Race, Power and Economic Extraction in Benton Harbor, MI

by

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Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of Doctor
of Philosophy in the Department of
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ABSTRACT

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Abstract

My dissertation investigates twin financial interventions—urban development and emergency management—in a single small town. Once a thriving city drawing blacks as blue-collar workers during the Great Migration, Benton Harbor, Michigan has suffered from waves of out-migration, debt, and alleged poor management. Benton Harbor’s emphasis on high-end economic development to attract white-collar workers and tourism, amidst the poverty, unemployment, and disenfranchisement of black residents, highlights an extreme case of American urban inequality. At the same time, many bystanders and representative observers argue that this urban redevelopment scheme and the city’s takeover by the state represent Benton Harbor residents’ only hope for a better life. I interviewed 44 key players and observers in local politics and development, attended 20 public meetings, conducted three months of observations, and collected extensive archival data. Examining Benton Harbor’s time under emergency management and its luxury golf course development as two exemplars of a larger relationship, I find that the top-down processes allegedly intended to alleviate Benton Harbor’s inequality actually reproduce and deepen the city’s problems. I propose that the beneficiaries of both plans constitute a white urban regime active in Benton Harbor. I show how the white urban regime serves its interests by operating an extraction

machine in the city, which serves to reproduce local poverty and wealth by directing resources toward the white urban regime and away from the city.

Dedication

To Victor. Thank you.

Contents

Abstract.....	iv
List of Figures	xii
List of Abbreviations	xiii
Acknowledgements	xv
Chapter 1: The Walled City	1
1.1 Setting	1
1.2 Three Stories of a Walled City.....	6
1.3 Scene One: The Black Costs of White Renewal.....	7
1.4 Scene Two: Spatial Restriction and Legal Threat	13
1.5 Scene Three: Containment and Displacement	18
1.6 Conclusion.....	23
Chapter 2: Theory	25
2.1 Introduction	25
2.2 Urban Politics in the Mid-20 th Century	30
2.2.1 Growth Machines.....	33
2.2.2 Urban Regime Analysis	36
2.3 Race in Urban Politics.....	37
2.3.1 Black Urban Regimes	41
2.3.2 Whiteness in Urban Regimes	44
2.4 A Relational Framework: An Introduction	46

2.4.1 Structure and Culture.....	47
2.4.2 The Social Life of Economic Terms	49
2.4.3 Morality as a Mechanism.....	51
2.4.4 The Relational Approach to Inequality	54
2.5 My Theoretical Framework	58
2.5.1 The White Urban Regime	60
2.5.2 The City as an Extraction Machine.....	64
2.6 The White Urban Regime’s Extraction Machine in Benton Harbor	68
2.7 Conclusion.....	73
Chapter 3: Methodology	76
3.1 Case Study: Methods Triangulation.....	76
3.1.1 Archival Research	76
3.1.2 Interviews.....	80
3.1.3 Ethnographic Observation.....	81
3.2 My Role in the Field.....	83
3.3 Race and Access.....	90
3.4 Connecting Accounts.....	93
3.5 The Power of Anonymity.....	97
Chapter 4: The Promise of Harbor Shores.....	101
4.1 Introduction	101
4.2 Setting and Background	103
4.2.1 The Humanitarian Dream of Harbor Shores	108

4.2.2 Harbor Shores' Creation	114
4.3 "I Found Some Land": Assets and Natural Resources	117
4.3.1 "When I Stand on That Dune..." Value Creation and Destruction.....	126
4.4 Participation Theater and Coalitions of One.....	133
4.5 Trickle-up Development: Tracking Outcomes	138
4.5.1 Outcomes: Community Benefit Plan.....	144
4.5.2 Outcomes: Jobs	153
4.5.3 Outcomes: City Tax Capture	157
4.5.4 Outcomes: School Tax Capture.....	168
4.6 Conclusion.....	173
Chapter 5: When Democracy Disappears: Emergency Management in Benton Harbor	177
5.1 Introduction: Emergency Management as a Lens	177
5.1.1 Competing Perspectives: Story-Telling	180
5.2 Emergency Manager Law—Background	182
5.3 Individual Blame for Structural Problems	186
5.3.1 Upstream Determinants of Municipal Crisis.....	200
5.4 Emergency Management as a Blank Slate	203
5.4.1 Crisis Time	206
5.5 Constricted Black Governance	208
5.5.1 Consolidating White Outsiders' Access	212
5.5.2 Race and Voice: Black Insiders Left Out.....	221
5.6 Rumors and Institutional Memory Loss: Contested Truth.....	225

5.7 In Perpetual Transition: Partial Local Control	230
5.8 Conclusion.....	234
5.8.1 Post-Script: Note on Flint.....	235
Chapter 6: Discussion.....	238
6.1 White Urban Regime: Shadow Governance and Racialized Citizenship	240
6.1.1 Value Agreement and the “Conspiracy”	241
6.1.2 The Land of Do: Racial Networks and Resources.....	244
6.2 White Urban Regime: Black Elites’ Conditional Inclusion	251
6.2.1 “They used them and let them go.”	257
6.3 White Urban Regime: Owner/Outsider	260
6.4 White Urban Regime: Reframing Inequality	266
6.4.1 “Let them think it’s their idea”: The Question of Propaganda	266
6.4.2 Media: Setting Terms of Debate.....	269
6.5 Extraction Machine	272
6.5.1 Extraction Machine: The Empty Slate	274
6.5.2 Empty Slate and Creative Destruction.....	277
6.6 Extraction Machine: Growth from Taking	279
6.6.1 “Shifting and Changing” Development	280
6.6.2 Assets for Charity	282
6.6.3 “Anything’s Better than Nothing”: Benton Harbor as Laboratory.....	287
6.7 The Commodification of Inequality	292
6.8 Inequality Justifies Future Extraction: The Charity Model.....	298

6.9 Conclusion.....	302
Chapter 7: Conclusion—Breaking Down the Walls.....	304
7.1 Limitations	304
7.2 Future Research.....	308
7.3 Utility and Extension of Theoretical Framework	309
7.4 Policy Recommendations and Conclusion.....	314
Appendix A: Timeline of Relevant Benton Harbor History, 1900-2016.....	320
References	326
Biography.....	354

List of Figures

Figure 1. Map of Benton Harbor in relation to Benton Township, St. Joseph, and Lake Michigan.....	2
Figure 2: Map of Harbor Shores and nearby landmarks in Benton Harbor, Benton Township and St. Joseph.....	105
Figure 3: Jean Klock Park viewed from Lake Michigan.	119

List of Abbreviations

CBP:	Community Benefits Plan
CDBG:	Community Development Block Grant
CEDC:	Community Economic Development Corporation
CPC:	Citizens for Progressive Change
CWCC:	Council for World-Class Citizens
CCD:	Consortium for Community Development
DDA:	Downtown Development Association
EM:	Emergency Manager
EFM:	Emergency Financial Manager
HUD:	Department of Housing and Urban Development
MEDC:	Michigan Economic Development Corporation
MDNR:	Michigan Department of Natural Resources
MDOT:	Michigan Department of Transportation
MDEQ:	Michigan Department of Environmental Quality
NAACP:	National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
NPS:	National Park Service
PGA:	Professional Golf Association
TIF:	Tax Increment Financing

R-TAB: Receivership Transitional Advisory Board

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across domains in considering “what is this a case of?”, and proved essential to my formulation of the extraction machine. Carol Stack has been brainstorming potential book titles for this project since 2012. Her advice served as my mantra during and after fieldwork: “pull the data through the theory, and the theory through the data.” Matthew Hughey gave invaluable advice about studying white people and whiteness. Writing about my co-chairs, Linda Burton and Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, is less easy. I am dictating this (as with most of my dissertation). As soon as I started to speak about my advisors I learned that crying makes dictation difficult, and having to say these things aloud makes me cry. Linda and Eduardo have believed in me since before I arrived at Duke, and in doing so, they have changed my life.

None of this would have happened without Victor Ray. My dissertation is dedicated to him.

Chapter 1: The Walled City

And then the wall rose...
Rose until it touched the sky...

Shadow.
I am black.

My hands!
My dark hands!
Break through the wall!
– Langston Hughes, "As I Grew Older" (2015 [1925])

1.1 Setting

Benton Harbor, a small city of 10,000, sits on the coast of Lake Michigan. The city is 90% black, one of the poorest towns in the state; it faces St. Joseph, a white tourist town, just west across the Paw Paw River. (See Figure 1). The majority of the city, composed mostly of residential neighborhoods, is on a slight bluff, dipping down to enter the main drag, which eventually passes by Whirlpool's newest corporate building and over the bridge to St. Joseph. North of Main Street lies the small, newly created Arts District. Beyond that to the north lies the area now dominated by the Harbor Shores Golf Course. Before the golf course was created, the land was occupied by industrially polluted sites, factory buildings and warehouses. This industrial area, in turn, was built in part on top of "The Flats," the city's neighborhood for non-white residents, which was razed under urban renewal in the early 1960s. Continuing northwest past the golf

course, the city ends with its public park on Lake Michigan, bracketed with million-dollar beach houses from adjacent communities on both sides.

Figure 1. Map of Benton Harbor in relation to Benton Township, St. Joseph, and Lake Michigan.

Introductions to Benton Harbor usually mention its 1983 designation as “the worst place to live in Michigan” by *Money Magazine*. They also include statistics on the high poverty and unemployment rates that have persisted for ever since whites pulled out of the city and brought the money and jobs with them, along with the hospital, community college, churches, and stores. According to 2014 statistics, 60% percent of

children under 18 live under the poverty level, and a quarter of children tested had elevated levels of lead in their blood. Seventy percent of the population rents, and almost six percent of the population is homeless (*City of Benton Harbor 2014-15 Annual Action Plan*, 2014). But the city usually attracts interest not only for these sobering statistics, but for the fact that they persist alongside the century-long presence of Whirlpool, a Fortune 500 corporation. Whirlpool has moved most of its manufacturing jobs to Mexico, South America, Europe and China but maintains its global headquarters just outside the city, with multiple white-collar facilities still located inside Benton Harbor.

Benton Harbor residents are conceived by the larger community, and even some within the city, as a moral problem: they are the subject of multitudes of talks, questions, articles and studies, police encounters and programs. They are the recipients of grants to analyze, diagnose and fix their problems. White Michigan residents joke about Benton Harbor as the worst possible place, only good for buying drugs (the epithet “Benton Harlem” is still in use). Yet Benton Harbor residents are also invisible. Their point of view is customarily ignored, misrepresented or mocked. The dire statistics above are likely undercounts, as many standard metrics of wellbeing would not capture this population, whether because unemployment measures do not account for their long-term joblessness, or because they are homeless or ill, imprisoned or formerly

imprisoned, or earning significantly under the poverty level (Edin & Shaefer, 2015).

Recognition of that fact is what led Commissioner Norton to tell me, “We have 47% unemployment rate.” She elaborated,

I got that number from the census, but I added more because I know so many people that had dropped out. They don't look for jobs anymore. Their unemployment was gone years ago. They're just floundering. And they just have no hope, or no... aspiration for anything. They just get up every day.

The statistics above simultaneously show and obscure the population they describe. Similarly, the city and its residents are both invisible and hypervisible behind the “walls” of Benton Harbor—their walled city has the clear sides of a fishbowl. This paradox of simultaneous hypervisibility and invisibility is a curious but ubiquitous phenomenon in race relations. As Patricia Williams puts it,

How, or whether, blacks are seen depends on a dynamic of display that ricochets between hypervisibility and oblivion. While the real lives of real Blacks unfold outside the view of many whites, the fantasy of black life as a theatrical enterprise is an almost obsessive indulgence. (Williams, 1997, p. 15)

I use the metaphor of the “walled city” to emphasize, first, how most accounts of Benton Harbor explain the city in isolation, and second, how that gaze inside the walls limits our understanding as gawking spectators of tragedy. This dissertation examines how what lies outside the wall, and even the wall itself, shapes the city inside it. The

metaphor of the walled city has multiple valences that will take shape over the course of this dissertation.

This dissertation is not another recital of Benton Harbor's golden years as an agricultural and industrial center, or another elegy of its decline. It is not a study of mass incarceration, or another survey of the recent major political events, from protests to the 2003 rebellion, that have captured national attention for Benton Harbor. Nor is it the sequel to Alex Kotlowitz' book, *The Other Side of the River*. In his portrayal of a racially divided community, the fundamental division Kotlowitz saw locally lay along the Paw Paw River dividing St. Joseph and Benton Harbor. In contrast, I found divisions bisecting the community in multiple directions. One division was Main St, which separated most BH residents to the south from the new Arts District, the golf course, and the lake. I also saw divisions between the traditional "racists" in St. Joseph and the white people who did get involved in Benton Harbor, who saw themselves as different; between the black elite, who served on boards and city entities, and a group of black officials and residents opposing them; between those who embroiled themselves in local politics and those who claimed to eschew politics completely. These other divisions are not "instead of" the local divide of race, nor are they horizontal divisions in which subgroups simply hold differing opinions. These extra divisions complicate the story by adding power into the calculation.

1.2 Three Stories of a Walled City

In this introductory chapter, I provide the setting for the remainder of my dissertation, which explores the interwoven layers of racial, economic and political inequality in Benton Harbor, viewing them as the result of a relationship between the city and its surroundings. My subsequent chapters take a macro view from above to focus on development and politics, and are framed at the level of discourse and resource flows.

But to set the stakes for the discussion to follow, I must begin with a more micro-level, embodied narrative, to describe the spatial and social boundaries that govern daily life for Benton Harbor residents. The political and economic issues I address in my other chapters are ultimately experienced, like race, at the level of the individual. Below, I present several scenes from my fieldwork and interviews to illuminate the metaphor of the “walled city,” a lens which helps to situate and explain Benton Harbor’s persistent suffering.

I open this dissertation with three stories, each of which illuminates a different aspect of the “wall” surrounding Benton Harbor. The stories are linked by shared themes: the role of multidimensional social control in Benton Harbor residents’ lives, and how whites’ everyday moral designations of blacks limits their opportunities;

geographic limitation and spatial/social exclusion; and how both stasis and change could be harmful in this setting.

1.3 Scene One: The Black Costs of White Renewal

Within the imaginary wall that surrounds Benton Harbor, whites control blacks' opportunities, largely escaping blame for preying on the black community and even being celebrated for their work. Black citizens, paying the cost for whites' actions, are meanwhile expected to forgive, forget, and work together. If they do not want to "cooperate" on these terms, they are scorned, insulted and avoided by local whites. I begin with a look at the local legal system, not because this dissertation is criminological, but because it is an important site to see how white values can become imposed on blacks to show what Staples (1975) alleges is the "colonial structure" of U.S. society.

In 2008, Benton Harbor discovered a crime ring in its own police department. A young narcotics detective, Andrew Collins, was caught with stolen drugs at work, after which he also admitted to falsifying 80 to 90 search warrants, filing false reports, seizing citizens' money and property for his personal use, and embezzlement from the department by using the stolen drugs to pretend he had conducted drug buys (Swidwa, 2010b). Collins had repeatedly stolen drugs from the police department, both for his own use and to plant on innocent Benton Harbor residents. In 2009, Collins was convicted of a single crime, possession of over 5 grams of crack cocaine with intent to

distribute, and sentenced to 37 months in prison and a \$10,000 fine (if repaying what he stole can be called a fine). This single charge does not come close to addressing Collins' confession to a several-year long, full-fledged conspiracy involving other police officers, who alleged he was the ringleader. The exact number of his victims is unknown, but locals count it at over 200. Collins told the court he committed these acts to increase his arrest numbers, "'to, in my mind, do a better job'" (Swidwa, 2010b).

By October 2015, local and national news media started covering a feel-good story from Benton Harbor: a white, formerly crooked cop befriending a black man, Jameel McGee, one of the people he had framed. Thanks to their newly found religious faith and their fortuitous reunion working at a church-run café providing employment for the formerly incarcerated, they had both come to terms with the past and learned the power of forgiveness. The pair were even giving speaking engagements together to share their story. But the story goes far deeper than this case of two new friends.

Collins was released after only 19 months. By the time I showed up for fieldwork in 2014, he was physically and spiritually transformed: a bearded, earringed, evangelizing manager of a Christian café and bookstore. The café's website describes it as a "new model of social business in the community" ("Cafe Mosaic BH," 2016), part of a complex of church-run businesses designed to help Benton Harbor by assisting people transitioning back into the workforce. The café provides job skills and experience for

welfare recipients and people just out of prison. As the manager, Collins not only supervises McGee and potentially other former victims, but he is also a spokesman for the organization. In supervising parolees, and in his middle-class presentation of whiteness, Collins avoids being stamped as a parolee himself. For instance, the business' website does not mention Collins' prison time and says Collins has been working there since 2009—the year he was sentenced.

Collins' actions severely harmed Benton Harbor residents. Not only were many people wrongly imprisoned, causing distress and suffering to these individuals and their families, but their sentences were not automatically overturned when the wrongdoing was discovered. In 2014, "Rodney," one of my respondents and a local activist, alleged some of Collins' victims were still in jail. Rodney had been trying to bring this story to light since the same year Collins was given a Police Officer of the Year award from a local civic organization for his 67 arrests and "recovering \$7,100 in cash" (William F. Ast III, 2005), the latter likely stolen from his victims. Rodney attested this award was given *after* his complaints started:

We kept telling them this was happening, that the guy was planting drugs on people, but nobody listened. That's how law enforcement does. They don't listen to you, you see? They don't even want to hear what you're saying or what you're doing. Matter of fact, if you just go away and shut up, they'd be happy, letting them continue planting drugs on you or whatever. Doing what they do.

Rodney also alleged that Collins was only finally stopped years later after an unrelated arrest for assaulting a bar bouncer in majority-white St. Joseph (William F. Ast III, 2008), marking him as a problem for the white community:

He had a fight with a white guy in St. Joseph at a bar. When he had that fight, they already knew that he was planting drugs on people, you see. They were waiting for him to do something that they could hold his hand to the fire and have a reason.

Benton Harbor has suffered a huge material loss from Collins, as the city was listed as a codefendant on dozens of the lawsuits filed against Collins and the police department by wrongfully imprisoned citizens. Benton Harbor City Commissioner Norton told me about the difficult decision to move forward with exposing the narcotics detectives' corruption (describing it as a pus-filled wound), knowing how much it would cost Benton Harbor to do so:

We got them opened up. Said, "let's get this sore opened up and let all the stuff run out." And it ran out and he had to leave. Of course we got 48 lawsuits because of it.

There is no total estimate available for the cost to the city. Norton knew of one settlement that had cost the city \$150,000, so the total is easily in the millions.

Collins' original case was the best single example, fully documented, showing the depths of unfairness in Benton Harbor's legal system. As Rodney pointed out, Collins served only 19 months, far less than many of his victims. While Collins has moved on with his life, hundreds of people are still invisibly grappling with the direct

costs of his actions, and city residents are still paying the literal costs of his actions. But his present contributions to society are all that matter to the media. In fact, his transformation is paying off in the form of sustained media attention and public speaking opportunities. Collins' crimes and his repentance have been transformed into social, and possibly economic, capital for him.

But perhaps what shocked me most was my firsthand experience of Collins' transformation. In 2014, I had seen Collins at the bookstore multiple times and had no idea that he was the person from the 2008 case. Nobody I had spoken to, even those who talked about the Collins case, mentioned that Collins was still in town, much less that he was working very visibly right on Main Street. Did people not know it was him, or was this not worth mentioning? In such a geographically small setting, either seemed impossible. I had heard and read about—and even sometimes witnessed—the constricted legal environment in this town, and the fear people in BH experienced around local policing. But it seemed especially telling that Collins was not only comfortable enough in his safety to return to the same town he violated in so many ways: he was comfortable enough to take a visible job, working with Benton Harbor's formerly incarcerated population, and even comfortable enough to repeatedly air his story on local and national news.

Why was Collins' black victim only valorized in the media when he forgave Collins? He was exonerated-- but is he not owed more than an apology? Would all Collins' victims be so understanding about literally working underneath the person responsible for their wrongful imprisonment? As a supervisor in this organization, Collins oversees the training and work of many other people returning to the city after jail time. Does this organization not care that the very constituency eligible for their program have been harmed by Collins?

McGee's experience sounded like a Kafkaesque nightmare, in which Collins singlehandedly personifies white institutional power at every stage of McGee's experience, from unjust imprisonment through to post-prison rehabilitation and celebratory speaking engagements. Collins is a one-man metonym for the role of whites in the city, and the story is a perfect microcosm of the racial climate of this area. The white perpetrator has been transformed, in a remarkably short period of time, into the white benefactor, even as the predominantly black victims of his crimes are still paying the price. Thanks to racial stereotypes about black criminality, even innocent black residents of BH are not considered entitled to righteous anger at this maltreatment. The focus on black Benton Harbor residents as part of the city's problem distracts from whites' actions just outside the lens.

This story is not just an indicator of the cleansing power of whiteness in the city. It also shows what is forced, in myriad ways, on black residents--that they agree to reset the scale whenever they are asked. As I will show in my dissertation, whites in Benton Harbor get credit for fixing and helping the people they were responsible for breaking, without stopping the conveyor belt sending new people through the same process.

1.4 Scene Two: Spatial Restriction and Legal Threat

The imaginary wall around the city traps poor black residents inside it. First, residents are geographically limited by poverty. People move through the landscape on foot, at the pace of walking or even slower--everyone you see seems to be waiting for something. Besides the one small Latino grocery store that has opened on Pipestone Avenue, the once-grand entryway to downtown, residents have to shop at “party [convenience] stores” or get a ride to the strip malls of Benton Township, just outside the city. Walmart runs an expensive-looking bus through the public housing complexes twice daily, as sixty percent of the population of Benton Harbor lacks a car (Bedford, 2009) and the county-wide public transportation, Dial-a-Ride, is expensive and inefficient. The hospital closed a few decades ago, and the medical centers operating inside it withdrew to a more remote location in 2011. Thanks to several rounds of extensive demolition, the city has been hollowed out, with much of the more dramatic blight replaced by grassy lots. In this small city, there is no place to hide. On the 4th of

July, 2014, multiple police cruisers chased a car on a residential block just outside my apartment complex, despite the children on the street. Improbably, the object of the chase and the officers sped around the single block multiple times. It seemed too metaphorical to be really happening.

The legal system poses another major barrier to black residents' mobility. Many people have been through the legal system, limiting their ability to find a job. I attended an expungement clinic held in a church parking lot where many residents left disappointed after hearing that only one misdemeanor could be stricken from their record. Formal social control, through policing and actual threat, exists alongside an extensive system of informal social control marked by residents' extreme fear of a potential threat. The prison and courthouse sit right at the bridge entering St. Joseph, directly facing Benton Harbor in a position some residents see as menacing. The local racial order is legible in the rigid spatial codes of its geography, in the legal system, even in the signs posted at St. Joseph's end of the bridge threatening drivers with a fine for playing loud music.

Ruth Gilmore has defined racism as "the state-sanctioned or extralegal production and exploitation of group-differentiated vulnerability to premature death" (Gilmore, 2005, p. 261). The reality of premature death in Benton Harbor, of airtight social control, the fear, seemed unbelievable even as I documented it. On multiple

occasions, black men have died in Benton Harbor without adequate investigation, sometimes after last being seen interacting with the police. Several times they were found in the river separating Benton Harbor and St. Joseph. Alex Kotlowitz wrote a book investigating the death of a black teenager, Eric McGinnis, found dead in the river after visiting St. Joseph with a white girl (1998). A 2003 uprising followed the police-related death of Terrance Shurn, who was killed after a high-speed chase by Benton Township police (advised to stop at the city's border) caused him to crash into a house. The county prosecutor concluded the police were not at fault: "'This death could have been averted if Terrance Shurn would have simply stopped'" (Strode, 2003). In contrast, in September 2014, there was only sparse news coverage when Harold Johnson died from crashing into a tree when Michigan State Police initiated a high speed chase over a broken tail light. He had warrants out for his arrest, most for traffic violations, and was likely fleeing as a result of them. While other parts of the country have been rising up with stories of black police-related deaths, this new story sank with barely a ripple. According to Commissioner Norton, Johnson's death didn't spark the same kind of anger as Shurn's:

I just think we kind of anaesthetized when a black person comes up missing. Or found dead. That happens all the time. Unless it's your family, I don't see a big cry-out in this town. And it's been happening, I can almost name you ten men that was in the river or the lake. Or in the police custody. And — gone. But that's nothing. That's been happening around here for years. When I was a little kid, I remember

hearing the older people talk about it. “Yeah, they killed so-and-so in jail.” So I don’t know why no one is affected by these deaths...I don’t know, my son tells me that’s the day-to-day struggle. That stops them from doing it. They’re too busy on the treadmill [chuckles], on the little circle, going around and around, to deal with it.

The extent of the legal system’s involvement with black residents, even some prominent ones. In my first week of fieldwork, a city commissioner,¹ the head of the public safety committee (which oversees the police department), was arrested for resisting and obstructing police. A cop had stopped him after observing the commissioner allegedly flailing his arms while arguing with his wife outside a bar, and arrested him for slapping away his hand during a pat-down. Benton Harbor’s most well-known activist, Edward Pinkney, used to publicize the new deaths as they arose on his website, until he himself was jailed on felony charges from having allegedly changed dates on a recall petition.² I attended Pinkney’s trial hearing; he was ultimately sentenced to serve two to ten years and is in jail now — although no evidence of his guilt was presented — because he is a repeat felon, having been jailed once for quoting the Bible in a newspaper column in a manner a judge found threatening, and another for similarly questionable allegations of vote fraud by leading an absentee-ballot campaign.

¹ In this region, the city commission performs the role of what we would usually call a city council.

² Notably, the terms for Pinkney’s pre-trial house arrest prohibited him (and his wife Dorothy) from using his computer. Pinkney has previously been banned from writing as a term of his probation. The possible date changes would have been to keep the signatures valid in the 60-day collection window, as a snow storm shut down the courthouse on the petitions’ due date.

And while black residents encountered these incidents as tokens of a racist system, many local whites circulated the stories as evidence of the criminality, hysteria, or comic incompetence of local blacks.

One interview respondent, “Cecily,” spent over five hours talking to me about her experience in the city. She explained how the local racial etiquette was taught through black socialization:

You ever heard of what was understood never has to be explained?...It's understood. It's in the water. It's everywhere. You just know. Your parents tell you coming up, you tell your kids, you keep passing it along, and it's just kind of –(mumbling) “O-kay. All right. So when I go to this place, that's how I act, and this is what I do, and you better not stir these waters, and never not do this or that, when you see somebody, you know, you be kind, you be nice, and you don't really look at them too much, you know, because they get offended by that –” you just learn these ways. It's like these norms.

But even observing these rules carefully, Cecily added, could not keep black people safe in the city. With burning intensity, keen insight, and deep sorrow, she explained the daily terror of being a mother raising young black men in Benton Harbor:

When you have your little black boy and he's a baby, he's cute. When he gets some hair on his face, he's a *villain*. A *monster*. A *maniac*. He's *depraved*. That's *your* black boy, and I have two of them. And so I could not make up, as a mama, some false way I wanted things to be. Because I had black boys to become black men. And I had to tell them the truth. To save them, to keep them. Because Berrien County (pauses) is Selma, Alabama. Read it. Read it! Look at the numbers. (pauses) Look at what— *they done*— *to them*. (crying) And *read* what *they've done to us*. And you'll see (voice cracking) it's *real*! It's *not* made up. So when they say these black people don't care—they are *afraid*.

Because you can't make yourself have a girl. You might have a boy.
And he's got to come up here. Because if you don't have money to take
him somewhere else, or show him something different, *this* is where he
will live! And they *will*, I'm telling you, they *will*! They will *get* him
while driving black. He don't have to do nothing. All he has to do is *be*!
Because what street in Benton Harbor is he going to drive around that
would not make him suspect? *Every* street is suspect!

1.5 Scene Three: Containment and Displacement

Finally, the wall, even while it seems to imprison, threatens displacement. I found a core conundrum about black residents' experience of Benton Harbor: they felt simultaneously trapped in this walled city and forced out of it. On the one hand, regular residents and some city commissioners worried about processes of gentrification and displacement they saw taking place in Benton Harbor, a concern for decades. Benton Harbor residents knew they were sitting on valuable land on the beautiful coast, and Whirlpool's investment made it even more attractive—except for the stigma of its population. A white minister said in 1990, "My biggest fear with this revitalization is that it will succeed. The problem is that the people who are living here now are not going to be here" (Tita, 1990). Like this minister and many others I talked to more recently, Cecily was dubious about who would likely benefit from the high-end development underway in the city. As Cecily put it, addressing an imaginary audience composed of Whirlpool and the white business community at large:

This is a thriving community and you want it to be a thriving community, but for your kind. And for what you are promoting for it to be. Not what and who is here.

Then she switched to the perspective of “Whirlpool,” expressing the necessity of removing Benton Harbor’s existing population in order to achieve its goals:

These people—us, them, they, we, however you want to say it—(laughs) have to be moved. And we can't move you, because the law gives you rights. So we, through law, have to make it more difficult for you to be here.

Here, Cecily is describing a process of forced attrition, in which, she believes, Benton Harbor residents’ lives are made so difficult that they are induced to leave. But at another point in the interview, Cecily describes an entirely different dynamic, in which she envisions local entities across several domains withholding “means and information and education and resources” —as she put it, “Things that could transplant your thinking, to help make you aware.”

But they have not done that [shared these resources], and why would they not? Because it keeps them in their coffers. Very profitable. To make their money to live in *their* spaces, to advance and elevate the consciousness and worries of *their* children. And *you*-- my black boy; my black girl; *you* will be the expense of that. *You* will be that. We don't have to have slavery, we have prisons. We have economic cells for you, that you would *never* outgrow. I don't even have to have any literal walls or bars, because you're like a trained rat. You'll stay in your space, and you will never go outside. Because it's configured in your mind. You know your limitations.

Cecily was describing, at an abstracted level, a system in which her black children were

sacrificed for others' profit. Her "economic cells" without walls kept people in place as effectively as former, more explicitly coercive systems of social control. This possibility seemed even more distressing than the threat of displacement, which after all is a common story in American cities. How were black Benton Harbor residents "very profitable" inside the "economic cells" Cecily mentioned, and for whom? This question became a primary subject of my dissertation.

Moreover, I was initially confused by Cecily's simultaneous conviction that her neighbors are both being driven out of the city and trapped within its walls. I got an answer to this conundrum in an interview with Donald, a prominent white member of Benton Harbor's business class who lives part time just outside the city, with even more pronounced views than most. From speaking with him, I understood that in fact there are contradictory philosophies within the white community surrounding Benton Harbor.

To explain his conception of the city, its problems and its future, Donald sketched out a map of Benton Harbor and its surrounding community. "Donald" described two competing models of how to "deal with" Benton Harbor from the outside. The model he deplored, that of the surrounding white communities, sought to contain the city: "Benton Harbor has always been treated like it's had a cage around it." Donald attributed the formation of the "cage" to federal social programs, including the city's

1960's-era urban renewal and 1970s Great Society benefits including AFDC and public housing, causing what he called "a concentration of poverty." Donald alleged,

that was the beginning of the end. Because it essentially put the walls up around Benton Harbor at that point. And now the reliance on that, those handouts, was established. So no longer was there incentive. There was housing, there was food, and there was incentive to exist. And there was no incentive for business to come back and try to do anything or rework--to plan. So, people got shoved in a corner. And the surrounding communities...Everybody's starting to put all of their dregs and all their problems into here, and they're starting to put a wall around it.

He described this as a "white island effect," where racist local governments decided,

we're going to shove your dregs, or your low [income], or your drug dealers or whatever, into a concentrated area and everybody can just close their eyes and just kind of be fat, dumb, and happy, until it gets too bad.

Donald condemned this plan as racist. Worse than its racism, Donald thought the wall (or concentration of poverty and black residents in Benton Harbor) was a bad idea because it encouraged passivity and welfare dependency among residents (a common point of view for my elite black and white respondents). But Donald's own point of view was even more radical than the wall approach. In Donald's model, Benton Harbor was contagious: the wall couldn't be built high enough to contain its bad effects. To explain, Donald returned to his map and drew over Benton Harbor in orange, to symbolize its radioactivity, he said. Donald elaborated:

Everybody needs to take a piece of the problem...it is radioactive. It emanates out. And if it doesn't get fixed, you can't fix anything. It is the elephant in the corner of the room. It's absolutely the problem child. And I don't care how much fencing, I don't care how deep the river is. If you don't fix this problem, you're never going to fix your problems. And you have to admit first that you have problems. And they all have got the cancer or the radioactivity or whatever you want to call it, because that's holding all of us back...socially, educationally, economically, reputation. It's just--let's call this what it is. It's called a negative constellation. It needs to get changed to a positive one.

Donald portrays Benton Harbor's bad, "radioactive" influence emanating outward to infect the surrounding white communities, and suggests "the problem child" must be eliminated through drastic means. In other words, Donald's problem with the wall is that it does not go far enough—it does not "fix" Benton Harbor. His idea of surrounding communities "taking a piece of the problem" may sound caring, but this imposed and involuntary dispersal entails the elimination of virtually everything currently in Benton Harbor, from schools to housing to government, as will be evident in Donald's discussion of the "empty slate" in Chapters Five and Six. And Donald would apply this scorched-earth strategy applies to people as well:

The fact of the matter is, you're gonna have to pick a generation and start with it. And you're gonna lose everything in front of it... I'm gonna focus on the three-year-old, the four-year-old, the five-year-old. Get them where I need to go, and—sorry—I'm gonna pick a grade, and I'm gonna be like, "okay, whatever happens, happens." But that kid that's three, that heart, and mind, and soul, that family, that's the one I want to get. I want to capture them, I want to work, I want them to be the voters of the future."

Although Donald's forthrightness was unusual, it is not rare for a white nonresident of the city to speak so confidently about what ought to be done in Benton Harbor. Donald consistently employs language of ownership in this excerpt, describing the children he wants to "get" or "capture," once he "get[s] them where [he] needs to go." What is not clear from Donald's statement is what Donald plans to do with these children once he gets them. Such assumed authority implies that the "wall" of social control will remain even in Donald's model of geographic dispersion. I heard echoes of this in the phrase commonly used by local whites in a community development organization, that they needed to "wrap our arms around" the city and its problems—whether that arm-wrapping was an embrace or a stranglehold became increasingly unclear.

The two positions Donald laid out, containment and expulsion, correspond neatly with the seemingly-contradictory fears Cecily outlined above. And members of the white community surrounding Benton Harbor have competing interests which may favor either outcome. As I will show in the remainder of my dissertation, both containment and displacement of black residents can be profitable for local whites.

1.6 Conclusion

To be sure, the above does not come close to describing the totality of Benton Harbor. Its marching band is legendary (if a bit past its prime). A retired teacher runs a community garden for children in the summer. The children's floor of the library is

the most successful and most highly-populated I have ever seen, with children playing chess games, drawing, reading and playing. Many people are trying hard to build things that last, things that make a difference. One lifelong resident, "Darlene," implored me not to tell only about the "bad parts" of Benton Harbor, but to include the good parts as well. As I have said, I have no intention of giving one more recitation of the city's woes. Instead, I want to understand why things seemed to fall apart so quickly here, and why people seemed so afraid; why so many efforts to improve the lives of Benton Harbor residents have failed and continue to fail. What do those efforts have to do with the programs, powers, and philosophies surrounding the "walled city," and whom do these systems serve? These were the questions I ultimately tackled with my research, questions that required I look just outside Benton Harbor's "wall." In what follows, I shift my frame of reference back out to a broader engagement with local economics and politics, maintaining my focus on racial inequality, to lay out the theoretical background and framework for my research findings.

Chapter 2: Theory

2.1 Introduction

I came to Benton Harbor to study two interventions—emergency management and urban development—in the plight of a distressed small city that had been flattened by job loss and white flight. But as my research went on, I started to understand both interventions as pieces of a larger story that had been happening for decades. I was motivated by my discovery of consistent themes in decades of local and national news articles focusing on Benton Harbor’s intractable problems and whether it was about to turn around (*City of Benton Harbor Shores, Michigan Jean Klock Park Conversion and Mitigation Proposal In reference to Land and Water Conservation Fund Grant #26-00568*; Mahler, 2011; Mouat, 1986; Pick, 1990; Stevens, 2003). The repetitive invocation of stasis and change struck me as itself significant, and suggested that these authors were not only asking the wrong questions, but could be actively contributing to the misunderstanding of Benton Harbor. In my determination to do more than rewrite a dissertation-length version of those articles rediscovering the same head-shaking paradoxes, I had to find a new frame of reference for my own research. Without understanding the bigger picture, I would lack the context for these phenomena. What was it about this place that would lead to both of these things happening at the same time?

I found that larger framework at a meeting early in my fieldwork, where black city commissioners were debating the prospect of yet another “collaboration” with local white elites. City Commissioner Frank Palmer, who was leading the meeting, concluded by issuing the following reflection:

[Machiavelli] was very leery of alliances, especially if you’re aligning from a position of weakness...I do know, from a little Biblical Scripture, that it was always the priority of the Israelites to have nearness to Pharaoh. It was like a rush to be at the table and to get close with those who had traditionally had a foot on [their] neck. So I see it’s kind of just like, [you] want to be at the table, which is good only if you’re not on the menu...the city of Benton Harbor is absolutely the entrée. Of a fine dining menu. With big spenders – ready to spend. So hopefully we can be a diner, where now we can start placing some orders, and getting some good nutritional meals so we can, not get fat, but at least not be so lean, and be a healthy community.

Citing multiple sources (as usual), Commissioner Palmer critiqued fellow commissioners’ rush to the “table” of the entity supposedly inviting collaboration. He saw the pro-collaboration side motivated by an understandable, if futile, desire to be close to power, since that power was derived from their own group-based oppression. Moreover, the commissioner portrayed Benton Harbor not as an impoverished site of lack (as most accounts describe it), but as an “entrée” for the “big spenders” surrounding the city—an ongoing resource for extraction. He wanted to figure out how Benton Harbor residents could stay at the table as “diners,” keeping some of those resources for themselves.

This visual metaphor of being a diner, not an entrée, at the local table, broadens our view from the usual narrow focus on city officials and residents themselves. The key variables in my analysis, race and power, are linked by the glue of a relational approach (Emirbayer, 1997), which suggests scholars evaluate *processes* rather than *things*. In working out a relational description of city political and economic dynamics, I develop a theoretical framework to identify the people and processes I see at work in the city. First, I propose that the “big spenders” constitute a *white urban regime* active in Benton Harbor, pursuing a variety of strategies and continually reconfiguring power relations to achieve their financial goals. Through membership in overlapping work, political and philanthropic networks, shared frameworks for Benton Harbor’s “problem” and the desired solutions for that problem, and extensive access to social and material resources, the white urban regime is able to serve its own interests despite, and sometimes at the cost of, the elected black officials. Second, I show how the white urban regime serves these interests by operating an *extraction machine* in the city, which serves to reproduce local poverty and wealth by directing resources toward the white urban regime and away from the city.

In formulating my argument, I draw primarily on work from three traditions, which I address in turn. First, I outline urban politics, an interdisciplinary field housed in political science and drawing heavily from sociology, focusing on Stone’s urban

regime analysis (Stone, 1987, 2005) and Logan and Molotch's growth machine theory (Logan & Molotch, 1987, 2002 [1976]). While both frameworks offer useful tools for interpreting city politics, the theories do not work without understanding how race directs action and order. Next, I address relevant concepts from race theory and their meaning for urban politics, particularly Bonilla Silva's (1997) theory of racialized social systems and scholarship on whiteness. I place race foremost in my analysis to show how racial divisions not only produce inequality in the formal and informal networks essential to achieving Stone's "urban coalition" (Stone, 2005), but also provide justifying narratives to explain that inequality. Finally, I draw on scholarship on economic inequality and poverty, extending to more theoretical scholarship on the construction of value and cultural economics. I critique the tendency to focus on the poor to explain poverty and inequality, arguing that we need a relational approach to understand these phenomena.

Having laid this groundwork, I turn to the heart of this chapter: my propositions about the racialized network in Benton Harbor's white urban regime and its creation of an extraction machine. Emergency management and Harbor Shores each represent an exemplar of an ongoing economic, political and social relationship in which a shifting coalition of mostly-white executives, government workers, developers and non-profit workers (the white urban regime) circumvented elected government in Benton Harbor

to obtain grants and land; make decisions; and plan, implement or abandon development projects. Their personal and professional networks place them in formal and informal contact with one another, allowing them to eschew the regulations and conflict of “politics” while engaging in extremely political behavior, as in Ferguson found in his “anti-politics machine” carrying out development in Lesotho (Ferguson, 1997). White urban regime members frequently assume the role of outsiders, as neutral entities bringing change, free from the stain of decades of bad management and acrimonious politics that serve as the perennial scapegoat. In comparison, they profess to value cooperation and partnerships. By constantly and publicly seeking change, they paradoxically reproduce the same ideas and same results, in an unfortunate reenactment of the old cliché, “the more things change...” But the white urban regime profits from the very process harming the city, through its *extraction machine*.

The extraction machine is a conceptual way to see how the parts of Benton Harbor’s political and economic system move in relation to one another. I lay out some major principles and preconditions of an extraction machine, and then explain briefly how the case of Benton Harbor illustrates each of these aspects. To foreshadow my argument here, I look at how one entity’s loss is another’s gain; how the process, not necessarily the outcome, of development is often the point of development; and how attempts to address inequality can be hijacked to provide further assets for extraction. I

show how the extraction machine operates in conditions of extreme power inequality, and requires a strong ideological narrative providing an alternative explanation for the visible inequalities. For these reasons, my research simultaneously tracks the material money flows and outcomes and the ideological narratives explaining or deflecting attention from these outcomes.

My methodological insights complete this chapter to highlight how the evolution of this theory was informed by my research experience. This project is theoretically and methodologically informed by Burawoy's "extended case method" (1998). Burawoy advances an argument for the relevance of deep ethnographic case studies for advancing scientific thought, and the possibility of theoretical engagement with large concepts. As a result, I entered the field with some theoretical precepts in mind. This allowed me to draw out similarities to and differences from existing theory. As an observer negotiating between the groups involved, attempting to gather information in a contested field of meaning, my own struggle to understand the exceedingly complex and non-linear situation served as a lens into the case. As a result, my methodological experience and findings are woven throughout my empirical analysis.

2.2 Urban Politics in the Mid-20th Century

First, my work draws on the "community power structure" studies of the 1950s and 1960s, which informed the contemporary field of urban politics. Anchored by Floyd

Hunter's (1963 [1953]) text on community power structure and Mills' work on *The Power Elite* (1956), community power theorists "put decision-making processes for and/or within cities at the center of their work" (A. Harding, 2009, p. 29). Both Hunter and Mills focused on how a relatively cohesive urban elite carried out its plans in overlapping networks, what Hunter called "pyramids of power" (Hunter, 1963 [1953]). They operated not as individuals but within organizations, many oriented toward philanthropy or other ostensibly non-political causes, that provided the resources, information and influence necessary for setting policy.

In the elaboration of community power theory that became "stratification" studies, scholars saw local politics operating through prior mechanisms: in particular, Bachrach and Baratz' "two faces of power" (1962). Bachrach and Baratz argue that behind the visible face of power presenting issues for consideration and making decisions lies a second "face," which suppresses other issues from entering the debate. Bachrach and Baratz point out the agenda is often set several stages prior to open political conflicts, making "nondecision-making" even more important to study than decision-making. They argue for a *longue durée* approach, to understand general tendencies and the "long-term payoff" (Stone, 1982, p. 284) rather than single battle outcomes. In other words, when studying politics, scholars cannot simply investigate explicit conflict to understand who wields power. Instead, organizations and coalitions

prior to their entry into specific political debates give better analytical purchase.

Attention to nondecision-making can show how inequality can be reproduced through everyday activities, without open conflict.

Lukes goes still further to critique elitists like Bachrach and Baratz for inadvertently failing to differentiate their theory from the pluralists'. Lukes claims these scholars omit what he calls the "third dimension" of power, the integrative component that can achieve elites' interests without any conflict. As Lukes notes, "The most effectively insidious use of power is to prevent such conflict from arising in the first place" (Lukes, 1974, p. 23). Lukes' "three-dimensional view of power" emphasizes that a political agenda can be controlled without working through specific decisions at all, even "non-decisions." Lukes also insists that scholars include an accounting of individuals' "real interests," as opposed to their expressed or felt preferences, which can be shaped by those with power over them.

The two primary offshoots of community power structure theory, urban regime analysis and growth machine theory, share an opposition to "pluralism" and its cousin, "public choice" theory, the traditional political science models that portray voters as consumers, rationally choosing candidates according to their interests, and with equal say in political outcomes. Despite their internal differences, both theories bring useful concepts to my analysis, so I address each below.

2.2.1 Growth Machines

I draw on “growth machine” theory, first, for its focus on resources and development as key sites for understanding a city, and second, because it shows how political decisions of allocation have been redefined as technical or economic, preemptively justifying unfair distributions while foreclosing political debate and dissension. The study of growth machines” (Logan & Molotch, 1987) or “growth coalitions” (Domhoff, 2009 [1967]; Gendron & Domhoff, 2009) within cities comes from a blending of Marxist analysis (from the field of political economy) and community power structure studies. Marxist urban politics privileges economic explanations for the division of power in a city: the power resides in those who own property or the means of production (Castells, 1977; D. Harvey, 1973, 1985). Marxist urban theorists use Marx’s distinction of “use value” and “exchange value” to distinguish residents’ interests in a city from those of developers, owners, and other private entities (who want to maximize exchange value in their private property). A single dynamic of class domination drives all cities’ politics, “making the matter of ‘who governs’ in the city of secondary importance” (Gendron & Domhoff, 2009, p. 12).

Logan and Molotch’s vision of the city as a “growth machine” (1987) incorporates this perspective by examining cities’ tendency to prioritize development and growth for its own sake, and the consequent benefits to private interests. They attest

that “For those who count, the city is a growth machine, one that can increase aggregate rents and trap related wealth for those in the right position to benefit” (Logan & Molotch, 2002 [1976], p. 199). Despite the growth machine’s claim that all residents benefit through increased employment, city revenue, and amenities, this theory argues that growth policies do not usually benefit city residents, particularly not disadvantaged ones.

Furthermore, the growth machine cloaks its agenda in blandness. Decisions benefitting “those who count” are covered by the media as “the dull round of meetings of water and sewer districts, bridge authorities, and industrial development bonding agencies,” while the public is distracted by “symbolic politics” (Logan & Molotch, 2002 [1976], p. 208), where participation is carefully stage managed on issues of little substance. Meanwhile, seemingly technical decisions about “tax abatements, industrial development bonds, tax increment financing, enterprise zones, loan programs” are distanced from politics so that agreements can be made in private (Judd, 1986, p. 164). The de-politicization of urban spending makes uneven development appear as if by an invisible hand, outside the realm of public access. However, investigations of these “technical” arrangements often show their powers of exclusion and upward wealth redistribution. Discourse about public-private partnerships further obscures this phenomenon, making it appear as if business and city residents share the same interests.

Public financing of private urban redevelopment is soaring, using trickle-down logic to argue that the poor will ultimately benefit from diverting their money to the wealthy. This backwards logic has persuasively convinced most that, as Pangloss said, we live in the “best of all possible worlds” (Voltaire, 2013 [1759]).

While the above propositions make growth machine theory useful, its conceptual limitations must be addressed. First, the idea that growth advocates are defending “place-based interests” is core to the literature, but elites are no longer bound by these limits. Constraining the domain of growth machine politics to land ownership artificially limits the range of resources elites can draw on or accumulate, just as it underestimates the growth of “lumpengeography” or “stagnant places” dependent on capital (R. Walker, 1978). Second, growth machine theory (and urban politics as a whole) fails to grapple with the significance of creative destruction (D. Harvey, 2004) and uneven development in urban settings (N. Smith, 1982). A primary unspoken principle of creative destruction is that value can be derived from the process of *devaluing* (one’s own property or others’). Use and exchange value are not static, but socially produced and variable. Third, we need a deeper understanding of how growth machines can succeed without growth, rather than being surprised by this outcome (Jonas & Wilson, 1999), or positing supposedly unsuccessful extraction machine politics as *distraction* from distributional issues (Jonas & Wilson, 1999; Logan, Whaley, & Crowder, 1997). Concerns

of growth and development are *also* distributional, even if the promised growth does not appear in the promised quarter. And fourth, existing growth machine theory does not apply to the case of an antagonistic relationship between the city and business regime, where the city is not an actual partner.

2.2.2 Urban Regime Analysis

Urban regime analysis focuses more on people and alliances than money and land, but similarly draws on concepts like nondecision-making to explore how groups wield power in cities. Further, this concept is especially useful to my analysis for its focus on networks and alliances between local elites. Clarence Stone, who along with Norman and Susan Fainstein (1996; 1983) and Stephen Elkin (1987) has written most prolifically on urban regimes, writes that “the ultimate concern is the differential capacity of various groups and strata to influence the actions and inactions of government” (Stone, 1982, p. 290). Unlike the Marxist perspective, which describes groups’ relations as one of domination, or “power over,” Stone’s work emphasizes how resources provide groups with differing “capacity to govern” (Stone, 1993), or “power to.” Stone’s focus is on the informal and well-resourced group of politicians, business people and elites who work cooperatively through shared networks, rather than bureaucratic or official means.

Stone argues, counter to public choice and pluralism, that electoral processes are not determinative of democratic outcomes in cities: instead, they only represent a small proportion of politics and policymaking (Stone, 2005). In fact, Stone asserts that "the 'retail' politics of pressuring officials on particular issues makes little long-term difference" (Stone, 2005, p. 326). Instead, political outcomes are shaped by structural forces that "manifest themselves locally through such phenomena as agenda feasibility, coalition formation, resource mobilization, and the ways in which modes of cooperation are worked out" (Stone, 2005, p. 323). Urban regime analysis deemphasizes the open power struggles that are often the basis for studies of racial politics in cities (for example, fights over school control or the construction of a highway through a black neighborhood). Looking only at these more obviously political and contested cases, rather than agreements, coalitions, and the long-term "flow" of decisions (Stone, 1981, p. 508), obscures how power actually operates.

2.3 Race in Urban Politics

Before I continue my survey of urban politics by explaining its insufficient treatment of race, I must first specify what I mean by race and racism, as these contested terms are defined and measured in myriad ways. In accord with many race scholars, I define race as a social construction with real effects. Race was constructed as a hierarchy, which means it is undeniably relational (i.e., racial meanings are defined in relation to

racial others). This hierarchical relationship is based on power, as opposed to scholars of ethnicity, e.g. Wimmer (2008), who look at difference and boundary-shaping but argue against group-based power *over*. Race was co-created with colonialism (Glenn, 2015), Enlightenment thinking (C. Mills, 1999), and modern capitalism (C. Robinson, 2000 [1983]; Roediger, 2007), and as such, is foundational to our economic and political systems. However, race also has an experiential component: many have pointed out that erasing racism's many harmful effects should not come alongside the cultural assimilation into the "mainstream" some advocate (e.g., Alba & Nee, 2003).

My focus on "institutional racism" (Ture & Hamilton, 1992 [1967]) and power differences is distinct from those who describe racism as a matter of individual prejudice, solvable with interracial contact (Allport, 1979 [1954]), and race as an unfortunate side effect of this prejudice. Our present moment has a public face that equates race-consciousness with racism; publicly touts diversity; and accuses those identifying racial disparities or racism as complaining, impatient, or themselves racist. I am among the scholars who have pushed back against the "post-racial" or "colorblind" consensus that racial divisions are declining in importance. Instead, as Omi and Winant (1994) and Bonilla-Silva (1997) have pointed out, our "racial formation" is shifting. Our task is to reckon with the shape and meaning of that shift, which includes the seeming contradiction of the harmonious public face alongside continuing, even deepening,

racial disparities across nearly all social measures. Importantly, the Black Lives Matter movement has recently punctured that harmonious face, forcing a long-due discussion of continued racial state violence, harm, and exclusion.

In conceptualizing race for the purpose of this project, I draw on Hall's (1986) enumeration of specific insights Gramsci brings to race theory, particularly his attention to both historical and regional specificity; "a non-reductive approach to... class and race" (1986, p. 24); his emphasis on the role of civil organizations, education, and other indirect methods of reproducing society; his attention to culture and the "common sense" of a society; and, finally, the importance of "the analysis of racist ideologies" (1986, p. 25). These precepts, which also undergird Bonilla Silva's "racialized social systems" framework (1997), are an excellent starting place for my study that unites material, political and cultural analysis.

While urban politics theories form a base for my own framework, their superficial understanding of race limits their explanatory power. Some scholars have observed that in both urban regime analysis and growth machine theory, race is usually omitted as an axis of inequality (Horan, 2001; Reed, 1999; Street, 2007; Thompson, 2009). While the mainstream narrative on race holds that legal "institutional racism" (Ture & Hamilton, 1992 [1967]) ended with the Civil Rights Movement, scholars have shown how race structures historical and present decisions about urban renewal (Frieden &

Sagalyn, 1991; Fullilove, 2004) and housing (Charles, 2003; Jackson, 1985; Katz-Nelson, 2005; Massey & Denton, 1993; Rugh & Massey, 2010; Sugrue, 1996). Even less-explored and seemingly race-neutral urban issues like municipal infrastructure (Marsh, Parnell, & Joyner, 2010), insurance (Squires, 1997), annexation (Johnson, Parnell, Joyner, Christman, & Marsh, 2004), districting (Kousser, 1999), zoning (Aoki, 1993, 1996), and taxes (Edsall & Edsall, 1992) have racial understandings and boundaries mapped onto them, both created by and reproducing our historical and present-day patterns of segregation. For that reason, when studying decision-making about resource allocation, neighborhood boundaries, or construction projects, scholars must attend to how racial inequality may be reproduced through the smooth functioning of everyday municipal business. We can see how the approach, subjects and methods of urban regime theory could be very useful in conducting these analyses, even if it does not currently do so. Understanding race as a governing structure embedded deeply in social processes is a crucial precondition to making sense of urban politics.

Neil Kraus, among others, critiques urban regime study's neglect of race for its failure to "fully consider how local politics has both reflected and reinforced racial inequality" (2004, p. 97). In a way, Kraus criticizes Stone for committing the same error, with regard to racial politics, that Stone found in Dahl's take on electoral politics, by only considering a narrow swath of overt phenomena to be potentially "about" race.

Kraus argues that Stone gives too much credit to the racial rhetoric of tolerance, rather than looking below this level at actual practices. The problem lies, as Horan (2001) notes, in *how* the researchers address race: in terms of ethnic groups competing for advantages, rather than a structuring force permeating every form of social organization. Horan proposes instead that we “posit that urban regimes are three-way relationships shaped by the interconnected logics of state, economy, and race” (Horan, 2001, p. 22).

2.3.1 Black Urban Regimes

One scholar has taken race seriously as a central concern in urban regimes. Adolph Reed has adapted the concept of *black urban regimes* to explain the late twentieth-century phenomenon of black municipal leadership, particularly in the role of mayor, in his “black urban regime”. Mainstream urban political literature considered the election of black politicians to represent the advance of the interests of their ethnic group (see, for instance, Cole, 1976; Holden, 1971). Reed argues against this view of unitary black politics, claiming instead that black city politicians primarily serve the interests of a small black elite, in a manner consistent with black elites’ historical role of “racial custodianship” (Reed, 1999, p. 18) and uplift in the black community, while allying with whites in power. This alliance is conditional and does not grant full access to political power, showing that black elites’ class advantage does not eliminate the significance of race. Black politicians are often constrained by business pressure and their own

apprenticeship within white institutions to promote a pro-growth agenda (Judd, 1986), even though their poor black constituency, their own electorate, is least likely to benefit as a result of pro-growth policy (Reed, 1999). Reed challenges the celebration of these regimes, not only because of this restriction on their potential political achievements, but because “the dynamics that make possible the empowerment of black regimes are the same as those that produce the deepening marginalization and dispossession of a substantial segment of the urban black population” (Reed, 1999, p. 88).

Lastly, Reed argues that black mayors’ power is partial (Reed, 1999). Writing in the era in which black mayors were first being elected in several major cities, Holden (1971) identified several realms of institutional power—administrative control, support positions, and state governance—that were (and are) still controlled by whites, as are the private institutions driving the growth machine. Writing a few decades later, Browning reflects pessimistically that “perhaps the great expansion of African Americans was merely temporary, to be followed by the reestablishment of white rule at the local level and by reversal of legislative gains at all levels” (Browning, Marshall, & Tabb, 1997, p. 5). As blacks took control of some cities in the second half of the 20th century, power over municipalities may have retreated from the positions blacks held into higher offices, which means that urban regime analysis may underestimate the role of the state in black-led cities (Hochschild, 2008). A serious assessment of contemporary limits on black

governance and the consequences of this dynamic is called for. In 2016, black neighborhoods and cities across our country are often characterized by crumbling, sometimes deadly infrastructure and uneven access to basic services like water provision and education. But for the most part, whites' responses have ranged from indifference, to active resentment of perceived black spaces' "dependency" on successful white neighborhoods and cities,¹ to more predatory approaches where service improvement only comes alongside displacement.

In order to integrate a more serious discussion of race into urban regime analysis, we have to start looking at how race works in *all* urban regimes, including white ones. After all, as Horan asks, "what makes the black urban regime black?" She continues, "Reed is not simply labeling administrations led by African Americans. Rather, in his account, the election of a black mayor makes visible racial power relationships often obscured but nevertheless central to urban politics" (2001, p. 29). Urban regimes ought to require race as an axis of analysis whether or not the official positions are held by blacks. Indeed, Reed's work should lead us to highlight the formerly hidden whiteness in "normal," presumably raceless, urban regimes. How can we incorporate race as a formative structural category within urban regime analysis?

¹ A common trope in Michigan decries Detroit as a drain on the state. This is reflected at the political level; for decades, the legislature has passed bills including or excluding cities of over a million inhabitants—which applies only to Detroit.

2.3.2 Whiteness in Urban Regimes

Looking at black urban regimes can help understand how race works in *all* types of urban regimes. White governance tends to be invisible to those carrying it out, because it is taken for granted (just as whiteness in general is considered to be “empty” (Hughey, 2010), “unmarked” (Frankenberg, 1993; Lipsitz, 1998), or “invisible” (Frankenberg, 1993). Whites may have a sense that, as Richard Dyer puts it, “other people are raced, we are just people” (Dyer, 1997, p. 10). Indeed, whiteness is invisible and unchallenged because it is dominant—at least from within; as many standpoint theorists have pointed out, whiteness is hardly invisible when viewed from the outside.) . Scholars have explored how whites have a “possessive investment in whiteness” (Lipsitz, 1998), as they receive real benefits from their privileged racial status (Cheryl Harris has called this “whiteness as property” (1995)). Further, when whites perceive their benefits to be threatened by redistribution or other projects working toward equality, they will act to defend these benefits, which they perceive as rightfully theirs. Importantly, whites need not be aware of their privilege to profit from or defend it (A. E. Lewis, 2004).

Part of the purpose of this project is to render “whiteness visible” in the urban regime, in order to understand the perpetuation of urban racial inequality. While much scholarship on whiteness has focused on identity formation, we can extend the insights

of this field to study how whiteness functions in larger structures. Race is a social hierarchy defining groups only in relation to one another: in the U.S., white is “not-black” and black is “not-white.” As a result, even studying whites exclusively limits theoretical understanding of how race functions. Further, this analysis needs to be situated in space, as the visible articulation of racial inequality in experience and opportunity (Lipsitz, 2011). The mental gymnastics required for the daily navigation of racially segregated and exclusionary spaces provides insight into some of our country’s most fraught racial contradictions.

Before I continue, I must add a note on the role of gender in my analysis. Of course, the processes I outline in my dissertation are lived through gender as another pivotal axis of inequality--after all, what I call the “white urban regime” could also be the “white *male* urban regime.” Some of my data on how gender plays out in this setting is included in the following chapters. I focus on the role of race in creating and reproducing economic oppression in Benton Harbor not from a blindness to how gender works in the city, but because the specific theoretical mechanisms I wanted to illustrate required particular attention to this dimension. Risman has noted that an intersectional analysis does not always require equal attention to all domains at all times: “To focus all investigations into the complexity or subjective experience of interlocking oppressions would have us lose access to how the mechanisms for different kinds of inequality are

produced” (Risman, 2004, p. 443). That said, this is a fertile area for future research into the ways gender operates in racialized urban regimes and extraction machines.

2.4 A Relational Framework: An Introduction

In 1997, Emirbayer issued a “manifesto” calling for sociologists to study the social world as consisting of “processes...dynamic, unfolding relations” (Emirbayer, 1997, p. 281). A relational analysis across groups and spaces, taking into account the relationship *between* poor and wealthy, blacks and whites, can help explain the mechanisms of resource hoarding and appropriation that have driven our extreme and growing inequality. Several scholars have called for such a relational approach to inequality (Desmond, 2010; Khan, 2012; Lewis-McCoy, 2014). It is not coincidental that these scholars are all ethnographers, as this method is particularly appropriate to investigate the relationship between categories. Inherently relational, cities form a good scale on which to examine near-complete racial and economic systems—that is, to simultaneously investigate urban wealth *and* poverty, or whites *and* blacks. In so doing, I further advocate for a relational understanding of resource distribution. Investigating the social and symbolic levels of money distribution in the case of Benton Harbor sheds light on some of our most vexing contemporary debates about cities, governments, the obligations of business in a post-manufacturing context, individual responsibility, and social change. Grappling with distribution and inequality also raises questions of

political voice and representation, as well as social exclusion. Carrying out a fully relational study, however, requires revisiting our terms of analysis and theoretical frames. The very terms social scientists use to operationalize and measure inequality or a city's wellbeing constrain our comprehension, producing the illusion of independence and consistency. My theoretical framework engages both at the material level and the level of discourse and ideology—to identify and push past these limitations in terminology.

2.4.1 Structure and Culture

In working simultaneously at these two levels, I take seriously Sewell's integration of structure and culture. Where many scholars present these concepts as entirely separate, Sewell nests culture within his very conceptualization of structure, which he sees as constituted by "mutually sustaining cultural schemas and sets of resources that empower and constrain social action and tend to be reproduced by that action" (Sewell, 1992, p. 27). Culture is the medium through which the structure is lived and reproduced, "even when actors engaging in the relations are unaware of the patterns or do not desire their reproduction" (Sewell, 1992, p. 3). Culture is more than a reductionist or inevitable expression of material circumstances, but that does not mean it is now freed from material conditions.

Moreover, any definition of structure and culture should encompass the dialectical, constantly evolving relationship between the two. Sewell notes that structure is “a process, not...a steady state” (1992, 4). As Hall argues, drawing on Gramsci, our theoretical analysis needs to reflect real economic conditions for a given age (S. Hall, 1986). The material conditions of our society have substantially shifted over the past four decades. With the move to off-shore manufacturing and the growth of financial “products” and “services,” the domestic economy is much less tangible. Economists have called this latter process *financialization*, or “a pattern of accumulation in which profits accrue primarily through financial channels rather than through trade and commodity production” (Krippner, 2005, p. 174). Following Gramsci’s call to base theory on real conditions, we need new theories to explain what ideology and “superstructure” might fit this new mode of production. I also argue the contrary is true: looking at cultural phenomena and beliefs can help scholars infer the structural conditions that would produce such cultural explanations. In arguing for the reincorporation of culture into materialist or structuralist work, I want to be clear that this is not a return to “culture of poverty” arguments. Rather, I am proposing that dominant and elite cultural frameworks can show us much about today’s material conditions.

2.4.2 The Social Life of Economic Terms

Even Sewell's conception of resources is not traditionally materialist: he argues that culture has a crucial role in reproducing material reality because

the activation of material things as resources, the determination of their value and social power, is dependent on the cultural schemas that inform their social use" (12)

In other words, even our material objects have a socially-determined power. The value-laden meanings we attribute to economic phenomena form a primary site of redefinition for this investigation. Despite economists' tendency to essentialize "value," for instance, judgments of value are determined socially (Fourcade, 2011; Graeber, 2001, 2011; Polillo, 2011)—think of the price of gold or Bay Area housing. The price of a house, or land, or person, is not inherent to it. As Marx put it, "Capital is not a thing, but a social relation between persons which is mediated through things" (, quoted in Emirbayer, 1997; Marx, 2012 [1867], p. 932).

Moreover, the meaning of a payment is socially constructed. The same financial transaction could be construed as a gift, a bribe, or a tax. A whole moral universe surrounds money, where constructions of worth, deservingness, righteousness, corruption, and benevolence are bound up in these daily transactions. For instance, non-profits are generally assumed to act for the benefit of society, which is why they are given tax exemptions. Stockholders are presumed to have justly "earned" their

dividends, no matter what impact they have on society. Meanwhile, David Graeber points out,

there's no better way to justify relations founded on violence, to make such relations seem moral, than by reframing them in the language of debt – above all, because it immediately makes it seem that it's the victim who's doing something wrong (2011, p. 5).

Much academic scholarship employs these moral constructions as neutral concepts, as if academic treatments are outside the social world. But without careful attention to how we conceptualize phenomena like “philanthropy,” “charity,” “corruption,” “debt,” “profit,” “community development,” and “growth,” we predetermine our findings. These words are loaded not only with moralizing assumptions, but also with racial understandings about who gives charity, to whom, and why; who is innocent and who is guilty; who is corrupt and who is maximizing their potential; who is neutral and who is biased; which communities need development and growth; and why redistribution is not an alternative. In contemporary society, under the process of financialization I noted above, abstracted financial concepts from credit scores (Fourcade & Healy, 2013) to stock valuations to derivatives’ crystal-ball predictions (Martin, 2013), carry increasing material weight and consequences—but our complex algorithms are still premised on racial stereotypes and ideologies (for one possible mechanism, see Soss, Fording, & Schram, 2008’s “Racial Classification Model”). By the same measure, the value-laden concepts surrounding resource allocation and

wealth generation are also used, by academics, policymakers, businesspeople, politicians, and everyday people, in ways that have serious concrete consequences. These points are not limited to scholars of philanthropy, development or corruption: they are fundamental to sociology, which could be generalized as the study of who legitimately gets what.² In what follows, I show how power makes self-interested economic actions legitimate (again following Lukes, 1974), and how these concepts are fundamentally interwoven with racial understandings.

2.4.3 Morality as a Mechanism

If legitimacy and good intentions are part of the cultural fabric enfolding our economic concepts, morality lies at the heart of this discussion. Operating as part of Lukes' "third dimension of power" (1974), morality is a subtle mechanism for racialized power, both for building and maintaining social boundaries (Lamont, 2009) and to align ideas of economic value and personal value. A racialized moral framework conveys messages about who is *worthy* and whose lives are *worth* something, both literally and figuratively. Our attribution of values to human lives comes *after* they are sorted into our unequal distribution. As Lerner has shown (1980), confirmation bias leads those who believe in a "just world" to blame the worst-off for their own suffering. Eddie Glaude Jr. (2016) argues that our "values gap," or the differential value attributed to white and

² Thanks to Victor Ray for this phrase.

black lives, is not only the motivation for the Black Lives Matter movement but also the crucial element underlying continued racial inequality.

Morality is an inherently hierarchical concept and is closely tied with both economic and geographic mobility; moreover, it is an important tool of surveillance and social control. Contemporary media provides countless cases in which an individual deemed “deserving” through some accomplishment of intelligence, talent and/or virtue, is urged to “make it out” of the economic and social space that is seen as limiting them—while everyone else, it is presumed, deserves to stay in that space. I frequently encountered this geographic escapism in Benton Harbor, in which Napier Avenue in Benton Township formed a literal line black Benton Harbor residents wanted to cross. While Wilson bemoans the loss of these middle-class blacks as a formerly-steadying moral force in the lives of the “underclass” (Wilson, 1978), but in Benton Harbor (and, I suspect, elsewhere) they did not go as far away as Wilson assumed. Blacks and whites who “crossed” over the border still play an active role in monitoring, judging and shaping the lives of those left inside the wall. Moral judgments allow social control both up close, through local campaigns, boards, charities, social service providers, schools, housing, and individual interactions, and afar, from bureaucratic policy to academic judgment of what Wilson called “ghetto-related behavior” (1996) and assumptions

about what, and who, merits academic investigation (O'Connor, 2009; Small & Newman, 2001; Soss, Fording, & Schram, 2011).

The moralizing gaze is responsible for much of the “fishbowl effect” of poor blacks’ hypervisibility and invisibility I identified in the first chapter. Attributing moral values to some behavior and amorality to others frames our construction of social problems by identifying which lives and practices are subject to intense scrutiny, and whose lives are considered normal or private. Moralizing is a highly raced and classed process: Herbert Gans shows how material resources can mask wealthy people’s moral deviations or personal failures like unemployment, while poor people have no such protection, causing them to appear as “value threats” (84). Gans notes,

That some rich people actually live the lives of hedonistic leisure of which a jobless poor are wrongly accused is also thought irrelevant, even if their income derives directly or indirectly from past gains once thought ill-gotten – for example, war profiteering or slave ownership. (Gans, 1995, p. 84)

This contradiction is especially relevant in the context of Benton Harbor’s luxury golf development that serves as the focus of Chapter Four. Wealthy whites’ leisure activities and distaste for the mundane tasks of self-care are heralded as a major opportunity for poor black people to find work mowing their lawns, cleaning their houses and hotel rooms, and picking up their trash. Meanwhile, by occupying the role of philanthropists

and benefactors, local wealthy whites avoid discussing the origins of this wealth. (I will expand on this in my discussion of the “charity model” in Chapter Six.)

2.4.4 The Relational Approach to Inequality

As my discussion of hierarchies, boundaries, and relational constructions of morality has indicated, a major precondition for a truly relational analysis is to understand Shamus Khan’s emphasis that “poverty is not an aspect or property of poor people but a relationship that the poor are in with the rest of society” (Khan, 2012). (He adds that the same holds for elites, the subject of his book.) This intervention is necessary because poverty is generally studied in isolation. Paolo Freire labels this practice an “oppressive cultural action which is almost never perceived by the dedicated but naive professionals who are involved”: the tendency to produce a “focalized view of problems rather than on seeing them as dimensions of a totality” (Freire, 1970, p. 137). Similarly, in a reflection on the Moynihan Report’s impact, James Farmer, former director of CORE, expresses frustration with a societal preoccupation with black families: ““We are sick unto death of being analyzed, mesmerized, bought, sold, and slobbered over while the same evils that are the ingredients of our oppression go unattended”” (quoted in Steinberg, 2015). The insular focus on Benton Harbor by laypeople and journalists is of a piece with social science perspectives on poverty. In all the discussion of Benton Harbor’s problems, Benton Harbor’s existence as a poor black

city is itself “the problem” for most white observers, outside of any lay-sociological mention of unemployment or crime rates. As Lisa Sun-Hee Park pointed out to me, this harkens back to the once-common framing of “the Negro problem.” And just as black writers, starting with Du Bois (1994 [1903]), continually pressed back against the implicit logic of this question, so must scientists interrogate the ready-packaged problems that tend to predetermine the subject of our concern.

Farmer’s point is still relevant, given the contemporary proliferation of studies investigating “grit” and “resilience” among poor people of color as the solution to their own poverty, and parallel proliferation of non-profits, charter school models, and initiatives (like My Brother’s Keeper) similarly narrowly targeted on the attitudes and behaviors of the poor (Cox, 2015; R. J. Miller, Miller, Djoric, & Patton, 2015). Even social exclusion scholars, whose very terminology implies a relational framework, tend to focus on the excluded as individuals, rather than those doing the excluding (Burton & Welsh, 2014; Sidney, 2009). Despite the urgency of this task, even our foremost scholars of racial and economic inequality still tend to focus on poor urban neighborhoods to find internal explanations for their poverty (Massey & Denton, 1993; Wilson, 1987). The divergent tendency to study either poor neighborhoods or urban politics suggests wrongly that poor neighborhoods formed spontaneously rather than as a direct result of those politics. Park’s early model of urban “concentric assimilation” and Hawley’s

ecological succession, decades old, still infect scholarly language of urban inequality with naturalizing imagery. But as scholars have shown for Detroit (Sugrue, 1996), Flint (Highsmith, 2009), and Baltimore (Rothstein, 2015), among many others, ghettos have been continually reconstructed through municipal (and higher) policies. As such, we must understand what role they play for the actors continually building and demolishing these spaces, both symbolically and materially.

The interplay of culture and structure is crucial to this investigation. Addressing culture and poverty has been intensely controversial since Moynihan (1965), O. Lewis (1968) and Wilson (1978) argued that a pathological “culture of poverty” kept blacks poor. While sociologists have gingerly returned to the question of culture and poverty after decades of avoidance, the focus on poor people’s culture is still predominant. In a review, Small, Harding, and Lamont (2010) note how elite culture matters in the reproduction of poverty: “The public discourse on poverty, and the policies resulting from that discourse, are themselves cultural products, subject to the whims, predilections, prejudices, beliefs, attitudes, and orientations of policy elites” (Small et al., 2010, p. 12). But this point has not received the emphasis it deserves. Rather than simply reviving the Moynihan framework, as Small et al. have noted, a return to the role of culture in reproducing poverty can be reinvigorated by a pivot to focus on white and elite culture (“studying up,” in Nader, 1972’s formulation). In this respect, urban regime

analysis and growth machine theory are useful for calling attention to elite ideology in framing debates.

But certainly, beyond identifying the fact that two groups exist in relationship to one another, what does that relationship actually look like, and what does it do? Saskia Sassen's recent concept of "expulsions" (2014) is extremely helpful in this regard. Sassen's theory connects the abstract, highly complex and highly socially valued financial activities producing growth for some, with the "brutal," often violent phenomena of exclusion at the other end of the process. She identifies spatial exclusions like land loss, foreclosure, environmental destruction, but also exclusion from our ways of measuring wellbeing, whether through death, unemployment, or disability. Here Sassen is talking about the people who Commissioner Norton was concerned about in Chapter One, those who "dropped through the cracks." Through these "expulsions," which Sassen calls "predatory formations" (2014), the victims of these processes are written out of the rosy picture of universal growth. I draw on Sassen's framework as a model for connecting seemingly unrelated phenomena by tracking money flows and processes, and illuminating how much of the distance between complexity and brutality is artificially constructed. Putting the luxurious environment of Harbor Shores, St. Joseph and Lake Michigan into the same framework as Benton Harbor's pitted streets requires understanding how the two spaces were created together.

2.5 My Theoretical Framework

While I entered the field with some working concepts as per Burawoy, I was open to the limits of existing theory. In order to fully explain the dynamic I witnessed in Benton Harbor, I moved beyond existing theories of urban politics, which limit our understanding of the racialized and power-based relationship between groups. As a result, when I entered the field, I rebuilt my theoretical argument from the foundation of Benton Harbor's "objective relations" (Gramsci, cited in S. Hall, 1986, p. 13), rather than misusing theory that may no longer apply in this economic context.

Moreover, this allowed me to hear the theoretical analysis already present in Benton Harbor. In her study of black girls' citizenship in Detroit, Aimee Meredith Cox (2015) suggests scholars stop looking at black girls as "narrative puzzles to be solved" through existing theory (akin to the relentless framing of Benton Harbor as a "problem"). Cox suggests we instead "explore their [black girls'] potential to inform and transform theory" —engaging in a "conversation" versus a "one-sided reading" (Cox, 2015, p. 8). Cox reminds us that not only should standpoint theory inform our methodology and research framing, but it should also leave us open to the possibility that our respondents *themselves* can transform *academic* theory. By engaging in the conversation Cox calls for, and often by simply listening, I found that local black residents' perspectives provided components for an alternative theoretical framework.

My own theoretical contributions are indebted to their analysis, which foregrounded power dynamics in the interaction of racialized wealth and poverty and paid attention to the long-term flow of resources, looking at the difference between words and deeds. Their critical analysis was deeply relational, foregrounding the role of white corporate and political power in the city, and providing a trail of concepts I could use to map out an alternative framework. Using this relational research approach, I foreground the dynamic created by the interaction of two competing groups, which I see as crucial to the reproduction of inequality in the city.

In what follows, I outline the two primary elements of my framework, extending the insights of urban politics by incorporating a relational approach grounded in race theory. First, I illuminate the primarily white network of people (the *white urban regime*) profiting as Benton Harbor suffers. Next, I explain how this group operates a system (an *extraction machine*) geared to redirect the city's resources in their direction. The extraction machine explains the mysterious process by which the white urban regime is constantly trying and failing to solve the same problem, while reinforcing the story that blacks in Benton Harbor are themselves to blame for the failure. Here, I lay out general principles for each concept and provide a broad profile to show their joint operation in Benton Harbor. I return to each concept in my discussion chapter to detail these processes more fully.

2.5.1 The White Urban Regime

In the first half of my theoretical framework, I extend the tools of urban regime analysis and black urban regime theory to illustrate the "underground" operation of race and privilege in this city.³ Bringing white politics under the same microscope Reed lends the black regime, I propose that a white urban regime governs Benton Harbor.

Whiteness studies scholars have provided several key insights for the operation of this group. For instance, the regime depends on overlapping white social and professional networks (Royster, 2003), which I call a "racialized network," to hoard resources. Within this network, a "white habitus" (Bonilla-Silva, Goar, & Embrick, 2006; Burke, 2011) produces shared meaning and signal unconscious rules for spatial inclusion and exclusion (Low, 2009). Despite using diversity ideology (Mayorga-Gallo, 2014) and a maintaining a non-racist orientation, the group reproduces white advantage and black disadvantage. While urban regime and community power scholars have outlined principles of informal collaboration and shared understanding essential to the formation of an elite "coalition," I show how these concepts are themselves racialized attributes of

³ I distinguish this discussion of Benton Harbor's urban politics from the designation of Benton Harbor as "urban." Indeed, this small city of 10,000, even including the larger metro area, hardly qualifies as "urban". Despite this, Benton Harbor is frequently described locally and regionally (including in official documents) as an "urban" setting, no doubt following the common practice of using "urban" as a euphemism for majority-black.

white elites, depending on white-dominated resources from wealth to institutional and governmental power.

I define this white urban regime with the following four principles:

1. The white urban regime is a racialized network of business people, landowners, developers, nonprofit heads, and philanthropists who interact directly with political entities, agencies and people at multiple levels without needing formal elected positions within the black-led city. White social and political networks give white urban regime members the social and material capital to achieve their goals through informal agreement and shared values.
2. Black elites keep favor as long as they justify the white urban regime with cultural, economic and political arguments. However, black elites lack full access to those white political and economic networks.
3. White urban regime members position themselves as outsiders to the city (and few live there) but they hold the majority of economic resources in the area, and they also control a large portion of the grant money administered on the city's behalf.
4. The white urban regime justifies its control by continually reframing the story both through media and internal storytelling. White urban regime members

argue their local economic interests are in the interests of all. Similarly, they threaten to exit if local terms are not favorable for them.

The existence of a political elite deciding opportunities for all has long been catalogued by community power structure theorists (Hunter, 1963 [1953]; C. W. Mills, 1956). But Benton Harbor's case is exceptional because its political elite is almost entirely unelected at the local level and bypasses most of Benton Harbor's elected city government altogether. Logan and Molotch did address this: "the absence of corporate officials in local politics...can instead be evidence that the local agenda is so pervasively shaped by their interests that they have no need to participate" (Logan & Molotch, 2002 [1976], p. 209). Even so, my case represents an unusual situation in which the white urban regime's actions are frequently actively antagonistic to the city's elected government. If urban regime analysis emphasizes the limits of electoral democracy, I illustrate a case in which governance has moved entirely outside the realm of formal democracy.

The white urban regime's rhetoric (which holds sway locally) highlights intermunicipal and interracial cooperation and celebrates symbolic racial diversity. They espouse seemingly uncontroversial values like striving for economic development and ending inequality by spreading prosperity. However, the white urban regime's demand for concessions and tax credits, its opposition to local taxes, and its development plans,

serve to benefit business at the expense of the government and citizens of Benton Harbor. They accomplish their goals through their racialized networks, by linking private, public and non-profit spheres, and rhetorically, by eliding economic development, philanthropy and community development to promote the concept that business, city and resident interests are identical.

White urban regime members think of themselves as outside formal politics, but they are extremely involved in shaping Benton Harbor's economic and political future, from their personal networks of businesspeople and politicians, to the boards and organizations they volunteer time with, the grants they solicit, the plans and developments they draw up, and their fundraising and (usually indirect) campaigning. While Benton Harbor's government is beset by endless crises, the white urban regime is able to carry on business without disruption. In fact, the white urban regime's actions contribute to Benton Harbor's instability.

While many Benton Harbor residents speak of Whirlpool, the city's primary corporation, as the embodiment of all white interest in the city, I argue the white urban regime is not coeval with Whirlpool, although that entity certainly holds the most sway in Benton Harbor. Whirlpool funds a good proportion of the white urban regime's work, and has spearheaded some of its major effort and organizations, as one would expect from a company town (Bates, 2012; Crawford, 1996; J. D. Hall et al., 2000). But it is

somewhat difficult to assess the intentionality of a corporation or get an honest, public assessment from a corporation's representatives. As someone interested in the contradictions in ground-level narratives of resource distribution and actual money flows, what attracted my attention was the cohort of white urban regime members who work in tandem with Whirlpool in various capacities: their personal networks and resources, and their explanations for the city's trouble. Whirlpool's relationship with Benton Harbor may be somewhat unusual in the US, but nonprofit workers, board members, and business owners are not.

In Benton Harbor, my two exemplar cases, the construction of a luxury golf course development and the city's stint under emergency management, illuminate the activities of this group accustomed to working outside the spotlight. Benton Harbor's white urban regime is one example of my argument that *all* urban regimes should be studied as racial regimes (Seamster, 2015). For that reason, more comparative research is needed before determining how these principles I outlined above may work in other local constellations.

2.5.2 The City as an Extraction Machine

Where is that money going? I just don't see how some stuff that's going on around here is going to benefit the city and put money into it...Some of these businesses are getting off like a fat rat. (Laughs) They are! They're catching a big break! (Keeps laughing) That's why they're able to build things like that! (Sherry)

Describing who the white urban regime *is* is insufficient without explaining what it *does*. In the remainder of this chapter, I illustrate the white urban regime's work in Benton Harbor and its impact in the city. Here I return to Logan and Molotch's notion of the city as a "growth machine" (2002 [1976]) in which business and landowning interests can manipulate situations to their own benefit, pursuing a singular goal of growth for the city. My dissertation focuses on the same coalitions and shaping arrangements illustrated so well in both growth machine theory and urban regime analysis. But although growth machine theory explicitly focuses on the landed elite's "power over," rather than Stone's "power to" (1993), it does not address key facets of what "power over" actually looks like—power over whom? Power maintained with what means? Working solely within the existing framework of urban politics limits the available conceptual language to explain a system I see as entirely relational.

For this reason, I extend growth machine theory to propose that the white urban regime is operating an *extraction machine* in Benton Harbor. By using the term extraction, I place the economic activities of the elite in the same context as the poor, to show how wealth and poverty are created together. I also draw on the notion of "serial resource extraction" (Saegert, Fields, & Libman, 2011), formulated to describe the racialized subprime mortgage crisis, but applicable to a much broader range of practices. My theoretical intervention is to challenge the metaphor implicit in the language of

“growth”, which erroneously suggests, as McFarlane has pointed out (2013), that development produces “extra” wealth. In fact, the idea of growth, with its suggestion of ecology and biological functions, reproduces the fallacy we are warned against by our parents: money doesn't grow on trees. It is exchanged between individuals and social entities—and, often, it is *taken*.

In my description of the extraction machine, I am guided by Harvey's concept of “accumulation by dispossession,” designed to replace Marx's “primitive accumulation”—which suggested that the violent taking of resources occurred only prior to the capitalist era (D. Harvey, 2004), as well as the related concept of development producing underdevelopment (Manning, 1999; Rodney, 1972). But, as Harvey notes, capitalism is still fueled by these predatory forms of taking, from privatization, to land and asset appropriation and devaluing, to indebtedness. It makes sense to think of this ongoing extraction as a near-colonial relationship, with contemporary forms of extraction bearing resemblance to post-colonial foreign development.

The following four general principles describing an extraction machine form an initial sketch of its shape and operation. (I have consciously formulated this theory in broad terms to be transferable to other domains, although I do not explicitly address these other applications until Chapter Six.)

1. The extraction machine, in its present iteration, draws on the logic of *creative destruction*: a community's loss (expressed through property devaluation, blight, unemployment, or other measures of misery) can fuel another party's growth, and may even be necessary for it.
2. While the extraction machine employs growth narratives as justification, universal growth is uncommon. Growth is not generated from thin air, but made through *taking* (made visible in a relational framework). The point is not necessarily universal growth, after all. Moreover, even the *process* of development enriches elites.
3. Land is just one of many public assets and revenues that can be extracted and hoarded through this process.
4. The unequal outcomes generated from extraction ("underdevelopment") paradoxically serve to justify future extraction.

In addition to these four characteristics, I also postulate three general prerequisites to create an extraction machine:

- a) Extreme power inequality, often racialized, in the central group dynamic (in my case, but not always, between a governing entity and a business coalition).

Geographic, political, and/or social isolation of the disadvantaged group helps

the advantaged group hold this power. Racialized networks reproduce much of this inequality.

- b) Public resources available to be appropriated by the private/nonprofit sectors
- c) Misdirection as to the source of inequality, the value of assets, framing of the problem, and the meaning of change. The entity in power controls the historical and present narrative and agenda, positioning itself as a benefactor rather than as a parasite.

Throughout my two exemplar cases, urban development and emergency management, I will show how these three factors (racialized social exclusion, the appropriation of public resources, and narrative misdirection) facilitate the work of the extraction machine.

2.6 The White Urban Regime's Extraction Machine in Benton Harbor

In what follows, I lay out the basis for Benton Harbor's extraction machine and explain how it is carried out by the white urban regime. The white urban regime has enacted serial enclosure and extraction in Benton Harbor for decades, following three broad phases.⁴ The first era (broadly speaking, the 1920s-1950s) could be characterized

⁴ In Appendix A, I have provided a timeline of relevant local history, foregrounding the economic activity of the white urban regime. This timeline is instructive read as a single document, to show both continuity and change in the city.

as extraction of black labor in manufacturing and agriculture. Benton Harbor was then a thriving city, with port access to Midwest rivers, Chicago, and other Great Lakes cities facilitating its role as a fruit grower and transporter, as well as a summer tourist destination. It followed the industrialization path of many Midwest cities in the 20th century (most notably as the birthplace of Whirlpool, the appliance manufacturer), which brought a new wave of Great Migration-era black migrants (Dumke, 2008). Its active downtown and agricultural/industrial wealth made Benton Harbor more impressive than its “twin city” across the Paw Paw River, St. Joseph. However, when urban renewal cleared out “The Flats” and desegregated Benton Harbor, whites moved across the river to St. Joseph. During this second era I characterize as one of “containment” (1960s-1980s), local whites were pulling other institutions out of Benton Harbor, from the majority of white churches, to the community college, to Mercy Hospital.

As the city continued to be hollowed out, Benton Harbor became Michigan’s first “Enterprise Zone” in 1986 in an attempt to bring in new industry (Mossberger, 2000), but by 1989 it was named the worst place to live in the country by *Money* magazine. Its plight was common in the Rust Belt (Bluestone, 1982; High, 2003; Sassen, 1990), as municipalities lost their tax base (Cowie & Heathcott, 2003) and job centers, were depopulated, and left with polluted industrial footprints, or “brownfields” (DeSousa,

2008; Hollander, Kirkwood, & Gold, 2010). All these extractions not only solidified the feeling of Benton Harbor's abandonment but reinforced the racial guidelines for spatial exclusion laid out by white flight and a punitive racial regime.

The Rust Belt's economic plight after manufacturing flight is a familiar story, but the local landscape is made harder to interpret by Whirlpool's new \$70 million corporate facility downtown, as well as the world-class golf course newly constructed on sand dunes and former industrial sites, both substantially subsidized by public money. Although Whirlpool has not manufactured any appliances in the city since 2010, it still maintains Benton Harbor as a post-industrial company town. Whereas Whirlpool once employed black workers in making its appliances, the corporation now primarily recruits the global elite (Bauman, 1998) as white-collar workers, with few local black employees. Whirlpool is involved in nearly every local sector, funding non-profits in economic and community development, and donating to select causes like Habitat for Humanity and the Boys and Girls Club.

Thus begins our exploration of poverty and wealth, money flows and power in Benton Harbor. The primary facts I lay out above are visible to everyone, but background information and *explanations* vary widely. Surface-level explanations for white elite involvement in Benton Harbor imply the resources flow from white-led business entities to poor black residents, with the goal of addressing the city's poverty

and unemployment. Public concern from political and business elites focuses on Benton Harbor residents' alleged "dependency" on social benefits and charity, which is ostensibly at the root of the city's failure to thrive. This internally-consistent explanation is powerful, matching national schemas about race, class and opportunity. Even in a setting with such extreme inequality, daily life goes on because people within that setting accept some version of the above story. How can I argue extraction is still taking place despite the white urban regime's philanthropic orientation, or even as a result of it?

To push beyond these common-sense accounts, I lead the reader into an "upside down world" (Galeano, 2001), identifying the analytical frame behind the dominant explanation of Benton Harbor's problems. The frame I outlined above is based on a highly racialized understanding of deservingness, independence and dependence, wealth and poverty. The racial hierarchy in our society orders groups of people spatially, economically and politically in a "racialized social system" (Bonilla-Silva 1997). This system provides heuristics and frames to govern the division of resources, and to explain the morality of this division. These racial beliefs are essential to justifying the extraction machine. In Martinot's concept of the "machinery of whiteness," he emphasizes how the machine requires "people who can invert justice, fairness, democratic procedure, and the ideals of human sanctity, which they rationalize on the

basis of a concept of race" (6). Martinot explains this not as conscious misdirection but genuine belief:

we have to be clear that the people who function in that machine, who speak and act as parts of its destructive operations, think they are doing the right thing. (Martinot, 2010, p. 6)

Although it requires resources and some degree of coercion, a system can only function thanks to this shared analysis of how the world works. Boulding, who writes about the "three faces of power" (coercion, production and integration), points out that "Without legitimacy, both threat and riches are 'naked.'" (Boulding, 1989, p. 10). This system is legitimated through racialized assumptions about deservingness, politics, and inequality in society.

Here and in the remainder of my dissertation, I move between power analysis, focusing on wealth as a primary axis, and race theory, showing how power operates through a racial hierarchy. Race and capital were created together, and in some cases, these categories overlap too much to treat each independently. As Fanon writes in *The Wretched of the Earth*,

In the colonies the economic substructure is also a superstructure. The cause is the consequence; you are rich because you are white, you are white because you are rich. (Fanon, p. 40)

This overlap in categories explains my insistence on the white urban regime as a white entity, not merely a wealthy one. A quick thought experiment helps show how the

processes I identify above are thoroughly raced. If Benton Harbor's situation could be explained entirely by class relations, we would be able to imagine a flipped version of my case study: namely, a poor white-majority city administered by wealthy blacks who determine the city's chances and serve their own interests by means of their superior access to upper-level government, corporate power, and resource hoarding. In our society, it is nearly impossible to conceive of such a city, much less identify a real city operating in this context.

2.7 Conclusion

In the above chapter, I have laid out the three intellectual traditions driving my own theoretical argument: urban politics; race theory; and a relational approach to inequality and poverty. I showed how the limits of urban politics require significant reframing to accurately explain contemporary cities. The remainder of the chapter detailed that contribution. First, I showed how whites and whiteness play an important but frequently unidentified role in cities, and argued that in Benton Harbor this role is that of a "white urban regime." To explain the work and impact of this group, I developed the concept of the "extraction machine," which extends and significantly modernizes growth machine theory to reflect contemporary realities. The concept of the extraction machine offers an alternative explanatory framework to understand modern inequality in cities, in spite of (and in fact because of) attempts at redistribution,

development, renewal or revitalization. It represents a crucial and timely intervention into current debates within sociology, but also directly addresses the realm of urban policy.

In the two substantive chapters describing contemporary urban development and politics in the city (Chapters Four and Five), I foreground my analysis of the white urban regime and the extraction machine. I illustrate how the white urban regime has carried out an extractive process through the very interventions intended to help this distressed city: first, through the execution of a luxury golf course development; and second, during Benton Harbor's period of emergency management, or state receivership. Throughout these two chapters, I focus on the dimensions that best illustrate how the white urban regime operates the extraction machine, believing itself perfectly justified. In each chapter, one of the two constructs is foregrounded: in Chapter Four, the extraction machine gets more attention, while in Chapter Five the white urban regime has a starring role. In my discussion chapter (Chapter Six), I return to my theoretical concepts, expanding the lens to show the extraction machine's logic and the white urban regime's behavior in much greater detail. This chapter has only provided a skeletal framework for these concepts, where my discussion offers both the theoretical meat on the framework and the empirical examples bringing it to life.

Before this analysis, however, I turn to give context to the methodological insights shaping my findings. The following chapter illustrates how my research in the field, trying to get to the bottom of what ailed Benton Harbor, itself became data. My difficulty navigating between two communication networks; my encountering others' active shaping of my perspective; my attempts to obtain hard facts in a land of uncertainty and rumor, and my negotiation of my expected role as the researcher in this closed system each helped me better understand the complex arrangements that kept this extraction machine running.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Case Study: *Methods Triangulation*

My theoretical hypotheses are based on extensive ethnographic research, employing case study methodology to draw information from multiple data sources (Creswell, 2007).

3.1.1 Archival Research

The first component data source consisted of four years of archival research into local, state and national accounts of Benton Harbor's plight, local politics and current events, and financial status. I would call my approach omnivorous, and the following is likely only a partial account of all the sources I drew on in these four years. To understand the state political context and Benton Harbor's fiscal state, I examined data from state surveys conducted by the Ford School at the University of Michigan; local voting results; and census statistics. I read audits of Benton Harbor's finances for the past decade and other financial data from the state Treasury. To understand more about emergency management, I archived 197 orders from both emergency managers off the city's website (they have since been removed). I read legal documents from the lawsuits challenging Public Acts 4 and 436 (the two most recent iterations of the Emergency Manager law). I collected data on the implementation and contestation of emergency management statewide, tracking each city's progress through state control over the past

four years (as well as previous iterations of emergency management, if any). As Michigan's largest city and largest black-majority city, Detroit proved an essential site for comparison, so I read several historical case studies on race, politics and development in Detroit, in addition to tracking major contemporary economic and political events.

To better understand land and development in the city in the context of the state, I collected records of relevant tax credits, project grants, and environmental surveys from state agencies including the Michigan Strategic Fund (MSF), Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC), Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ), Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT), the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), and the Treasury Office; and federal agencies, including the National Park Service (NPS), the department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), which houses Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding. I tracked the implementation of several iterations of economic development incentives, from Enterprise Zones to Empowerment Zones to "Cool Cities," Renaissance Zones and brownfield designations.

To capture Benton Harbor and Berrien County's larger financial context, I obtained data from public sources as well as state research organizations including the Citizens Research Council, Michigan Policy Network, the Michigan Municipal League,

and Munetrix (which is contracted to tabulate state financial health information), and advocacy positions from the Mackinac Center, a conservative policy think tank. I tracked the impact of several major changes in revenue collection structures, from Michigan's 1973 Headlee Amendment limiting the amount of local taxes a community could impose, to recent cuts in state revenue sharing, and 2014's abolition of the "personal property tax" imposed on businesses. I examined data from Propublica tracking the local distribution of federal stimulus money as well as countywide farming subsidies. Because it is intimately linked to fiscal health, local well-being, and local property tax matters, I looked at school funding data across Benton Harbor and nearby communities, as well as some of the historical context on Michigan's school funding structure.

Locally, I looked at city and regional strategic plans authored by both public and private entities, both present-day and stretching back at least as far as 1990. Representatives at the county office were very helpful in providing work plans and other documents related to local development, and they gave me access to the local GIS database. I examined local deed records and GIS data to verify research participants' claims and better understand how property had changed hands among various stakeholders – this research was also how I came to understand some key components of the golf course project. I used a property tax liability calculation tool to estimate local corporate tax savings. Through a FOIA request to HUD, I got documentation of business

loans Benton Harbor made in the 2000s through HUD's Section 108 program. I analyzed legal documents from several lawsuits around the use of public park property in Benton Harbor. I also read local surveys conducted by Cornerstone Alliance.

I looked at thousands of media items (across print, radio and television), including local outlets Herald-Palladium, ABC57, WSJM, The Benton-Michiana Spirit, and the Detroit Free Press, and state outlets MLive and Eclectablog, as well as topical magazines (i.e., golf and travel magazines) and regional coverage in places like Chicago, Illinois and South Bend, Indiana. I focused primarily on news articles within the past ten years but extended further back as necessary. To capture some sense of public opinion, I also read letters to the editor and online comments. I followed blogs and public Facebook accounts by local key players and informal organizations on both "sides" of the conflict. I examined local tourism brochures as well as local website content for most of the primary organizations to understand how projects were represented locally and to a broader audience. I also used these websites to collect data on funders, board members, and employees and map the network of overlapping funds and employees in Benton Harbor's development-oriented organizations and charitable foundations. I gathered meeting minutes from various organizations to expand my sense of local agendasetting beyond the meetings I could attend.

Finally, I gained access to several extensive amateur archives that proved essential to my understanding of the city. One person shared his unpublished 100-page manuscript on Edward Pinkney, and several others shared their own collection of meeting minutes, legal cases or agreements. A Jean Klock Park activist has posted an online collection of legal and environmental documents, letters and agreements related to Harbor Shores that included several key documents I could find nowhere else. One person allowed me access to a 3' x 3' craft-paper scrapbook he had acquired from its maker. The book documented almost 40 years of local politics and development in news clippings, carefully taped into a non-linear collage of projects, initiatives, incentives, alliances, and failures. I also obtained the carefully collected archive of Harold Atwood, a local amateur historian. After Atwood died, a neighbor found this work and offered it to a local historical museum. The archive documented local political and economic history from the 1970s up to the 2000s and ranged from news articles each impeccably stamped with the date (Atwood was a librarian by profession), to meeting minutes and political campaign material.

3.1.2 Interviews

The second component of my ethnographic case study consisted of formal, semi-structured interviews with 44 key figures and observers in Benton Harbor, several of whom I interviewed multiple times. I spoke with local politicians and board members,

ministers, lawyers, business-people, nonprofit workers, activists, and other residents. I spoke less formally with dozens of other locals, many of whom suggested connections or generously provided their thoughts. I also spoke with over a dozen employees of state and federal agencies and data analysts to supplement my analysis or get additional information. My interviews ranged from half an hour to five and a half hours, with most lasting between one to two hours. I conducted interviews at the public library, in coffee shops, respondents' homes or offices, City Hall, and local educational institutions.

While I do not claim to have full interview coverage of any one constituency, my extended observations of many key players at multiple meetings, combined with media interviews and other news coverage of their statements and actions, gave me a sense of their public positions and supplemented my interviews well. Given the prominent role of rumor and storytelling in the city, respondents and observers also told many stories about one another, helping build up my own impressions with an understanding of how people were seen by various groups.

3.1.3 Ethnographic Observation

The bulk of my participant observation consisted of attendance at over 20 local meetings, primarily but not exclusively at Benton Harbor's City Hall. In addition to city commission meetings and smaller committee meetings, I also attended meetings of the

county commission, the County Land Bank,¹ the newly-formed inter-municipality "best practices" committee, the library, a community garden initiative, the nonprofit Parks Conservancy, the Downtown Development Authority, and a local presentation by the Secretary of State's office. I attended church and community events as well as a court hearing (and, unexpectedly, a radio show broadcast). I also spent unstructured time making observations in several parks, the golf course, farmer's markets, Benton Harbor's Art District, and the public library, as well as public areas in nearby St. Joseph and Benton Township. I also made it to one of the region's Blossomtime Festival Parades.

I also collected observations on my experience tracking down archival data, as this proved to be an important element of my substantive findings (see the section on race and access below).

I was simultaneously using amateur archives of documents and contemporary news articles; both in-person observations and analysis of state policy. I followed multiple strands of development incentives and kept abreast of state politics and financial trends generally.

¹ A land bank is a quasi-governmental entity that can hold parcels of underused property in trust for future development. Land banks give local actors more control over the sale amount and ability to choose potential buyers (as compared to a tax auction, in which parcels must be sold as soon as there is any interested buyer willing to pay the taxes owed). Land banks can also repackage parcels into larger units to sell to developers.

In addition to my research on politics and development, I investigated parallel trends in the domains of education and housing so I could have a firm basis for the proposals I advance here. My willingness to work across domains, time periods and sources allowed me to see themes and linkages, as well as important fractures and inconsistencies. Working through the data without necessarily imposing linearity on it also allowed me, somewhat paradoxically, to engage with time as a key variable in the processes I was witnessing. Time was essential to forgetting and repetition; to change and stagnation; to the evolution of an official story, to appreciation of value or the growth of blight.

3.2 My Role in the Field

Not only is my theoretical model relational, but my study itself is relational, moving back and forth between camps of people; between legal/policy/promotional documents and on-the-ground statements and observations; between what is said in meetings and in one-on-one settings. (Commissioner Norton told me one evening, “That’s going to be your job, to connect the dots.”)

My field site extended tendrils outward—what Duneier called an “extended place method” (1999, p. 344)—to encompass the state agencies in charge of making decisions about Benton Harbor. From these conversations, I realized that some

important technical details were unclear because, even among experts, nobody seemed to have a universal view of what was occurring.

As my primary fieldwork progressed and I continued attending nearly all the local public meetings, I became part of the landscape I was studying. In many ways, my own role as a newcomer to the scene became data. In daily interactions and arranging travel, I was frequently presumed to be a Whirlpool employee (almost as a matter of deference). At Benton Harbor City Hall, where attendees and officials were used to white members of the media documenting their hearings, my presence was rarely questioned (possibly because the local racial etiquette prevented such questioning). Several black citizens approached me at City Hall as a presumed media member, asking to publicize their need for redress with the city. But as I got to know several officials, I saw at least a few were observing my observations. Following one meeting, for instance, Commissioner Norton praised me for writing at “all the right times,” seeming to suggest I was successfully tracking some of the layers of meaning in that evening’s discussion. Occasionally, navigating the complex politics of alliances and antipathies in the meeting chambers became nerve-wracking: one evening, one person enthusiastically greeted me with a hug, as behind her, another attendee caught my eye and grimaced to indicate her distrust of the woman hugging me.

Ironically, I was more salient at majority-white meetings in the county or at a local development non-profit, where I was frequently approached by friendly people asking what had brought me there, marked as an outsider in this small town. (Again, the racial etiquette probably governed whites' comfort in questioning me.) In these environs, mentioning my elite university's name brought mock gasps and exaggerated displays of recognizing my "status." Many people asked if I had family in Michigan, assuming my interest in Benton Harbor had to be personal somehow. One interviewee commented, "I'm just absolutely fascinated because how Benton Harbor ends up on the radar of a Duke Ph.D student is beyond my comprehension." In these interactions, the reaction to hearing I was studying politics and economics in the city was often a version of "good luck..." as if I would need it. One white man told another man about me: "she just looked up like, 'dysfunctional cities with interesting things going on' and found this one, isn't that right?" At another meeting, an attendee asked if I was studying local politics "in the context of—Barnum and Bailey?" Most communicated the apparent futility of trying to understand the city.

From my interviews and observations, I realized that, for that three-month period, I was possibly one of the few people with a relatively complete cross-section of what was happening. There was little overlap between meetings of the white urban regime (primarily held in conference rooms at a development non-profit) and at City

Hall. This was occasionally frustrating, as I would hear an account of a meeting repeated back to me as gossip by a non-attendee, in an interview or at another meeting, and I would have a very different interpretation of that event. I saw firsthand the impact of the two parallel networks of information, and how it created misunderstanding. As an official observer, I became a “keeper” of the stories told by both sides, a point person in the contradicting narratives and contentious non-relationships. By the end, I felt a bit like a marriage counselor working with two parties in a severely dysfunctional relationship.

I saw first-hand how, despite the sharply divided opinion, life in a small town meant participating in a closed network. One white respondent relayed a comment from a friend, that “in a big city, the poverty community is like an eddy in a river, but in a community like Benton Harbor, it's like a stagnant pond.” The metaphor of the stagnant pond proved useful to me, but in a larger sense than my respondent’s use of the term. While she was focused on the circumscribed perspectives and influences available for poor black Benton Harbor residents inside this “walled city,” I used it to refer to the closed internal logic of this small town, as well. Inside the stagnant pond, certain moral narratives were predominant, even among some of my most progressive interlocutors. They spoke of personal responsibility, the need for personal change, and the apathetic, self-defeating and lazy attitudes of Benton Harbor residents who chose dependency

rather than initiative. As Linda Burton noted, this deployment of morality as a tool of social control is a common feature of Michigan's small cities and a major distinction from places like Detroit. Moralizing discourse was the primary form of capital black elites could offer as currency to the white urban regime. It was their ticket to attend meetings and other events, but it was also an understanding shared in gatherings of black elites, as the logic explained their own success and others' failure. In a local NAACP meeting, I heard the black school superintendent get enthusiastic responses from blaming local schools' failures on "babies having babies" and the "self-hate" he dramatically admitted to seeing in the community. Moralizing about black Benton Harbor residents was also a major form of communication amongst white urban regime members, as I will show in my data from meetings and interviews. The stagnant moral rhetoric is a key theme in my dissertation. As I have noted in the previous chapter, morality is a subtle mechanism for racialized power, for aligning ideas of economic value and personal value, and for maintaining social control over the most marginalized.

To convey the true internal power of this logic, I have to use myself as a case and admit to a brief infection of my thoughts with some of these perspectives. I was preoccupied, for a time, with the need to "make change" or help in some way during my field work (from an understandable frustration and despair at the status quo). But that

mindset led me to do something that certainly was not helpful. I frequently sat with the children who played on our unit's doorstep or borrowed our son's balls, and on a few occasions I would suggest they pick up their food wrappers as we were talking on the stoop. Of course, this was not what they needed, and it was not going to help. It represented a negative focus on harmless behavior rather than a positive focus on their generous practice of sharing whatever snacks they had amongst all the children.

Focusing on the littering also ignored the daily messages the children received from property management and others that their spaces did not matter. The profane graffiti on their play structure was never cleaned off. The basketball hoop had been removed, supposedly to prevent "outsiders" from playing, leaving a fenced empty concrete pad to play in. Kids recognized undercover cops on stakeouts in the parking lot better than adults. The 10-foot-high fence made their home feel like a jail. But this experience, from my own behavior, helped me understand just how deep the local ideology was.

Some of the local paranoia about social control and surveillance also rubbed off. I was constantly worried about leaving my doubly-encrypted computer anywhere, so I brought it almost everywhere I went. While in retrospect this seemed unnecessary, it was instructive to understand how it felt to live inside the "walled city," where dynamics of power and inequality seemed much more exposed and blatant, and where it was credible that an unnamed "they" would want my data.

I want to address one more dimension of living in this “enclosed environment:” the huge toll it takes on physical well-being. During my fieldwork, a 24-year-old city commissioner announced his retirement for health reasons: he’d developed a tremor since starting his commission position. I watched another commissioner get elected and sworn in, a strikingly beautiful mother of three in her forties. Within only a few months of her election, she died suddenly of heart failure. A respondent, who herself was suffering from a chronic condition, told talked about the daily toll of living in the city:

I've watched so many people die from the stress of this. (crying) It's a lot. I've watched people who were so young and appear to be so healthy and they get a diagnosis of cancer (sobs) or something catastrophic and you just think, how could that be? (Voice breaks)

Halfway through my fieldwork that summer, I experienced a sudden onset of severe arm pain that prevented my typing or writing, and has persisted ever since. Pain and physical discomfort apparently represent a relatively common, if seldom remarked upon, component of fieldwork (Coffey, 1999). At the time, it seemed like one more major stressor of fieldwork compounded on the needs of my two-year old child for whom we had no formal childcare, our substandard underground apartment in a barbed-wire fenced complex, and the illness and death of a family member. (Even one of our dogs died of cancer at the end of the summer, after a Michigan vet had to amputate her tail from a car-door accident.) Two years in, I have started wondering how much this condition was exacerbated and has endured due to the stress of this topic, by carrying

this weighty information around with me. Sometimes it seems like a physical manifestation of the many “emotions in fieldwork” (Copp & Kleinman, 1993) we experience in ethnography, which is, after all, an “embodied activity” (Coffey, 1999, p. 59). Although wishful thinking leads me to imagine the burden will lift with the completion of my dissertation, it serves as a reminder that these issues matter, and that Benton Harbor residents cannot escape them as easily as I can.

3.3 Race and Access

I had assumed that my appearance as a white female would engender some trust among members of the white urban regime. In fact, I was sometimes surprised by white urban regime members’ forthrightness in explaining their motives and perceptions of black city residents. As I sat in meetings, black city officials would sometimes speculate about what they thought was going on with an organization, grant, or project. On occasion, I had already heard from white people directly involved that the motives behind that project were indeed what the officials suspected, at least in part. But in fact, I ended up disturbed by the amount of access I was given as a white outsider, in the form of time, documents, and background information. I was aware that many black city residents, even officials, did not receive this access despite constant requests for more data, nor did they often receive the respect of a conversation. My position as a “marriage counselor” was more sinister in this regard. Of course, for every document I was handed

by white staff or white urban regime members, I had five more vague promises to dig up what I wanted, but the difference was still shocking. In a city where so much depended on accurate information, *proof*, having this privileged access simply as a white PhD student from Duke went far to explain how different groups had such different perspectives and explanations of events. Attention to these issues is part of the reflexivity required of ethnographers: some have noted their access acquired as whites with relatively elite status (e.g., Duneier, 1999), while others may have underestimated the value of their whiteness in collecting data.

One story serves to illustrate the extent of my access compared to black locals. I spoke on many occasions with a black resident, "Archie," who was reticent to conduct a formal interview. Although he wanted to tell me about a historical event in the city, he was worried about being caught talking about it. He repeatedly said, "I should be dead," since in his experience, the main participants now claimed not to remember the event. Archie asked me to find others who would confirm this event had even taken place, but he was still concerned for his safety after I found several news articles and interviewed a key player. Weeks later, when rooting through unmaintained boxes and piles of archived papers at a historical house-turned-museum, the curator and I found the set of files I mentioned above from Harold Atwood, the amateur historian. This archive included a whole fat file on the event in question. The curator, who had never

met me before, lent me the whole archive to make my copies and return to her at the end of my trip. I told Archie about this find, and offered to lend the file to him to make his own copy, so he could have his own proof. Archie was thrilled and spent several days at the library poring over the files and copying them. I was left thinking about how afraid Archie was not to have proof of his clear memories about what was, after all, a relatively innocuous and very public intervention into Benton Harbor. Meanwhile, that proof sat uncatalogued and unread in a spare room of a historic house belonging to a prominent white family (a site black residents rarely visited). I was not sure how Archie would have ever been made aware of those files, or whether he would have been invited to borrow the file if he had.

As far as my access in the black community, I was aided by some preliminary connections, but I found that any initial fears of social distance were unfounded. My interviewees were very forthcoming and friendly (some volunteered for an interview before my request), and helped me enormously with my research. Very few potential respondents gave me an outright refusal, and I found that those who did generally had good reason. I do not know if I was more successful than other white researchers might have been, but I did find that listening and pleasantness went a long way toward establishing credibility. My in-depth coverage of historical and present dynamics in politics and economics, and my focus on black and white key players in the city,

somewhat foreclosed the possibility of my achieving full coverage of all population subgroups in the area. I do not claim to have a full sample of young people, or the most marginalized in the city, nor do I claim to be representing their perspective – that would be another project.

My relatively short fieldwork timeframe would have prevented full “access” in any scenario; but full access not was an essential component of this project, as I was more interested in narratives and storylines than in emotions or micro-level meaningmaking. In any event, the process of “getting in” can be more about maintaining the (usually white) ethnographer’s self-image more than anything pertaining to the data. Feeling accepted is a coveted indicator of authenticity, but S. Harding (2012) points out that some researchers’ quest to “go native” does not allow them to shed their standpoint or avoid acknowledging it. Requiring validation, even love, from our respondents, can mean uncompensated emotional labor above and beyond the significant gift of time, energy and thought we already ask of participants.

3.4 Connecting Accounts

I found that both sides only had part of the story, conditional on their networks. The environment was one of rumor, innuendo, and differentially race- and class-based access to information. Without clear documentation of the "real story," rumor takes on extra meaning, and the willful ignorance of facts carries heavy ramifications. The gaps in

understanding and communication, the difficulty in acquiring hard information, complicated my attempts to understand “the problem” of Benton Harbor but enlightened me about the problem itself. I was experiencing, through my research, the daily struggle to find out what is really going on in the city. But one side, dominated by whites, *sounded* very reasonable, neutral, and balanced, and had the weight of the media and the state's point of view behind it. Another side sometimes sounded so extreme that most media did not take it seriously. It seemed crucial to understand the falsely “balanced” perspective of those who ultimately supported emergency management and the supposedly hysterical claims of those opposing it. Both of these narratives drove action, and therefore shaped social reality whether or not they were fully true. Here I follow the lead of Zandria Z. Robinson (2014) in reporting rumors and stories as meaningful social metaphors, regardless of their factual truth.

Moreover, everyone seemed to have a “quintessential story” on Benton Harbor they shared with friends and outsiders, one that captured the essence of the city’s conundrum. These stories were traded within a group as currency, as origin stories that gave meaning to the present and legitimated a course of action, whether or not they were founded in truth. They resembled the giving and receiving of “accounts” used to justify a position and shore up relations within a group (Scott & Lyman, 1968). In evaluating these accounts, I did not ascribe equal truth value to each statement. By

triangulating between sources and methods, I was able, to some degree, to push through the veil of myth. Some stories had acquired a glossy veneer of non-specificity: paradoxically, stories I heard most frequently tended to sound less reliable.

Not only were they forthcoming with their own stories, most people I encountered listed other people I should speak to. These lists' omissions were as interesting as their inclusions. One elegant elderly woman, a member of Benton Harbor's elite black families, introduced her list with a threat: "You need to know who to talk to—and who *not* to talk to." I kept the caveat in mind (Stack, 1974) that early entrances into a community often provide the "official" narratives and structure ethnographers' future experiences, as they are directed to meet with the most respectable, authoritative and vocal residents. Becker has written about the "hierarchy of credibility," where people with high status are supposed to be able to give the broadest, most complete view of the situation (1967). But in this case, I wanted to hear that official narrative as a likely influence on others in the community. I saw how newcomers to Benton Harbor like me were often "steered" to a certain group of people (usually respected church leaders or long-term board members) with a particular set of perspectives on Benton Harbor's problems. These respected elders, expressed (to varying degrees) the sentiment that Benton Harbor residents were the source of their own problems.

But I was neither the first nor last person to be given this talking points tour, as I learned by interviewing other relative newcomers and by hearing ideas expressed in meetings that were recognizable from my own interviews. Close to the end of my fieldwork, I interviewed a white man, Dennis, who had been working in Benton Harbor's nonprofit system for only a few months, and he told me of being directed to some of these same "community elders". Later, when he asked me what he should know about the area, I made a general comment about the researcher's tendency to be steered to a particular narrative, and suggested he speak to as many people as possible to avoid this. Dennis told me he had already experienced the steering I was warning about, and told me a story about his first time attending a local non-profit meeting dominated by white outsiders. At the meeting, Dennis said, while a black city commissioner was talking, a white woman next to him wrote on a piece of paper for his benefit, "watch out for her." When he asked what the note had meant after the meeting, the woman apparently told Dennis that the commissioner had once told her, "you're just a rich white girl." Dennis, bemused, thought he was immune from that particular eventuality. By "catching" an interview with Dennis at this early stage of his integration into the nonprofit, white-dominated world of Benton Harbor, I was able to see how the people around him were directing his interactions, already encouraging him to mistrust a black

elected official. In interviews with whites, I myself frequently received a verbal list of those they trusted at City Hall.

Notably, as in Dennis' example, whites' strongly held opinions did not seem to stem from extensive personal experience interacting with the people they warned me away from. In one interview, Stan complained of one commissioner's refusal to collaborate: "he's so divisive, it's hard to invite him to things...when you know what you're going to get out of him, and you hope for the best but expect the worst." I asked whether this was based on past experience working with the commissioner, and Stan responded, "I have never talked to the man. I haven't *not*, I haven't *avoided* him—he's never sought *me* out to ask *me* anything." What mattered most here was Stan's perception of the commissioner's behavior, not his own experience. In fact, Stan had not attended the commission meetings he disparaged extensively, even when he was asked.

3.5 The Power of Anonymity

Finally, I must address the role of anonymity in this investigation of a small town. The question of anonymity and respondents' power to shape narrative about them first arose at a preliminary meeting with a non-profit. To my surprise, my interview with Troy, a manager, was attended by Sadie, another staff member (both white). Troy was eager to tell me about the organization's goals, but Sadie was there to direct Troy's conversation to focus on their programming. I often got the feeling that I

was hearing a prepared presentation under the guise of an interview. Before we began, I had told Troy and Sadie I was interested in local politics and development, and they hastened to emphasize this was not in their purview. Sadie said, her voice lilting upward, “We don’t involve ourselves in the politics side at all? But we can certainly, you know, talk about ourselves and explain what we’re doing.”

Troy added,

That’s really the advantage for us is, we get to play Switzerland and we don’t allow our organization or our people to be swayed by whatever. I mean that ultimately our political view is, we need to be doing what’s right for the community, and the people in the community. And when we say people we mean, obviously the residents, but even more importantly, the businesses.

In Troy’s perspective, the organization’s outlook of “doing what’s right for the community” is politically neutral. Importantly, however, in this perspective, businesses, as “people,” take precedence over actual people’s interests. Economics and business are constructed as outside politics. Like many others, Troy believes that determining what is “right” for Benton Harbor can be assessed by outsiders, perhaps better than insiders because of this apparent neutrality.

As an ethnographer, I am trained to look for moments when people insist that they are *not* a particular thing. And as Troy went on to explain, much of their work is highly politically motivated, at least for him. By the end of the interview, Sadie was asking me not to associate anything “political” Troy said with the organization,

specifically mentioning his discussion of a broader political strategy: “I just know my direction from [her BOSS], I just don’t want [organization] involved with political ties.” This mention prompted Troy to start repeating his neutrality message, which made me wonder if I was hearing a script: “Yeah, that’s kind of always our advantage, is that we don’t have to sway one side or the other, we can just run down the middle and do what’s right for the community...” I left confused. These staff members had insisted their organization didn’t get involved with politics. But when Troy described unequivocally political content, Sadie did not argue against his viewpoint—instead, she just asked not to associate it with the organization.

In Benton Harbor, anonymity is a literal luxury, as it is obtained through material resources. Whether agreeing to let me use their names in interviews, or in their public meetings, black officials did more business out in the open than the white urban regime. In an effort to combat the unequal effects of naming, I have employed pseudonyms for all respondents for this dissertation, even those (primarily officials and government employees) who allowed me to use their real name in my research. I have already mentioned that several interviews I conducted with whites were also attended and steered by public relations “handlers.” I left the first of those meetings contemplating how anonymity equals power in Benton Harbor’s fish bowl. One of my advisors labeled this the “no-naming game.” The white urban regime’s easy, often jocular relationship

with media also serves as a sharp contrast to the role of the media in City Hall, as I will show in Chapters Five and Six. While occasionally black members of meetings in city hall asked the media to “quit playing around,” they had nothing like the white urban regime’s control. On one side of the conflict, black commissioners are upset about the lack of transparency and desperately collecting documents. On the other side, the “no-naming game” entails friendly handshakes, agreements not to use material, anonymity and public relations staff. The intense focus of both locals and outsiders on the “politics” and actions of city officials and activists draws attention away from the nominally apolitical actions of the white urban regime.

Chapter 4: The Promise of Harbor Shores

4.1 Introduction

Harbor Shores is a 530-acre development built on industrial brownfields (polluted land) and public parkland. The development features a luxury golf course designed by Jack Nicklaus and includes a new inn and marina and a residential development still under construction, with houses priced from \$150,000 to \$800,000. Three holes of the golf course are constructed on 22 acres of Benton Harbor's Jean Klock Park (its only lakefront access), under an agreement with the city in which Harbor Shores rents the property for a term of 35 years (with renewal options for 70 more years). An individual annual membership at this "public" course costs \$4,550. Despite the obvious luxury/tourist orientation of the project, it has been explicitly marketed as the great promise for Benton Harbor, one of Michigan's poorest cities—a case in which white business elites and poor blacks ostensibly have shared material interests in Harbor Shores' success.

This chapter focuses on an empirical application of the theory developed in the last chapter: the extraction machine. I review the development and execution of the Harbor Shores project to illustrate the components of this theory. I look at how both rhetorical themes and financial arrangements promote white urban regime interests against those of the city. In the first half of this chapter, I focus on discourse surrounding

the project by examining the rhetorical construction of morality and value in creating the rationale for the Harbor Shores development. White urban regime members position themselves as beneficent outsiders occupying moral high ground, and Benton Harbor residents as (variously) needy, ungrateful, and responsible for their own failure to profit from the project. As a result, the white urban regime earns both symbolic and material credit for cleaning up the land it is responsible for polluting. I also address the white urban regime's language of collaboration to capitalize on contemporary trends in urban development and construct a false universality in which the project is "for" everyone, although it is explicitly aimed at elite tourism.

In the second half of the chapter, I turn to the project outcomes, evaluating who benefits from this development. Harbor Shores was built on a series of promises to Benton Harbor: an improved public park along the lake and other recreational properties; thousands of temporary and permanent jobs created; direct contributions from golf course revenue, which would fund new community-development organizations under a community benefit plan; two hotels; and millions in revenue generated from new property taxes, tourism, and new seasonal residents. I examine each of these elements in turn, from the project's community benefit plan, to projected revenue and jobs, to the land itself. I show how this development in progress is already structured to provide maximum benefit to the white urban regime, at the cost of Benton

Harbor's wellbeing. I look specifically at some of the state development policies that facilitated this arrangement, focusing on the state's brownfield tax capture agreements, to show how state economic incentives can provide a perverse incentive for extraction in distressed communities, an argument made by many black city officials. My discussion of these financial arrangements repeatedly links back to the rhetorical language of the first half, showing the material impact of these discursive frames.

Throughout this chapter, I interpret the outcomes of the Harbor Shores development in light of decades of development strategies and multimillion dollar efforts to turn Benton Harbor around. While this golf course project was more ambitious and more successful, it was not the first time the white urban regime had made such an attempt. To focus my analysis, I do not address the prior development strategies in detail in this chapter, although they get more attention in Chapter 6). I mention them to emphasize that my conclusions here are made in the context of a much longer history, where the Harbor Shores project serves as one example of an ongoing relationship.

4.2 Setting and Background

Benton Harbor's commercial rise began in the late 1880s when it became a major fruitpacking and shipping hub with excellent rail and water access. Building off the amenities created for agriculture, industrialists drained the wetlands just inland of the lake to build factories. For the first half of the century, Whirlpool (founded in 1911 by

the Upton brothers) was just one of many manufacturers in the area. Most of the territory depicted in Figure 2 was then occupied by factories and warehouses, along with the “Flats” neighborhood populated by the European immigrants and black migrants who worked in these industries. White flight and manufacturing and labor shifts hollowed Benton Harbor’s industrial space, as in much of the Rust Belt. Industrialists also, in part, abandoned these spaces to avoid accountability for the environmental destruction they had created (Cowie & Heathcott, 2003)—their capital investment was no longer worth the cost of cleanup. The Harbor Shores project represents a case in which environmental remediation has become profitable through public economic incentives—in this case, for the very agents responsible for creating the problem.

Figure 2: Map of Harbor Shores and nearby landmarks in Benton Harbor, Benton Township and St. Joseph

Legend, Figure 2:

- A. Ridgeway neighborhood, St. Joseph
- B. Edgewater, St. Joseph (business development)
- C. Edgewater Dunes, St. Joseph (residential development)
- D. Future construction planned (St. Joseph)
- E. Jean Klock Park (City of Benton Harbor park "maintained by Harbor Shores")
- F. Grand Boulevard Development, Benton Harbor (sold from JK Park)
- G. Harbor Village, St. Joseph (nominally in Benton Harbor): hotel, marina, 60 cottages and 168 condo units under construction
- H. Fairways neighborhood, St. Joseph (nominally in Benton Harbor): 57 houses
- I. Trailside neighborhood, Benton Harbor: 19 houses
- J. Hideaway neighborhood, Benton Township (nominally in Benton Harbor): 58 houses
- K. New Products Corporation (refused to sell to Harbor Shores, woman-owned business)
- L. Golf Club, athletic club and housing under construction, Benton Harbor
- M. Future construction planned, Benton Harbor
- N. Whirlpool Corporate Riverview Campus (and Riverview Park)
- O. Arts District, downtown Benton Harbor
- P. Benton Harbor City Hall

The golf course development in question was executed by a consortium of local non-profit organizations sponsored by Whirlpool to form Harbor Shores Community Redevelopment, Inc. The project had many iterations over some years, but was conceived of as a high-end golf course butting up to Lake Michigan at Jean Klock Park, surrounded by several small neighborhoods of vacation homes, as well as a clubhouse and recreation facilities, a “boutique hotel” and marina (which one early plan showed sitting directly on the public beachfront), a larger hotel with a water park added, and even a small “community center” to serve as the development’s downtown. Harbor Shores has also negotiated a contract with the Senior PGA tournament, and is hosting the event a third time in May 2016.

If you drive through the Harbor Shores golf course development today, you may have to slow down for a golf cart crossing. Only a few industrial buildings remain among the rolling greens interspersed with short cul-de-sacs of summer homes punctuated by the meandering Ox Creek and Paw Paw River. Viewed in the proper lighting and angles, it all looks just like the pictures. Other parts of the “dream” of Benton Harbor are still under construction or have to be imagined. The new hotel is mostly used by visiting Whirlpool employees. The “public trails” are mostly either golf cart paths or unmarked trips to nowhere.

Just as with everything in Benton Harbor, opinions are divided over whether the golf course has succeeded. Most white people I spoke to thought it was either a fantastic success or at least an improvement on what had been there before. From the point of view of most in the white business community, the Harbor Shores development has succeeded because it has cleaned up the area, looks attractive, and will draw increased tourism to the area. The leaders of the black community are divided on this issue, as they are with everything else: those who think Whirlpool's actions in Benton Harbor are for the good of the city, and those who believe Whirlpool is serving its interest at the city's expense. Most black residents do not use Harbor Shores at all. They do not play golf or visit the Inn for Sunday brunch; they don't use the "walking trails" on the course or kayak in the creeks; they certainly can't afford to buy a home there (nor are the homes marketed to them). A look at Figure 2 helps explain the spatial exclusion despite technical proximity. While Benton Harbor residents still technically have access to Jean Klock Park (region "E"), if they have a car and can pay the fee, the park is now almost entirely enveloped by Harbor Shores. Moreover, the beach is surrounded on both sides by expensive beach houses in Benton Township to the north and St. Joseph to the south. The "Ridgeway" community (region "A") is home to Congressman Fred Upton, Whirlpool CEO Jeff Fettig, and Chesapeake CEO Aubrey McClendon, among others. It is easy to see Harbor Shores as the contiguous extension of St. Joseph (regions A, B and C),

but not Benton Harbor. Even the road that was supposed to connect the east portion of Harbor Shores to Benton Harbor wound up not being built.

4.2.1 The Humanitarian Dream of Harbor Shores

The promoters of the project certainly have a grandiose image of its benefits. An internal Harbor Shores Leadership Presentation opens with a quote from architect Daniel Burnham: “Make no little plan. They have not the magic to stir men’s blood and probably themselves will not be realized” (Hesemann, 2012). Both Harbor Shores’ marketing and its coverage in golf, business and tourism magazines emphasize not only the huge ambition of this project, but crucially, its magnanimous intentions and benefit to the community. In a representative example, one reporter wrote, “Although Harbor Shores is designed for the enjoyment of golfers, spectators, vacationers and second-home owners from across the country, the real beneficiary is the local area—on all levels.” (Yun, 2012). In this framing, the luxurious accommodations and leisure infrastructure are supposed to benefit people living in poverty right nearby. One article covers Whirlpool’s general counsel buying a second home in Harbor Shores, “downsizing” to a 3,500 square foot, \$900,000 house to support what he calls an “impressive civic project, rescuing land that was laying waste” (Murphy, 2007). In another, Whirlpool’s vice-president of communications is quoted saying, ““People who golf have money...People who have money talk to other people who have money, who

you hope...will invest in Benton Harbor. A golf course is a way of telling the story” (Gould, 2014). These stories also construct Harbor Shores as a community project. For example, PGA CEO Pete Bevacqua is quoted saying, “What’s unique about Harbor Shores is it’s a part of the community. It’s not a golf course on another side of the wall. It really is a part of this town” (Gould, 2014). Another claims the developers have “put plenty of thought and care into engaging all residents,” giving as an example the sculptural tee markers created by a white couple in Benton Harbor’s new arts district.

The *New York Times*’ more critical, lengthier and locally controversial 2011 piece exploring emergency management and Harbor Shores deserves specific attention for direct analysis of inequality (Mahler, 2011). Observing the development over a round of golf, Mahler makes the contrast between Harbor Shores’ Hamptonesque homes and “the poorest city in all of Michigan” explicit: “I felt almost as if I were at a resort in a third-world Caribbean country” (Mahler, 2011). Mahler’s analogy to the Caribbean resort resonates because he is hitting on a key aspect of these touristic enterprises: the unsettling feeling that the very contrast of wealth and poverty itself gives guests a frisson of pleasure. Indeed, the city’s pain is part of the development’s marketing story or “branding,” both to external audiences and internally, to funders and state agencies. I saw sociological language and allusions to “unemployment, poverty, and crime” in project documents as far afield as the Department of Natural Resources evaluation of

Jean Klock Park ("Wetland and Coastal Resources, 2007, p. 18). Where mitigating inequality meets bureaucracy, regional, state and federal funders give higher "scores" to struggling communities. Emphasizing these aspects of Benton Harbor in grant language can thus garner material advantages for the white urban regime, as I will show later in this chapter.

But white urban regime insiders certainly did not see themselves as profiting off the poor. Instead, the predominant model was that Harbor Shores' wealth would trickle down or rub off on poor Benton Harbor residents. To return to the *Times* piece, the reporter's golf course guide was Marcus Robinson, originally hired as a diversity consultant for Whirlpool, and head of one of its non-profits, the Consortium for Community Development, who then was perceived by many within Benton Harbor as the corporation's mouthpiece. Robinson was prominent in media interviews and Whirlpool's nonprofit coalitions until he abruptly resigned his posts in 2012, moving back to Chicago to start a jazz band. Robinson frames Mahler's understanding of the huge inequality contrast between Harbor Shores' luxury and the city's poverty as "deliberate, part of a strategy of social engineering that's central to the plan to save Benton Harbor." Robinson tells Mahler as they ride "toward the next tee,"

The intermingling that shifts a culture, makes it more upwardly mobile and creates more striving-type sensibilities naturally occurs when you

bring people of different races and classes together...It creates a mentality of inclusion. (Mahler, 2011)¹

Interestingly, Robinson's mental image of Benton Harbor was as a wealthy but still majority-black town:

"This could be a model for African-American towns...I want to see this turned into a great place to live, work and play and have it be predominantly black. A great place to play golf, go to the beach, with great schools, a place that turns out scholars, athletes and artists. A place that's banging, as they say."

But Robinson was not around long enough to see if this vision came to pass.

The very cost of Harbor Shores (the \$500 million number invoked so often) is used by its founders as a marker of the project's vision, ambition and generosity. But "Rodney," a local black activist, interpreted the very cost of the development as a signal to Benton Harbor residents that they are not welcome. "When you think about the cost of Harbor Shores, and how much it costs to be a member of that club, it tells you that it's not cut out for you, you see?" Among the white urban regime, though, there was

¹ Robinson is implicitly extending the sociologist William Julius Wilson's argument that poor black neighborhoods suffered from the flight of the black middle-class, who had formerly stabilized segregated black neighborhoods with their better values. Wilson and other sociologists' concern with "concentrated poverty" led to suggestions that cities should aim to break up these concentrations with housing plans. This argument has trickled into contemporary planning for "mixed-income" developments, which provide a range of housing for various income levels in a single area. The logic is not only that poor residents will have better opportunities from a mixed neighborhood, but that their aspirations and values will improve. This notion has been challenged by residents and scholars alike, but is still popular in contemporary planning discourse. See (Chaskin, 2013; Chaskin & Joseph, 2009; Pattillo, 2007; Rosenbaum, Stroh, & Flynn, 1998; Wilson, 1978, 1987)

mystification that black Benton Harbor residents did not take more advantage of Jean Klock Park, if not the larger golf course. “Will” had worked with the white urban regime on several projects, and claimed black residents did not visit Jean Klock because “unfortunately, there are a lot of self-imposed limitations:”

When I first came to town I heard people talking about the fact they lived in Benton Harbor and had never been to the beach because there was a perception about it. I don't know what it was. Black people don't swim. Now I'm black, so recording, please note that. But it's just unfortunately, I think the community has really shrunk in a lot of ways and turned in on itself in various ways. There's infighting in families, burning down houses in your community on your street, vandalizing your neighborhood, robbing your neighbors. Those are self-destructive things that—I don't understand the entire psychology behind it, but again, it's kind of a self-imposed limitation. There's no reason why somebody who lives in the hood who's on assistance and makes ten grand in a year in their household couldn't go to the beach. The beach is free.

Will was not alone in this analysis: conversations like these among whites and black elites helped to justify Harbor Shores’ impact. If black residents were not visiting the beach, Will argued, this was because of individual-level “self-destructive” tendencies, not decades of internalized social control, nor was it the spatial exclusion suggested by the golf course and the cultural signifiers surrounding it. As Orin Starn has pointed out, golf is not only saturated with upper-class signifiers, but tightly associated with political power (with all the images of corporate leaders and politicians playing). Starn claims “golf has always traced the fault lines of conflict, hierarchy, and tension in America, among them the archetypal divides of race and class” (Starn, 2011, p. xv). The

golf course, especially a course publicly touting its exclusive connotations, and sitting among the large vacation homes of Michigan's wealthy families, frames the lake itself within elite white cultural habitus. Project advocates simultaneously market Harbor Shores as a wealthy white dreamscape, and blame local black residents for not seeing themselves reflected in it.

In 2015, I returned for a week of follow-up research and interviews, staying in the newly-opened Harbor Shores Inn. The mid-week guests seemed to be almost entirely traveling Whirlpool employees. Despite the new sheen on everything, my Whirlpool-brand mini-fridge was broken, as were so many in the hotel that they were struggling to find working ones in empty rooms to swap. Each room contained a large coffee table book detailing the Harbor Shores miracle, with hundreds of pictures and some hastily-assembled written material. I couldn't decide if it was hubris or inattention that led the book to highlight the second paragraph from Mahler's *New York Times* article:

The juxtaposition of Benton Harbor's impoverished population and its two rising monuments to wealth — all wedged into a little more than four square miles — make it almost a caricature of economic disparity in America. But at the same time, it offers a window into one possible future for towns across the country, places that can no longer support their own economies or take care of their citizens and may ultimately have no choice but to turn their fate over to private industry and nonprofits. The way things are going, more and more states may start to look like Michigan, and more and more towns may start to look like Benton Harbor. (Mahler, 2011)

The reframing of the meaning of evident social inequality—as a promise of trickle-down wealth, rather than a social problem—is what justifies Harbor Shores’ existence.

4.2.2 Harbor Shores’ Creation

Like many “brownfield” developments, Harbor Shores was conceived as a way to creatively reuse land left polluted after almost all the area’s major manufacturers withdrew. The golf course was originally proposed by a Whirlpool-affiliated group as a potential urban development in the 1980s (McClure, 2012), although the plan was abandoned in favor of a series of other ideas from reopening Benton Harbor’s canal to developing new industrial parks. The energy to implement a new plan came in 2003, when Terrance “T-Shirt” Shurn, 27, was killed when his motorcycle crashed into a house following a high-speed chase by Benton Township police (who had been advised to stop pursuit when Shurn entered Benton Harbor). When people gathered at the site to memorialize him, the police dispersed them forcibly, sparking unrest that resulted in 20 empty buildings burned (Dumke, 2008). This event got worldwide television coverage, although many noted the coverage hugely overestimated the actual scope of the event. As one black elite observer, “Florence,” said, “I was not really all that far, maybe three quarters of a mile. I couldn’t see it from where I lived. So the television kept that going like the whole city was burning. It was confined to a very small area.” Even now, there is

no consensus on whether 2003 was a “riot” or an “uprising.” By 2014, even most of those who still called the disturbance a “riot” used audio air quotes. And as with everything in Benton Harbor, there are varying explanations for what it happened and what it meant—whether cops bumped Shurn’s bike, shot him, or knocked him into the house. Although only a few structures were burned, Michigan roused the National Guard and hundreds of police statewide to subdue the population (until rain stopped the insurrection a few days later). The event triggered a new round of “state of Benton Harbor” think pieces and seemed to validate white Michiganders’ fears of black cities.

How else can we interpret the outsized coverage and response to this event? State and local elites seemed to respond to this moment as discontent to be managed, and as potentially hurting their reputation. But this was also an opportunity to implement plans that had been forming for some time. The opportunity required turning this relatively small event into a crisis. Then-Governor Jennifer Granholm made a series of trips to the area, setting up a special task force to make recommendations for improving Benton Harbor’s bleak economic situation. Both the task force and another Whirlpool-sponsored community group, the Council for World-Class Communities, made a range of proposals covering a wide range of social, political and economic factors. But the timeline shows these groups’ work was mere window dressing for plans that were already underway. An article from January of that year had noted the

explosion of development occurring in and near downtown Benton Harbor (Stevens, 2003). Moreover, the same year these groups were meeting, Governor Granholm announced that Whirlpool and Michigan's Department of Transportation (MDOT) were donating 29 acres of land for a new economic development project (Dumke 2008). The solution of a golf course development was underway before the task force had finished meeting or issued any recommendations. In fact, an internal Powerpoint outlining this history specified that Whirlpool and Cornerstone Alliance were meeting with consultants about the Harbor Shores project in 2002, a year *prior* to the 2003 disturbance (Hesemann, 2012). But at this point, the golf course was not disclosed to the public yet. One article mentioned only "condominiums, apartment buildings and stores" on the site, and another article from the event described the transfer as "part of an initiative to provide Benton Harbor with public-access areas on Lake Michigan and the Paw Paw and St. Joseph rivers" ("\$250,000 grant for homes in Benton Harbor announced by Granholm," 2003). A Chicago reporter wrote, hitting the symbolism hard, "Leaders hope that that the land will be a step toward unifying the two towns that have been separated by race and class differences. Previously owned by the state and left over from a road project, the land is the only place where the two towns [St. Joseph and Benton Harbor] are not divided by the river" (Mastony, 2003).

4.3 “I Found Some Land”: Assets and Natural Resources

The controversy over Benton Harbor’s trading away of its shorefront Jean Klock Park, possibly its most valuable asset, served as the focal point for Benton Harbor’s conflict over privatization and development. Harbor Shores has “rented” 22 acres of Jean Klock Park to build three holes on its sand dunes. While supporters emphasized that only part of the park would be taken for the golf course, the move effectively draws the rest of the park, including its shoreline, within the visual scope of the development. Benton Harbor’s loss of 22 acres of public land serves as an obvious case of asset extraction. However, following the principles of urban regime analysis I outlined in the previous chapter, I do not focus on the open conflict over this land grab—to do so would mean limiting myself to description, rather than analysis. Instead, I look at how the white urban regime worked to narratively shape the value of this land and its uses to its advantage. By selectively emphasizing the land’s *lack* of value, the white urban regime was able to a) obtain land cheaply; b) avoid blame for its bad condition; c) take credit for its revitalization; and d) exploit public funds in its name.

As is evident from Figure 2 Jean Klock Park represents Benton Harbor’s only lake access. On either side of the park lie St Joseph and Benton Township neighborhoods with expensive lake homes, whose access to Jean Klock Beach is as easy as a short walk down the shore (see Figure 3). Looking at the wealth abutting the park, it is easy to see

why control over this park was essential to the plan. A Michigan lawyer alleged that Whirlpool recognized the value of this public park land, hoping to build up the area as “a destination point for rich people from Chicago.” He said, “They have a commuter train that runs every day, and inconveniently, kind of like with the Indians and the oil fields, there’s,” (he adopted a comic voice to portray Whirlpool’s thinking), “‘people happen to be on top of some really valuable land, and therefore, we gotta figure out how to do it.’” As another lawyer told me, “Shorefront property on Lake Michigan that’s undeveloped is, I mean, it’s pretty tough to put a price tag on it...there’s maybe 150 people in the country who could afford it, you know?” Despite its extraordinary value, as activists noted in 2008, the 22 acres of lakefront dunes were appraised at only \$881,000 (Heibutzki, 2008), apparently because of the park’s restricted use for the public. While the official park transfer was only for 22 acres of Jean Klock, Figure 3 shows how the golf course now occupies virtually the whole park (which once reached to Highway M-63) except for the shoreline and parking lot.

Figure 3: Jean Klock Park viewed from Lake Michigan.
M-63 is the highway crossing the top. Edgewater homes visible in upper right, Grand Boulevard development in lower left. Source: <http://mudclub.scubaobsessed.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/06/Jean-Klock-Park-Benton-Harbor-2.jpg>

This park, representing Benton Harbor's sole lakefront property and consisting of prime dunes and a spotless beach, was deeded 100 years ago to Benton Harbor and required to be perpetually available for public use. The prominent Klock family donated the 90-acre plot of beachfront and sand dunes in 1917 in memory of their daughter Jean, who had died as an infant. At the dedication ceremony, John Klock said in words that have since been repeatedly cited and debated by all parties:

Perhaps some of you do not own a foot of ground, remember then, that this is your park, it belongs to you. Perhaps some of you have no piano or phonograph, the roll of the water murmuring in calm, roaring in storm, is your music, your piano and music box...The beach is yours, the drive is yours, the dunes are yours, all yours. It's not so much a gift from myself, it's a gift from a little child. See to it, that the park is the children's. (J.N. Klock at the 1917 Dedication Ceremony for Jean Klock Park)

On my first site visit in 2012, my guide told me that despite the media's focus on the Jean Klock Park takeover, the golf course was only replacing a big parking lot and a "swamp." I heard variously (and contradictorily) that only rich whites had ever visited the beach anyway, or that people only went there to do drugs. The differences in attendance seem likely to continue: activist Julie Weiss has pointed out that St. Joseph's Silver Beach is more popular because of its playground equipment and its county-provided lifeguards, and notes that "None of the changes to Jean Klock Park carried out by Harbor Shores or the City of Benton Harbor includes additional playground equipment or life guards" (Weiss, 2012). With few cars and little geographic connection to the beach, and in a larger context of social control and black constricted access to public space and natural resources, black residents' access to this resource has historically been limited. It is unclear to what degree the Klock's vision has been fully realized over the past century.

Instead, the above dedication and its wording has become a technical battlefield over the park's use. John Klock's words were invoked in a lawsuit filed by Friends of

Jean Klock Park, claiming the golf course plan violated the public-use requirement. In response, Harbor Shores developers claimed long-term rental of the land for a nominally public golf course was consistent with the deed. The Benton Harbor Boys and Girls' Club and First Tee, both of which are funded by Whirlpool, filed amicus briefs for Harbor Shores to this effect. First Tee is a golf after-school program that teaches children "Nine Core Values" through golf and trains them to be caddies. Their use of Harbor Shores for practice is subsidized as part of Harbor Shores' annual "payment" to the city. First Tee's brief interpreted the above deed thus:

a reasonable perspective is that Mr. Klock would be in favor of an approach to the use of the deeded property that both ensures ongoing funding for the maintenance of the beach for the use of the community—including children—and takes into account the safety of those using the beach, as opposed to the approach that effectively denies the use and enjoyment of the beach due to the lack of resources to maintain it...(M. A. Miller, 2010)

The brief argued the deed and statement never indicated "that Mr. Klock would not be in favor of a practical, creative and beneficial use of this unique property that uses revenues from a public golf course, rather than limited community resources, to create an endowment of a public beach." In a town focused on change and starting over, the idea of Benton Harbor's children serves as a primary battleground, representing hope for the future. They are a convenient interest group as they cannot vote, are rarely allowed to speak for themselves, and are a morally "pure" cause, unquestionably

deserving in a widely-degraded community perceived by outsiders to be largely unemployed and unmotivated. Claiming the interest of children significantly benefits the white urban regime. Whirlpool's sponsorship of the Boys and Girls Club is frequently mentioned by its supporters as a major community benefit, although the sponsorship comes in lieu of Whirlpool paying local taxes. In the case of Jean Klock Park, children's interests were claimed on both sides, but Harbor Shores won. While the National Park Service (NPS) originally rejected the conversion plan, noting that the arrangement effectively gave control of all of Jean Klock to Harbor Shores (Quintana, 2007), the NPS eventually reversed its decision, urged on by Whirlpool heir and Republican Congressional Representative Fred Upton (Melzer, 2008).

The contested battle over Harbor Shores' "three holes" in Jean Klock Park was actually not the first time a piece of the park had been sliced off for development. A prime chunk of Jean Klock Park (the along the road to the lower left in Figure 2) had "accidentally" sold in 2002 to a home developer when the city manager at the time (his fishing and hunting buddy, it was alleged) told the commission he'd "found some land" to solve their revenue problems. Benton Harbor City Commissioner Toni Norton explained:

They should have mitigated it, but they didn't, because it's part of the DNR [Department of Natural Resources]. If you decide to sell that property, you have to give the value of the property that you're selling, and size-wise too...So the state let the city do that, and it was wrong.

Even after this was discovered, the land sell-off didn't stop. Commissioner Norton said the city manager justified it to them as "'we need the money. We're gonna have to pay less pay days if we don't do it.' So, those four people got over like *fat cats*. They got their lots for little or nothing.'" While the commission had voted to approve the land transfers, Commissioner Norton said, "they didn't tell us everything. They just told us part of it. And most of it was, we got--they brought all the employees in and they sit there with their little sad eyes, 'we're not gonna get any payday.'" But as Commissioner Norton pointed out, the state should have had more oversight over this sale. "But the state let them do it. And we asked the state, 'why did you do that?' And they said, 'oops.'" The judgment from a lawsuit over this sale was supposed to prevent future sales of pieces of Jean Klock Park.

The first emergency manager reenacted the above scenario by selling parkland supposed to be reserved from the Harbor Shores project. As I mentioned above, Harbor Shores provided several "mitigation parcels" as potential replacement parks for the Jean Klock property that became part of the golf course. But only four years after the transfer, EM Harris sold the only full-size, usable, non-wetland "mitigated parcel" downtown to a company that built a dialysis center, apparently without knowing the intended use of the parcel (L. Smith, 2012a). Commissioner Norton reportedly fought this decision on multiple fronts:

I'm like, "how do you do that? It's mitigated." And I'm fighting, "oh no, you can't do that." They did it anyway. And the state come in. What they did, with the state, change staff. Came a whole new staff in [to the Department of Natural Resources or DNR]...So, the new staff come in, "oh, they shouldn't have did that." I said, "how are we going to correct it?" So they're all gung-ho, young people, and they're all gung-ho. Can't even get a return call now...Oh, I screamed and hollered and had to have meetings. I brought them here. We had meetings with Cornerstone and Harbor Shores. We met--we talked about all the promises they made. And they said we got to hold their feet to the fire and make them do everything they said they were gonna do...So yeah, we've had meeting, after meeting, after meeting...We had a lot of people sitting and talking about how to straighten this out. Nothing.

In both examples, Commissioner Norton, an elected official, was unable to obtain recourse with state-level organizations, even after the wrongdoing was made clear and even after representatives assured her something would be done. In 2016, I spoke to the relevant Department of Natural Resources (DNR) representative, "Mickey," to check this claim: according to him, the only party liable for the emergency manager's mistake is now the city. With an "unresolved conversion" (without a substitute parcel for the sold one), they would be virtually disqualified from future DNR grants until they donated a piece of land of equal size for public use. That will result in the city's continued inability to capitalize on this state resource. According to my calculations, Benton Harbor has received less than one tenth of St. Joseph's funding (measured per capita, in current population numbers) over the forty-year lifetime of Michigan's Natural Resource Trust Fund, which requires municipalities to apply for specific

projects. Moreover, what funds Benton Harbor has received have gone to support white urban regime development plans.

Mickey also explained he had had some difficulty moving forward because it was not always clear how much power the city commissioners had under emergency management. When I asked Mickey what benefit Benton Harbor residents could enjoy from these replacement properties, especially the inaccessible wetlands I had seen surrounded by golf course, he replied, "Certainly there are the additional protections of a wetland," mentioning a wetland's wildlife and bird viewing opportunities.² The property Whirlpool provided in trade for Jean Klock Park covers the same acreage, but it is scattered over seven parcels, and is also contaminated. Unlike the golf course, no extensive remediation has taken place on these "park" properties. A consulting firm's report on Whirlpool's cleanup noted that the "exposure barrier" from chemicals in three of the parcels consisted of the walking path through them (McClure, 2012). As a lawyer told me in an interview:

To swap that land for land off the lakeshore that was former toxic land along the river, land that as I understand it, literally by their own admission, if you go off the paved pathways, it's still toxic in places. Well, you're doing it for a public park? Do kids ever leave the pathways? And they were supposed to do some cleanup or whatever, but the

² Neil Smith has written about the recent discovery and commodification of the "value" of a wetland. See Smith, Neil. 2007. "Nature as Accumulation Strategy." *Socialist Register*:19-41.

compensating recreational activity is that people can now watch along this river channel, watch the boats go past...you're saying that now they can watch the rich folks go by in boats as a recreational activity? I mean literally saying that? I mean, what world are we living in?

4.3.1 “When I Stand on That Dune...” Value Creation and Destruction

It was just a dump. And it really was. It was just bunch of garbage dumped down there, everything. People here didn't give a crap until somebody else wanted it. (Steve, white urban regime member)

A key but overlooked insight from the Great Recession is that land value is socially constructed, as is value more generally (Fourcade, 2011; Graeber, 2001). Devaluation, or the policy-driven *dereliction* of land (Jakle & Wilson, 1992) is just as important as value creation in determining an area's success or failure. That has never been more clear than with this industrial brownfield abutting prime lakefront property, wedged between multimillion-dollar homes and some of the cheapest homes in the state. A local resident best illustrated this paradox: “When I stand on that dune, it's not worth anything...But when Jack Nicklaus stands on it and raises his golf club like Moses raising his staff, it's invaluable” (Dumke, 2008). When land is either priceless or worthless, its true value cannot be determined through calculations: as a result, the symbolic discourse around land requires analysis. Developers and boosters devalued the land in early phases of the Harbor Shores project by emphasizing its reputation as a polluted dumping ground, despite its proximity to the beach, and suggested it would never have been developed by anyone else.

The spotlight on “the land” as the primary actor also deflected attention from its prior ownership, as much of the development sits on Whirlpool’s own abandoned sites. The successful magic trick has been to set up the land itself as the problem, and not the people and businesses that got wealthy from the land’s degradation—even though, like Andrew Collins in the first chapter, many of those responsible are still key actors. The white urban regime is suddenly interested in environmental remediation, now that it is economically and morally profitable through brownfield grants and tax-capture schemes. Katz argued almost two decades ago that capital had discovered preserving nature as an “accumulation strategy,” frequently obscuring its own extractive role that had caused the need to restore nature in the first place (1998, 50). After all, the brownfield grants and tax capture agreements mean Whirlpool’s development arms are being repaid for mitigating land abandoned by Whirlpool and other corporations (at least, the land the federal government has not already remediated, including an irradiated Superfund site where workers once painted glowing aircraft dials).

The golf course boosters have explicitly sold the project as benefitting Benton Harbor residents, despite its exclusivity and the circumstances of its creation, because it represents an improvement on the abandoned and polluted former factory sites it occupies, and because revenues may trickle down from wealthy visitors. Narratives about the larger project area’s former trash and pollution devalued the land to justify its

cheap acquisition by Cornerstone and Harbor Shores. A trade magazine for the golf industry opened its article, "From Wasteland to Wonderland," thus:

Garbage. Slag. Industrial waste.
These are generally not the kinds of things you find on a golf course. Nor do you find drug dealers and prostitutes roaming about. But they were all present at the site of The Golf Club at Harbor Shores before it became a golf course so impressive it was named to host the 2012 and 2014 U.S. Senior PGA Championship. (Stahl, 2011)

I saw the same three pictures of used-tire piles endlessly in promotional material and news articles to signify the golf course's "before" stage. This move is familiar from Neil Smith's "Frontier Thesis" (N. Smith, 1996), which showed how gentrifiers narratively erase existing residents to justify takeovers, just as U.S. pioneers claimed territories as empty land. After all, Whirlpool and other manufacturers were still operating some facilities in the area when the development was first announced, and one family-owned corporation, New Products, has defiantly remained in operation at the course's edge. Only a few years earlier, a good portion of the area had been redeveloped as an industrial park, with talks about further expansion. But this history rarely made it into the narrative. As one example, "Eric" said, indicating the direction of Harbor Shores:

That out there...that was just essentially millions of square feet of warehouse, contaminated property. I'm not a big fan of golf but I think it's probably the highest investment in that property. [laughing] Every time I look out there, it's like, "Wow, it's a golf course." And it's an

amazing golf course! It used to just be warehouse, warehouse, warehouse... all the way down, abandoned, as far as you could see. Sometimes this story was told with intense vitriol, placing blame for the mess

squarely on the backs of residents. For instance, “Kathy,” a local white business owner, expressed anger at residents opposing the development and blamed them for the land’s condition:

Excuses drive me crazy. When the golf Senior PGA was here, there were actually people picketing on Main Street. Really? Really? Harbor Shores took your land, took your jobs? I don't think so. I think you're just sitting back, point fingers, saying that, you know, outsiders took your advantages. Harbor Shores—if you would've seen that land 10 years ago, it was a hell hole. It was dirty, junk, trash, tires, old boats. These people shit on that land. They didn't take care of it.

Kathy’s vivid language accuses Benton Harbor residents for the “hell hole” left by former industry, and fit with a larger trend I found in which white urban regime members fixated on Benton Harbor residents’ trash and dirt. Interestingly, the two interviewees who had actually attended clean-up sessions, including a county representative in charge of the project, told me the majority of trash on the site likely came from contractors, not individual dumping.

On the one hand, boosters overstated the land’s valuelessness and abandonment; but they also overstated the degree to which remediation and redevelopment reinvented the space. Devaluing the land’s past iterations and promoting the golf course as a blank slate served to lower expectations for Harbor Shores’ half-billion dollar undertaking. Ken, who worked on the Harbor Shores project through the county, expressed some

doubt about the likelihood of its success. But he invoked the specter that if not for this project, there would have been no change (again, retroactively rendering the area a static, abandoned space rather than one in transition and claimed by multiple interests):

One thing to remember is, suppose we decided, no, we're not going to do this. We don't want to do this. Because for, concerns that you might raise...So there is little bit of a risk associated with it, but it's a risk that is kind of counterbalanced against the idea that maybe if we don't do this, there just is not going to be any change to this.

Ken was echoing a tagline often used by Harbor Shores advocates. (As Jeff Noel, former director of Cornerstone Alliance head and Whirlpool Vice President, put it, "We've already asked, 'If not this, what?' and 'If not now, when?'" (Dumke, 2008). When his office was internally debating the project, Ken explained, their boss, the county administrator, convinced the group of its importance by comparing Benton Harbor's post-industrial sites to the "industrial wasteland" of Gary, Indiana, as viewed from above on the road to Chicago. "You know, the former greatness of North American industry just completely rusted out. And he said, you know, if you drive over there today, and what do you see? The exact same thing. There's no change." Ken sighed. Switching back to Harbor Shores, he continued,

The properties, and I hope you've seen photographs of what it was...that was a mini version of [Gary]--wasted industrial area, dilapidated factories, completely polluted and underused property, I mean, [his boss] made the point in this conversation, "Yeah, it's a risk for us to do this, but if we don't do it," (emphasizing point with finger on table) "twenty years from now it's going to look the same." So maybe this whole thing fails.

And maybe the developers pull the plug, or maybe the development doesn't succeed, and we don't get what you would think. We're no worse off than we would have been. And in fact we're probably better off, because someone would have come and borne the risk to clean the whole thing up.

Ken's retrospective analysis, in which the Harbor Shores development is posited against an assumed alternative of "no change," is a common frame for this and other local projects, as I will discuss in Chapter Six.

The golf course's landscape itself, with green rolling hills punctuated by wetlands, creeks and sand dunes, provides a visual representation of the white urban regime's ideal "blank slate." But just like every supposedly blank slate, what seems new is really built on historical strata, with not only industrial but cultural and social residue seeping up to the surface. The golf course looks cleaner because of fantasized associations with a pastoral or "natural" landscape, just as Park and Fellow (2011) showed for Aspen's superficially "natural" mountain lifestyle that was actually maintained at extreme financial, social and environmental costs. Elliott and Frickel have noted the growth of industrial urban hazards, where selective regulation, haphazard development, and historical amnesia expose the public to health risks (2013)—we should not assume that brownfield-centered development entirely mitigates these risks. Concern in Harbor Shores' case does seem warranted. At the former Superfund site, now Hole 14, the very remediation efforts inadvertently created a new carcinogen, vinyl

chloride (although the golf course manager has proclaimed the area safe because "you really have to eat this stuff...to cause you any major concerns at all" (Keagle, 2010). We do not see the continued industrial pollution in the wetlands and creeks. This is not to mention the fertilizer and pesticide runoff endemic to all golf courses, or the fact that, as activists' federal appeal brief pointed out, annually irrigating former brownfields with 25,000,000 gallons of water might cause further contamination runoff (Weiss v. U.S. Secretary for the Dept of Interior). I also heard several people wonder aloud where all that remediated dirt was going, raising issues of externalized costs beyond the land itself. A 2013 report from Michigan's Department of Environmental Quality concluded alarmingly that "although the HS development continues with construction and expansion, the multiple contaminated properties it contains continue to have concentrations of contaminants in excess [of] multiple state criteria." While the one-page report suggests future cleanup and careful monitoring are necessary, it does not specify how these will be enforced.

Harbor Shores represents a case of "environmental gentrification" (Checker, 2011; Dooling, 2009; Pearsall, 2010), capitalizing on the alleged environmental benefits of their development—a case of the "commodification of nature" (N. Smith, 2007). This helped them capture tens of millions from future city tax revenue for "remediating" the polluted land. Whirlpool is already adept at capturing public money through

environmentalist causes. Whirlpool has been receiving millions from the government (making profits off public tax money (R. Harvey, 2011) for producing “energy efficient” appliances (Coleman-Lochner and Rubin 2011). And although I heard an abundance of anti-welfare rhetoric against black Benton Harbor residents during my fieldwork, public records show Whirlpool was the largest recipient of federal stimulus money in Berrien County from 2008-2009, getting \$22 million for R&D into green technology (ProPublica, 2012). Being “green” can be very profitable in the 21st century.

4.4 Participation Theater and Coalitions of One

Non-profit community organizations served as primary vehicles for the white urban regime’s goals, as described in my conversations with several white urban regime members. Whirlpool maintains several local non-profits and charities that propose and develop projects of long-term benefit to the corporation. The most powerful and longstanding non-profit, the Cornerstone Alliance, was founded as the Community Economic Development Corporation (CEDC) in 1987 by Whirlpool, merging with the local chamber of commerce in 1991 to form its present iteration. Cornerstone shares employees and board members with Whirlpool, is largely funded by Whirlpool, and is widely understood as the vehicle of Whirlpool’s will locally. It buys and sells land, initiates projects, applies for and manages grant money, deals with (or around) the city of Benton Harbor, and is otherwise the “face” of local economic development. It was

also a main agent in executing Harbor Shores. The three primary “Project Partners” carrying out Harbor Shores (Cornerstone Alliance, the Consortium for Community Development and the Whirlpool Foundation) were all directly created and funded by Whirlpool. (This is also reflected in the many Harbor Shores-related LLCs listed as owners of development property—I have counted at least five.) The project thus capitalizes on contemporary values supporting local “partnerships” and community-based organizations, connoting ideas of community engagement and participation, without actually partnering with anyone but itself.

These organizations rarely existed at the same time, but instead were successive iterations of the same overarching concept. For instance, the Consortium for Community Development (CCD) was the major player in 2012, itself formed in 2004 by folding four community organizations into one. When I conducted fieldwork in 2014, the CCD still held office space downtown, but the one remaining person on staff told me they had ended all programming in favor of a new (similar) organization. Later in the chapter, I will show how the disappearance of this organization erased accountability for Harbor Shores promises.

The highly-engineered process could lead to frustration for those who genuinely wanted to participate. “Harvey,” a white person who had been involved with a prior iteration, Citizens for World-Class Communities (CWCC), expressed frustration with

having engaged in the collaborative process of deciding how to develop the land, when it turned out not to matter. He described a “big expensive project bringing in consultants” to determine Benton Harbor’s future:

and the only real lasting legacy of that is Harbor Shores. And really, that didn’t emerge from any of those discussions. We met, we talked, we came up with all these ideas and at the end of this couple of year period, Dave Whitwam who [was] the CEO of Whirlpool said, “I think we need to build a golf course.” He got the idea from a development in Atlanta near the Whirlpool headquarters down there. There’s a group of very wealthy people including Warren Buffett had funded this golf development and really turned around a community, not unlike Benton Harbor. So Dave thought, “Oh, we ought to do this here.”

I asked Harvey how he felt when the golf course emerged as the way forward.

He replied,

I felt like why did we spend all this time doing all these meetings if the only substantive thing that’s going to happen is this idea that you had – I mean, it’s his money.. Nobody else could have gotten the financing and nobody else would have had the wherewithal...I’ve never been convinced that a golf course is the way to go...we’ll see. But it felt like the rest of us really didn’t have to be a part of that process.

Even after its conception, Harbor Shores measured community engagement in ways that minimized both citizen and city government involvement. Harbor Shores’ report on its 2009 “social/cultural transformation related accomplishments” frequently assessed its success in terms of how many people attended a given meeting or event (as

opposed to their actually shaping the project).³ For instance, the report emphasized the 3,700 “residents” who had attended tours, many in golf carts—although in a 2008 article, a reporter on a tour reported most on the bus were white middle-class families from out of town (Dumke, 2008). A Jean Klock Park activist commented in a 2008 article “‘All they're (residents) getting are rosy words, and pretty maps, and sales pitch bus tours – they're not getting any facts...They're just getting this rosy-eyed picture about this transformation that's going to take place in this community’” (Heibutzki, 2008). For instance, another activist noted she couldn’t find a complete map of the proposed development at city hall: only Cornerstone Alliance had that information. This is an example of the differential level of access for the white nonprofit organizations, staffed by people who associate with (and often work for) local companies, and Benton Harbor's City Hall.

What I call “participation theater” is a key tool for the white urban regime to demonstrate community buy-in to the Harbor Shores project in a depoliticized context where support is not signified through elections. Although once a critical activist demand in urban politics, community participation has been coopted, inverted on itself as window-dressing to top-down political organizing. Urban regimes have reconceptualized “community participation” largely outside the political sphere—a way

³ While I cached copies, these reports were removed from Harbor Shores’ website in 2016.

to involve people without their votes, without identities as “citizens.” Community development via community participation presents an alternative process of representation, deliberation, and decision-making—one which involves the *symbolic* representation of various interest groups, usually to affirm the interests of the wealthy few. Carefully staged avenues for community feedback and participation yield even greater-than-usual control over agenda-setting and “non-decisionmaking” (Bachrach & Baratz, 1962), so it is unsurprising they appeal to urban regimes. Even the very term “community” deserves critical attention—particularly who is claiming to speak on its behalf. Framing a depoliticized community, as Cody has noted of “representations of ‘the public,’” relies “on the erasure of social structures, allowing universalizing claims to be articulated only by particular types of people”(Cody, 2011, p. 38).

Critically assessing community engagement and participation is an important intervention in the field of urban policy. Many scholars, city planners, policy analysts and community advocates point to community participation as the means to avoid repeating past mistakes in urban planning. While few of these parties claim that business and development elites have benevolent intentions toward the urban poor, many of them claim that regular citizens can provide input into these projects at various stages and gain influence in the development process. This is essentially a pluralist argument (as compared to elite or urban regime theories), contending that average

people can influence policy at all stages. In these accounts, scholars stage political conflict as an equal fight between contenders with differing interests (Gaffikin & Morrissey, 2011), or if not equal, then at least a fight in which community activists have a chance of real power over their situation and can sometimes win (Monti, 1990). Even after reciting a litany of urban failures, urban policy analysts frequently display dogged optimism in the latest iteration of participatory development, like religious converts seeking a new messiah. However, community participation models only work if decisions are actually made at the point of community involvement, rather than being determined prior to any public hearing, as urban regime analysis or growth machine theory indicate. Using the insights of urban regime analysis, we need to look at where decisions are actually being made, whom the overall “flow of decisions” benefits, and, as ever, who maintains control of the majority of resources.

4.5 Trickle-up Development: Tracking Outcomes

With Whirlpool’s wealth, and the constantly-invoked \$500 million cost of the golf course, it can seem counterintuitive to argue that money is flowing upward. In 2010, Wendy Dant Chesser, then-president of Cornerstone Alliance, had presented the project as a symbol of autonomy:

People oftentimes want to turn to Lansing to solve all of the problems, but it’s not their responsibility to fix our problems...This [Harbor Shores] is a locally generated solution to fixing our own problems. We use

government like a toolbox. When we need a tool, we ask them. We're not waiting for Lansing to tell us what to do.(Keagle, 2010)

Dant Chesser was expressing a conviction I heard echoed by several white urban regime members. But this narrative of self-sufficiency is also belied by the project's financial backing by an array of government sources. I asked a Whirlpool executive to look back: "do you think that those grants were essential to moving it forward or do you think you would have done it either way?" He replied, "No, they were essential...we had grants from the Department of Environmental Quality, we had [grants] from the federal government...We probably couldn't have done it." While local elites may have used government as a "toolbox," it was their main source of tools.

Moreover, while the half-billion dollar cost of the development was reiterated endlessly, a document responding to city commissioners' concerns clarified that Harbor Shores was only contributing around \$85 million of the development's costs, or 17% (and this number is also likely high), to purchase land, cover infrastructure costs and financing. Much of these costs would be reimbursed through tax increment financing and land sales to "subdevelopers:"

Therefore, the entities behind Harbor Shores by themselves are not spending \$400,000,000...Hence, \$400,000,000 is not available from a pool of funds for other Benton Harbor related activities. (Dant Chesser, 2008)

As this response points out, the full cost of the development was leveraged from public and private entities, so this money was not available for other purposes. As a

result, the development shows the possibilities and the limits of contemporary financial incentives and policy. While hard numbers are hard to secure, development lawyers celebrated their accomplishment in securing hundreds of millions in public financing for Harbor Shores:

We layered multiple incentives for tax capture, securing more than \$125 million in brownfield TIF incentives and more than \$25 million in brownfield Michigan Business Tax (MBT) credits. We also helped secure Michigan Department of Environmental Quality grants and loans, U.S. EPA grants and loans, a New Markets Tax Credit and a Public Act 425 agreement. (2016)

The only means to see the true direction of money flow is to track it, especially from initial promise to actual outcome. During my field work, city commissioners and residents often reviewed the promises of Harbor Shores, from the thousands of jobs forecast to the millions in projected revenues. One commissioner reflected to me:

Every time they seem to come to want to befriend us, we always get sucked, screwed, hurt. It ends up always costing us more than we're willing to pay. I just think that this whole overall \$500 million development was supposed to bring in millions of dollars, and they're supposed to be flowing in right about now.

Only a few years later, these promises seemed impossibly large, making the residents themselves sound unrealistic in their dreaming. To show how quickly the promise evaporates, Benton Harbor's 2007 audit enthused that "this project could triple the City's existing tax base over the next five years" (*City of Benton Harbor, Michigan Audited Financial Statements for the Year Ended June 30, 2007*, 2007, p. 9). From the Harbor

Shores perspective, the recession dampened these possibilities, or (in the best case) postponed them. As a project visionary argued, “It’s panned out. The original expected outcomes of the project haven’t changed. The timeframe has.” But only detailed attention to the structure and fallout of these benefits can reveal whether the recession or something larger got in the way. This is where the “extraction machine” model is essential. Simply calculating additional income or jobs generated by a project, without specifying their destination or who is doing the spending, is insufficient and inappropriately general. Looking at the project’s material outcomes can show which model, trickle-down development or my extraction machine theory, truly applies.

According to Harbor Shores marketing literature, the economic development study to supplement the project, and project supporters, the benefits are supposed to come from tourism, job creation, golf course revenue, new local ventures to train and educate Benton Harbor residents, tax base increase, new students in the district (unlikely for a development of retirees’ second homes), and, less tangibly, improvement of Benton Harbor’s “brand.” In this section, I will evaluate many of these streams in detail. Overall, the failure of grand promises of just a few years earlier, where the original promises or their outcomes can even still be found, are now retroactively justified by Harbor Shores supporters as impossible. While the one dream (the golf course itself) has been made real, even asking about the second dream (easing Benton Harbor’s dire

straits) brings harsh wake-up calls. Not only did promised benefits never materialize, this failure is retroactively justified as the only possible outcome (and residents were fools for believing otherwise). To the degree that residents, rather than the benefactors, do get any attention, they are blamed for their failure to take advantage of the project's opportunity. As with other development projects, racialized cultural narratives of responsibility and initiative provide a convenient explanation for the continued inequality of benefits.

Studying the project promises and outcomes in tandem illuminates how the extraction machine works by constantly resetting goals, reorganizing agreements, shifting staff and organizations, and reframing narratives. I find that most outcomes, pursued to the end, wound up trickling away from the community, not towards it. Here I emphasize the hidden public subsidies trickling *up* to private enterprise that make the "trickle-down" model possible. When I asked City Commissioner Frank Palmer about the trickle-down approach inherent to the Harbor Shores development, he invoked Martin Luther King's quote about white moderates:

King said the most inveterate--and I'm paraphrasing--enemy to the liberation of black people, poor people, is the white moderate, because they prefer a peace that is based upon, you know, don't ruffle any feathers. Not a peace that's based upon justice, but a peace based upon silence. So you don't really have justice, but you don't have any clamor. And the motto is "be patient," you know, "wait." Which is where he [King] said, "Justice delayed is justice denied." So we're waiting on the trickle-down. When is it going to reach the bottom, and how much?

I asked whether he had seen any trickling from the golf course, Commissioner Palmer replied, “Crumbs, crumbs. As with Lazarus, it was crumbs from the rich man's table, and he was laying there, waiting for it, until he met Jesus.” My investigation here is to understand how much does indeed trickle down.

Part of the confusion in outcome lies in the ever-shifting bottom line of the project. Commissioner “Rhonda Stanley,” who had worked to make Harbor Shores happen, told me she had believed in the promise, but said the project changed shape over time:

During Jeff Noel's presentation and some of the documents which he showed us and proved to us the moneys that would come in and generate... They got to shifting and changing stuff when they were successful at obtaining Jean Klock Park ... It's a 501(c)3 but that's not what they [were] initially supposed to be.

Another commissioner commented on a proposal in 2010, “I hate to sound like a broken record, but sometimes, these agreements tend to change as time goes on” (Heibutzki, 2010). That “shifting and changing” Commissioner Stanley experienced is a crucial mechanism of the extraction machine. Of course, any large, ambitious project is going to have to evolve, but those changes seem to have all occurred in a particular direction. Moreover, the frequent changes themselves work against the city, producing more confusion in a context in which accurate information was already at a premium. The city lacks the team of dedicated lawyers a Whirlpool can muster, and it got locked

into agreements early on. Because of the pressures of Benton Harbor's financial straits, and the artificial state of "emergency," Benton Harbor officials are continually pressured to consent to plans with sky-high promises, on the one hand, and doom-filled predictions on the other. Employing positive language of collaboration, mutual benefit, and community, city officials are pushed to participate in the name of progress. Their participation ranges from selling or donating land, to putting their name on a project to qualify it for better conditions. But Commissioner Mike Boone reflected on Harbor Shores at a 2014 meeting: "I think we been collaborating at a rummage sale rate. You know people are selling two parcels for \$600,000 and giving whole projects away for \$50,000, and a couple [golf course] passes."

4.5.1 Outcomes: Community Benefit Plan

The economic development study commissioned by Harbor Shores and Cornerstone mentioned the Community Benefits Plan (CBP) as a key component of the project's benefit and commitment to the area (R. M. Lewis & Pfister, 2009). The CBP was also mentioned in the development's Work Plan, promotional Harbor Shores material, and multiple news articles. Harbor Shores' Fact Sheet detailing the CBP's commitment was removed from its website in 2016, but it read:

The strategy that is outlined in the Community Benefits Plan includes new affordable housing throughout Benton Harbor, a commitment to fund renovation of existing homes, access to literacy and job training, financial and technical assistance for new small businesses coupled with

strengthening ongoing partnerships with area schools. (quoted in Dwyer, n.d.)

Asking itself the question, “What is the The Community Benefits Plan?”, the website answered, “The Community Benefits Plan will help individuals realize their potential...offer our youth a future, and provide citizens with assistance in building that future.” However, the funding commitment to implement the CBP seemed well below what would be necessary to achieve the ambitious plans outlined above. The 2011 audit specified Harbor Shores’ actual commitment was to maintain a fund for the CBP with an annual contribution of “the greater of \$5,000 or 20 percent of annual net operating income of the golf course” (*City of Benton Harbor, Michigan Audited Financial Statements for the Year Ended June 30, 2011, 2011*).

Although I was promised a copy of the Community Benefits Plan by multiple people during my 2014 fieldwork, the plan itself was elusive until I found it in a Jean Klock Park activist’s online document archive. The plan’s vision statement focuses on values of diversity and interdependence; its expressed goal is to “leverage the physical development opportunities generated by the Harbor Shores project and in turn catalyze systemic change opportunities focused on human capacity building that include educational economic and social initiatives” (6). But the Community Benefits Plan makes no reference to overall long-term outcomes in terms of numbers or commitments. There is no mention of money, accountability, or review. The rest of the document enumerates

several projects and organizations that were to be funded with golf course revenue, designed to bring residents chances at jobs and housing.

Unfortunately, the orientation of the programming pinpointed residents as the problem: a 2008 Harbor Shores memo to Benton Harbor commissioners summarized the programming as designed to “help residents make internal change, and become partners in making external change in the community” (Dant Chesser, 2008, p. 15). One such project was the Family Literacy Center, which was supposed to offer “life skills” classes to Benton Harbor residents. Its curriculum was based on a conceptual model in which residents were the only remaining barrier to their own success in the context of Benton Harbor’s imagined new wealth from the golf course development. One course, “Bridges Out of Poverty,” explicitly referred to the “culture of poverty”:

Moving out of the culture of poverty requires more than an increase in financial means devaluing relationships and accepting achievement as the driving force in ones [sic] life. It will require one to learn and use middle class language and behaviors. (Community Benefits Plan, 11)

Another course was titled “Diversity with Inclusion,” and a third, titled “Home Management Resources,” trained attendees in skills needed to “manage family, personal growth, positive attitudes, healthy lifestyle, family relationships, clutter organization, meal planning and preparation, parenting, and house cleaning.” These course descriptions attribute blame to individuals supposedly holding themselves back with low skills, non-inclusive attitudes, and lower-class culture. While this programming

vanishing so soon is problematic, it is also doubtful Benton Harbor residents would have benefitted from those classes. Other programming, such as a Housing and Home Ownership Consortium, also to be housed in the CWCC's space, similarly focused on individuals. Where earlier community organizations had repeatedly shown anti-Benton Harbor lending discrimination among area banks in studies, this housing consortium was designed to study local homeownership as a matter of identifying the gap between locals' needs and available "tools and incentives" —no longer focusing on banks but families.

The environmental language I described for the golf course itself has also bled through into the community-building narrative about Benton Harbor. Marcus Robinson, the same Whirlpool and Consortium for Community Development representative as above, told a reporter that "the transformation taking place through Harbor Shores" was not just about the landscape: "'We're dealing with human beings,' Robinson says. 'This is the finest raw material in the universe. It's the green part of it. You're growing people. It's the environmental justice aspect of the project'" (Keagle, 2010). Robinson's extemporizing reveals an elision between poor black people and land, where the physical revitalization of space is assumed to also "grow" people.

While its programming was probably unlikely to singlehandedly lift residents out of poverty, there was a bigger problem: none of the range of programs and resources

mentioned in the plan was happening. Only seven years after its creation, the plan was both dated and virtually unenforceable. The centers it referred to were defunct, as were several of their parent organizations and meeting locations: organizations like Citizens for World-Class Communities (CWCC) and the Consortium for Community Development (CCD).

But as long as nobody saw the actual document and its promises, the Community Benefit Plan still served developers' needs. As Ray (2013) has noted of some military "front-stage" veterans' programs, the existence of a program can be the actual purpose of the program. As late as May 2015, the project founder was still referring to the Community Benefits Plan as an extant commitment of Harbor Shores: "its charter says that all of the profits that are generated will go back to the communities and the community foundation—" he cut himself off—"continue to reinvest back in the communities." Although its components are largely defunct, Harbor Shores still gets credit for having written a Community Benefits Plan. Some scholars have extolled the potential value of Community Benefit Agreements (Saito, 2012; Stone & Stoker, 2015), and they can indeed have powerful effects—if they have teeth. But because Harbor Shores' Community Benefits plan was conceptualized as a plan or proposal rather than an official agreement with the community, with follow-up assessment and requirements, there is no accountability. And besides, Harbor Shores has many other ways to meet its

\$5,000 annual obligation, several of which allow it to pocket its own contribution. The city's audit mentions several funding options for Harbor Shores' annual contribution not addressed in the Community Benefits Plan, including "reduced golf course rates, and golf course access for various youth events" (*City of Benton Harbor, Michigan Audited Financial Statements for the Year Ended June 30, 2011, 2011*). In other words, Harbor Shores can pay its obligation simply by occasionally discounting golf course rates for residents or allowing First Tee to play on its grounds.

Meanwhile, if Harbor Shores has skirted any large commitments to this plan, the city itself may be on the hook for these dubious programs. A 2006 Memorandum of Understanding governing a large purchase of city land for the project outlined the city's commitment to place \$300,000 in a third-party account between 2006 and 2008 as a matching grant "to support the efforts of the project's community benefits plan" (*Memorandum of Understanding*, 2006, p. 3). The money would not be spent until Harbor Shores had matched it in golf revenue—but asking the city to hold this significant chunk of money in escrow, during a period when it faced bankruptcy, represents one more hidden cost to the city. Benton Harbor's sponsorship of the Community Benefits Plan, which is narratively positioned as Harbor Shores' gift to the city, is not mentioned in any literature I saw. I have so far been unable to document whether this payment was made, what third party may be holding the money, or how much has been spent. But the

agreement itself is one more case of extraction from City Hall occurring through the very program supposed to provide charitable assistance, without the city getting any credit for its contribution.

“We Make No Money:” Golf Course Revenue

The golf course revenue itself was another piece of the Harbor Shores “dream” that soon trickled away and was retroactively justified as a fantasy. As I have noted, Harbor Shores publicly committed the greater of \$5000 or 20% of its golf revenues to the community benefits plan. But by 2014 the new story was that it had *always* been known that golf courses don't make money, especially nonprofits. By 2010 (in the midst of the Great Recession), some were claiming the golf course boom had busted, with 16,000 courses and not enough golfers, and even the top designers were slowing down: “Jack Nicklaus, whose reported \$2.5 to \$5 million design fee for a “signature course” used to be catnip to developers, has laid off staff architects and cut his asking price in some cases to six figures” (Garrity, 2010). An expert notes,

‘If you go back now and look at the developments going bankrupt, I think you'll see that the big-name designer is part of all those,’ Hurdzan says. ‘Those guys got a big fee, spent money like it was water, and left golf courses that are expensive to maintain. They were doomed to fail.’
(Garrity, 2010)

This reality quickly deflated the promise of golf revenue. Commisioner Norton was frustrated that Harbor Shores, with all its displayed wealth, was telling the city their revenue was nil:

Yeah, they said they don't make any money. They showed we make no money. And I'm like, 'I want the treasurer to dig into this. I want you to look at these books and I want you to verify what they're saying. You give us a piece of paper. Two pieces. This is what we did, this is what we spent. Now we're \$231,000, blah blah blah, in the hole.'

This was backed up at the county level. Ken scoffed, "Harbor Shores? Well, they don't really make anything...They operate as a nonprofit." He continued, "that's *always* been understood that the golf course will probably lose money. Golf courses, particularly public golf courses, tend to lose money. Harbor Shores itself doesn't make anything." He referred back to the community plan that was pledged to be funded with "any excess revenues that they did earn." But, he continued,

My understanding as I've talked to them in more detail about this...is there has just not been any excess revenue generated at this point to fund a lot of those activities. Which was always questionable to begin with, whether there was going to be. I know that they're certainly hoping that there's going to be enough money that comes forward through these programs to fund broad-based community activities.

"That's outside of what we look at, though," Ken concluded. In other words, the county had no role in assessing or enforcing whether Harbor Shores actually made good on this promise. Nobody else did either. And because Harbor Shores only promised to forward golf course *profits* to fund the Community Benefits Plan, it has no obligation to

meet the Community Benefits Plan if there are no profits. As a non-profit, of course, the organization can set its salaries and costs, and is under no obligation to reserve any of its income for the city. Rodney, who was known for his opposition to the project, felt this was the crux of the matter. He told me, “See, now, the Harbor Shores project doesn’t have to be a bad thing—if they pay their taxes and their fair share!” He went on to address the Senior PGA tournament, which was billed both as free publicity and a financial boon to the city (although organizers mightily struggled to get the wealthy, white retirees to even travel through Benton Harbor, much less eat there). An internal 2012 Powerpoint from Harbor Shores had claimed there would be a \$20 million economic impact of the event each year (Hesemann, 2012), but Rodney doubted this:

When they had the PGA in 2012, Benton Harbor didn’t receive one dime. We had to pay \$50,000 for security. \$50,000 to guard Jack Nicklaus and all them other folks! We didn’t make a dime. And we ain’t going to make a dime this time [in 2014]. Nobody’s talking about it.

While this was an expected claim from a Harbor Shores opponent, a county worker was also wondering about the impact of the PGA:

We’re having a mini debate about that right now with the PGA tournament that was just recently here. Does that actually provide an economic stimulus, at least a local and temporary economic stimulus to the area? Our guess is maybe.

In 2014, boosters pointed to the “free advertising” from national coverage of the tournament, but on the ground it proved difficult even to get elderly, wealthy white

PGA attendees to drive into Benton Harbor. The parking shuttle was specifically routed to run through Benton Harbor's Arts District, but without much effect. As another attempt at bringing the communities together, the PGA sponsored three free evening concerts in downtown Benton Harbor (which required significant effort for the city), and distributed tickets at several locations. The tickets in Benton Township's Pizza Hut were gone early, and the restaurant in downtown Benton Harbor later complained that he'd run out too—but the two locations I tried in downtown St. Joseph still had stacks left on the day of the first concert, indicating that a free concert in Benton Harbor was not a big draw for St. Joseph's predominantly white residents.

4.5.2 Outcomes: Jobs

While initial job creation estimates for the project varied, they were all on the high end. A 2005 estimate (measuring in job years) claimed 2500 jobs would be created (Fisher & Douglas, 2006). In 2007, Governor Granholm stated in a speech that "4,000 Benton Harbor area workers will build the development" and Harbor Shores would "ultimately employ 2,000 people" (Begnoche, 2007). A more sober Upjohn Institute analysis (still using Harbor Shores' numbers) estimated the project would create between 162 and 937 temporary construction jobs and 700 permanent jobs by 2020 (Erickcek & Watts, 2008). As late as 2012, an internal Powerpoint for Harbor Shores Leadership included an unattributed slide projecting 3372 construction jobs and 1422

“permanent direct jobs” (Hesemann, 2012). Lawyers working for Harbor Shores still project 1,000 jobs created (2016). But these numbers have all evaporated. By 2014, a commissioner was corrected in a meeting when he said, “Harbor Shores was supposed to bring us five thousand jobs, correct? ... four hundred? Oh, sorry, I thought five thousand.”

Moreover, the quality of the jobs on offer were unlikely to lift families out of poverty. In 2012, Benton Harbor mayor Wilce Cook expressed his hope the golf course would provide “astronomical” income and jobs for the city: ““You know we need people to cut lawns or do the laundry or be caddies – any number of things”” (McClure, 2012). But a commissioner had told a reporter back in 2008 about the then-projected jobs: “Getting us to clean the trash, showers, bathrooms, doing menial work.... These are all low-end jobs and very seasonal” (Dumke, 2008). This was part of a larger pattern I observed in Benton Harbor in which white urban regime members talked about Benton Harbor residents on a “path to employment,” in which the white urban regime was to be applauded for hiring people in the most menial of positions. That framing, highlighting their magnanimity for the few people they did hire, allowed them to hire mostly outside the area. And even so, members of a local non-profit told me that without their efforts, Harbor Shores would not have attempted to hire local even for these jobs. Sherry, a young professional woman from Benton Harbor, whose fruitless job search was pushing

her to move, was frustrated that the Harbor Shores job fairs were only hiring for hourly, low-wage jobs.

I look at Whirlpool like, they do hire some Benton Harbor residents--once again, just get those Benton Harbor residents those salary-paying jobs. Like with that beautiful hotel? It's beautiful, but let's get those Benton Harbor residents some of those management positions instead of the housekeeping positions. Because if they have those housekeeping positions, they're still in poverty level!...So it's still holding them at a certain place! Instead of having some of these out-of-towners, I think that that it should be a large percentage, especially people who got away at school. Get the credentials, have the experience, have the talent. Why wouldn't you? Why wouldn't you? This is their hometown, their community, they're like to give you so much more because, not only do they want to stay here, they have a passion and a love for this town, this area!

Sherry said her local college-educated friends had applied to Whirlpool but couldn't even get a callback, claiming they did not want to hire within Benton Harbor's zip code.

The organization's own statistics did little to dispel the notion that even low-paid jobs were scarce for locals. From 2008 to 2010, Harbor Shores produced documents detailing its yearly accomplishments (these are no longer available on its website). As of 2010, the golf club employed 74 people total in grounds and golf operations. As they put it, 42% of the 28 people working in grounds and 30% of the 46 people in golf operations were "from 4 sq. Mi in Benton Harbor [Benton Harbor]" (*2010 Harbor Shores Accomplishments*, 2010). This ambiguously worded phrase could be interpreted to mean

that their total of 25.5 people were actual residents of the City of Benton Harbor, or simply that they lived nearby (i.e., in St. Joseph).

Beyond the jobs from Harbor Shores itself, much was made in 2012 of the 235 additional temporary PGA jobs offered to residents. I talked to one white woman in 2012 who found temporary work as a painter, and another in 2014 whose job was to evacuate VIPs in a Mercedes SUV in case of inclement weather. While observing the 2014 PGA event, I saw bus and trolley drivers, food workers (hired through a high school program), and a group of black women picking up attendees' trash. However, many jobs went to hundreds of "volunteers" who actually paid \$200 for the opportunity in hopes of getting to see senior golf stars up close.

Derek was one of the elusive few who got a Harbor Shores golf course job as a local. He had attended a meeting where "they were talking about job creation for Harbor Shores, and I got up there on the mic and spoke and I asked them when they all were hiring." A friend who worked there got him in touch with the manager, who hired him in an entry-level position. "I was just happy to have a job, so I was working there, I was out of a job for probably a year and a half until that summer job. But I mean, it paid pretty well, in a way." However, if Derek was one of the lucky ones to get a job, why was he no longer there after almost three years of employment? I asked him what had happened to make him leave.

When I left, I wanted – I wanted to do something different, learn something different, and it seemed like when I was there it wasn't no chance – it seemed like I had to be there for years for me to move up. And I mean, I liked it--I just wanted to move up and more pay. I was getting paid eight [dollars an hour]. And then I asked for a raise; when the time they come back, to do my third year--well, two years and a half – and they wouldn't give me a raise.”

Not only had Derek asked for a raise and been ignored, he said, but he had identified a need and had proposed an addition to his job description to management—one he was particularly suited for. But Harbor Shores’ response was tepid: “it was like, ‘maybe, probably could work something out,’ but it didn't happen after probably a year or so.” Derek got the impression that if he held on another two to four years, he might possibly get moved to supervisory work, even if his proposed position would never materialize. But he was frustrated that his requests had been ignored, so he quit. By this time, Derek estimated, about half of the original group of 15 local employees had also quit or been fired.

4.5.3 Outcomes: City Tax Capture

A major trackable outcome of the Harbor Shores development was its capture of city taxes to repay some development costs, through a program used by many US municipalities, Tax Increment Financing (TIF). In this section, I use my analysis of Harbor Shores’ Brownfield TIF program to argue these development incentives give developers reasons to prey on distressed cities when they give maximum extractive

potential to development that gives the promise of “helping” the worst off. Because of the long time horizon for municipal benefit inherent to most TIFs, and developers’ lack of obligation to guarantee any outcome, cities engaging in this ostensibly innocuous program are often gambling with the deck stacked against them, as is proven by their tepid outcomes (Briffault, 2010; Dye & Merriman, 2000; Pacewicz, 2013; Weber, 2010). This program serves as a federally supported Ponzi scheme in which “later investors” — taxpayers—are channeling money to the early investors (developers.) It represents part of a trend of public goods being captured for private profit (Aiken, 2014; deMause & Cagan, 2008; N. I. Fainstein & Fainstein, 1996; Farmer & Poulos, 2012; Frieden & Sagalyn, 1991; Gotham, 2013; Quiroz & Lindsay, 2015).

Tax increment financing has become commonplace in most states, where cities obtain bonds for or reimburse part of the cost of new development. Weber has commented on this phenomenon of cities using long-term assets as capital for short-term gain: “by turning the rights to their own heterogeneous property tax base into standardized, tradable assets—often without the knowledge of the individual property owners paying their tax bills” (Weber, 2010, p. 258). Every municipality can create its own TIF rules, so these programs vary widely in their terms and benefit to cities, and have long been shown to have mixed results for cities (Briffault, 2010). I propose that

vulnerable cities, with their lack of negotiating power, are more likely to have TIF rules that further exploit them.

Many TIF districts are designed to encourage development in distressed areas that need an increased tax base but would not otherwise be desirable for new growth. This can provide an incentive for cities and developers to “discover” a blighted area. With a TIF agreement, any new development within that district will be repaid the eligible costs of development (which vary across projects, TIFs, and states). Essentially, by subsidizing development costs with taxes, TIF helps developers earn back their investment even if their development struggles. And the long time horizon for these deals (frequently up to 20 or 30 years) represents the full life cycle (and taxable value) of many developments. Take, for example, a hypothetical 20-year TIF agreement in which the developer gets back all the new tax value created by a shopping mall built in 2015 until development costs of \$3 million are repaid. The city will not enjoy any of the new tax value until 2035, which would be fine if the mall were a guaranteed source of tax income by then. But given the average mall lifespan, it is very possible the city will have a blighted mall in 2035, with little tax value, while the developer can walk away with no loss and no accountability for the new blight.

The creation of new municipal “assets” for sale to the private sphere forms part of the growing financialization of cities, which have been pushed into increasingly

vulnerable fiscal arrangements. Weber (2003) points out the difficulty of modeling the counterfactual, complicating assessment of TIFs' impact. But even early analysis (Huddleston, 1986) showed that net revenue grew only over a long time. Moreover, there is little data on the extent or outcome of these programs. For instance, there is near-total lack of state oversight and enforcement of TIF in Michigan. Although the Treasury Department collects audit statements from Michigan's 1,300 TIF entities, it does not analyze them (Haglund, 2012). TIF revenue in Michigan was supposed to be \$280 million in the fiscal year 2014 but could be as high as \$1.2 billion, because only 20% of districts reported (Bieri & Kayanan, 2014). This 2014 report estimated TIFs could capture as much as 10% of all property tax revenue in the state.

In Benton Harbor's case, the city continues to capture taxes for the baseline value of the Harbor Shores property pre-development but remits everything over that amount (which is projected to increase annually) to the developer until all eligible costs are repaid. This provides Harbor Shores with an additional incentive to set the initial value of the land low. County and Brownfield Authority project-related expenses including administrative costs are also reimbursed annually from the captured taxes, then the remainder goes to repay the developer. And if the project yields less tax revenue than forecast, the TIF lasts longer. Ken (the Berrien County employee) noted of the Harbor Shores TIF that projections had been "wildly off the mark": "I mean, we thought we'd be

far ahead where we are right now. We thought the project would be generating two or three million in new revenue annually,” instead of approximately half a million per year. At a slower revenue rate, Ken explained, the developer captures city taxes for longer:

The problem is, the longer it takes them to get new investment the longer it stretches that project out. I mean, ideally what you want is for investment to occur right away, get those costs paid back, and get it back on the tax roll, so to speak.

Harbor Shores’ eligible costs for TIF capture added up to about \$20 million. Its TIF program is relatively little discussed in local media, even the more critical analyses of Harbor Shores. For instance, a lengthy 2008 article discussed millions in state funding extracted through the Whirlpool family’s lobbying and subtle threats of Whirlpool’s exit, but did not mention the TIF (Dumke, 2008).

However, the project Work Plan (obtained late into my research) showed the Harbor Shores project had been eligible for *two* simultaneous TIF capture plans. One, under the the state’s Department of Environmental Quality, reimbursed environmental remediation costs—reflecting the philosophy of brownfield TIFs, that localities want to equalize the cost of building on a brownfield compared to new ground. So far, so good. But Harbor Shores was also granted another TIF under Michigan’s economic development arm, MEGA, covered up to \$55.2 million in demolition as well as new infrastructure like lighting, sewers, roads, for a total of \$72.8 million. In other words,

while the the project's reimbursable costs ended up being only around \$20 million (requiring tax repayment for 25 years if the full amount is not repaid), the project had been approved to extract eligible expenses of nearly 4 times the amount. Moreover, the Work Plan disclosed that both TIF agreements also allow the developer to collect interest on these investments from city tax revenue. Confusingly, the Work Plan is not specific about the end date for repayment, and states that city commissioners can always extend a deadline in any case. It is also not specific on crucial information about accruing interest. The plan notes the accrual of between 4.5% and 6% interest—even the lower rate of interest on the full approved amount could have added up to an additional \$151 million over 25 years in interest alone (with the actual numbers and lower rate, I calculated the project would accumulate \$44.6 million in interest in 25 years). The MEDC representative I spoke with said the agency had since standardized its interest rate for all projects and made it simple, not compounding, but multiple MEDC contacts did not know whether the Harbor Shores project fell under these new rules. Moreover, the MEDC representatives I spoke with did not know whether interest was being reimbursed in this case. One person expressed surprise a TIF from 2006 would still be active.

These details do not seem to be generally known in the area, and Harbor Shores itself is opaque on the matter. For instance, Harbor Shores maintained a Fact Sheet on its

website from 2012 (but had removed this and other material from its site by 2016, as I have noted). The fact sheet, formatted as questions and answers, was intended to allay fears over the city's liability for the development. One sample "question" asked, "Will Benton Harbor or Saint Joseph be liable for repayment of any of the debt raised to pay for the public infrastructure?" The response was, "No. Harbor Shores Community Redevelopment, Inc., the project's master developer, will secure financing for the infrastructure. Harbor Shores will be the party responsible for repaying the debt. Neither Benton Harbor nor St. Joseph will be liable for repayment of the debt" ("Harbor Shores Fact Sheet," 2011). This answer is hard to reconcile with the MEGA TIF specifically designed to use taxes to reimburse developers for infrastructure investments—if the answer hinges on the TIF not being categorized as "debt," that seems like an academic distinction for those concerned.

Further, Harbor Shores was only eligible to receive the second, much larger MEGA TIF for repayment of infrastructure costs because of Benton Harbor's poverty. State program guidelines lay out expectations for development, and the more a project can meet, the more likely it will be funded. Some expectations draw on current thinking about urban planning—that a project be "walkable," high-density, centrally located. But a project gets additional "points" in evaluation, and is eligible for additional programs, if it is located in what Michigan calls "core communities." An insider told me this project

was always going to be approved because Governor Granholm wanted it. But even without her personal leverage, Harbor Shores was likely to have been approved because, on paper, it represented the ideal project state agencies were looking for. “I mean, honestly, if it's a project that seems to have a large impact in a historically depressed community, it's going to get favorable review.” As I will lay out, Benton Harbor being “historically depressed” made the project eligible for conditions more favorable to developers. The logic is that developers require these extra incentives to locate in the areas that most need development. But these incentives can also promote a predatory stance toward the communities least able to defend themselves.

Moreover, the county, state and development representatives worked to use Benton Harbor’s poverty as a magic cloak covering the whole golf course for the purpose of upward redistribution. Although most public coverage of the project located Harbor Shores in Benton Harbor, the development actually extended well into the boundaries of both St. Joseph and Benton Township. But as I tried to pin down the precise outline of Harbor Shores relative to those municipal boundaries, this turned out to be surprisingly difficult. I had heard a commissioner speculate on where the boundary fell for Harbor Shores’ new hotel, and realized I was not alone in this confusion. The hotel is on the Paw Paw River facing St. Joseph, in an area where city boundaries seemingly wind around one another. Looking up the property outline on

GIS did not clarify my question, nor could I understand why there were two property ID numbers for each property in that area. When I went to the county building on my next research trip to ask for the definitive boundary lines between cities around the development, this simple question unlocked a key component of the project. In fact, the hotel and much of the housing, especially the units priced over \$150,000 (and up to \$800,000), were not located in Benton Harbor at all. (See Figure 2.) Of the houses built so far, Benton Harbor has the most modest housing (priced online up to \$375,000, but must have sold for less) and fewest units (19), while 58 are in Benton Township (priced between \$300,000-\$600,000), and 57 are in St Joseph (prices \$450,000-\$850,000). The next stage of construction is another 60 cottages and 168 condo units, also in St. Joseph. The houses represent the “large taxable investment component,” according to Ken who works for the county. The golf course itself, primarily in Benton Harbor, will never generate significant taxes, as it is a non-profit enterprise. This means St Joseph and BT will receive more direct tax revenue from the project after the TIF is finally repaid.

The reason for my initial confusion, and the two property ID numbers, stemmed from the TIF arrangement. As relatively well-off municipalities, St. Joseph and Benton Township did not qualify for a TIF to prepay infrastructure investments – only environmental remediation of the land. But Benton Harbor, with its post-industrial status and distressing demographics, qualified as a “core community”, eligible for more

extensive tax capture. As a result, the city and Harbor Shores collaborated under a “425 Agreement” to temporarily transfer all the land in Harbor Shores into the municipality of Benton Harbor. This land swap allows the entire development to qualify for more extensive tax capture, as its whole territory nominally counts as a core community. In 25 years or once the TIF is repaid fully, whichever is sooner, the land will revert to St. Joseph/Benton Township boundary lines and jurisdiction. Moreover, while this property is nominally inside Benton harbor for this time period, the 425 Agreement specifies that the city of Benton Harbor collects taxes for the property but forwards them to the city of St. Joseph. Otherwise, the county staffperson said, it would not be fair for St. Joseph to participate in the agreement because St. Joseph would be giving up a good amount of taxes.⁴ The result of this transfer is that these two better-off municipalities are able to pretend their property lies in Benton Harbor, while still keeping the baseline tax revenue from that property. The real winner here is the developer, which is able to capture more tax revenue, but Benton Harbor is also the clear loser. The outcomes for the two other municipalities seem more likely to generate revenue- while Benton Harbor’s involvement seems more like asset capture. Like with other former developments, initial

⁴ Since the 425 agreement was reached, St. Joseph has itself been reclassified as a "core community," meaning the land transfer would not have been necessary if the development were happening today. This does not mean St. Joseph is experiencing distress: rather, the redesignation is an indicator that these projects, rules and categories are constantly shifting. Better-off communities like St. Joseph have the means to take advantage of programs when they serve their interest.

plans for Harbor Shores showed more direct engagement with Benton Harbor, that “shifting and changing” as time went on. As Commissioner Stanley put it, “The hotel that was supposed to go up was supposed to be in Benton Harbor. Beautiful indoor waterpark type of thing to get us all beefed up to OK this thing.” The property originally drawn in as the larger waterpark hotel, designed to bring in the majority of tourism revenue, instead became Whirlpool’s new building on Main Street.

It may seem implausible that this piece of the project would have been obscure to me for so long. But I was only told about the property transfer by county staff after a preamble that this issue was extremely complex, but a small army of lawyers had written the agreement, and the land transfer was therefore aboveboard. I was also asked whether I was really just a graduate student (and not some kind of lawyer or investigator) before the 425 agreement was explained. Similarly, when I broached this subject with the Harbor Shores operations manager, he prefaced his explanation with “I probably shouldn’t be saying this.” But in the version he told me, the city of St. Joseph had decided to transfer over some property to Benton Harbor so that the taxes could be paid to the city. Given that Benton Harbor has to remit those taxes to St. Joseph, and that this was not the reason for the property transfer, his explanation seemed at least a little disingenuous. Articles during the period in which the Benton Harbor city commission approved the agreement did not cover the terms of the agreement in depth (Swidwa,

2005; Swidwa & McEvilly, 2005), simply explaining the 425 agreement covered four parcels in St. Joseph and was necessary to obtain tax increment financing. This is all to say that this aspect of the Harbor Shores development is little-known and poorly understood, and that I do not know of any other media, academic or publicly accessible website providing the information I lay out above. As Sherry, the resident looking for a good job, put it,

I don't think people were educated to find out, like, this is not going to bring us money! If it's not bringing us money, who is it bringing money to? And I don't think those questions were really asked like that. And they definitely, I don't think they were answered.

4.5.4 Outcomes: School Tax Capture

Under the twisted logic of Tax Increment Financing, Benton Harbor's dire statistics also qualified Harbor Shores developers to capture school taxes in addition to city taxes to reimburse land development costs. The state's TIF rules allow developers to take school taxes only in its worst-off communities, with the excuse that incentives like these are necessary to encourage the development. As Ken from the county explained,

If it's a project that will have a small impact in an otherwise "favored" community, it's not going to get school tax relief...It's got to be a pretty exceptional project on paper in order to get that capture. For the most part, when we do brownfield plans we don't even apply for the school tax capture because it's just unlikely to be granted anyway.

As Ken indicates, the project's expected "high impact" in an unfavored community makes it eligible for further extraction.

But his explanation of what the schools actually received when Harbor Shores captured their tax money was confusing. I had heard the state reimbursed these taxes to the district. As Ken put it, “The schools actually do get a benefit” as compared to the city’s delayed tax revenue, “Because they’re getting paid what otherwise they would’ve been able to levy against the new development...they get new revenues.” But then he cut himself off: “Well--that’s tricky. I shouldn’t say it like that. They don’t necessarily get new revenues.” Thanks to the Michigan’s Proposal A (1994) that pools the state education tax and redistributes it “*across* the school districts,” Benton Harbor schools “benefit slightly in the sense that anything that increases the state educational tax fund, is necessarily going to benefit the schools collectively, but they’re not absolutely going to get every dollar back.” Ken’s correction addresses a side issue, that Benton Harbor Area Schools is actually harmed by the state’s redistributive law and receives less than if its district funding were based on property taxes. But it did not explain what was happening right now in Benton Harbor: after my conversation with Ken, I still didn’t know how the state reimbursed the district for captured taxes.

It took several more calls to state agencies to clarify that schools were only getting “reimbursed” as a function of their receiving the regular state distribution based on income. Michigan’s purportedly redistributive school funding plan under Proposal A is intended to bring districts up to a minimum funding level (although wealthy districts

also receive state funding, which means funding disparities are maintained rather than eliminated). As Harbor Shores captures the school tax increase from its development, Benton Harbor area schools are paid the same amount from the school aid fund they would have received to match that state minimum without any project happening. In other words, Benton Harbor schools were not really being reimbursed by the state: instead, they are being funded as if the Harbor Shores project didn't exist (with the hope of possible future revenue starting in 2025 or later). Not only is the state on the hook (which means taxpayers are on the hook), but the implication that Benton Harbor Area Schools see some immediate benefit from the project is incorrect.

Given the dire straits of Benton Harbor's school district, which carried \$16 million in debt as of 2015 and was operating under a consent decree (the step prior to an emergency manager), the capture of school tax is consequential. And Benton Harbor is not the only "core community" experiencing school tax capture. For example, in 2013 Detroit's current development maven, the Illitch family, were given a \$261.5 million TIF from the Downtown Development Association (DDA) to repay construction bonds for their new \$500 million Red Wings hockey arena, including school tax capture. As in Benton Harbor, this TIF is taking money from an underfunded and indebted school district in emergency management—but in Detroit's case, a special bill had to be passed to allow it (Felton, 2014). And as in Benton Harbor, news coverage tended not to address

school tax capture except, for example, to report the DDA's claim that the "state reimburses the schools for the diverted money" (Shea, 2013). I would wager most laypeople do not know this is part of the Harbor Shores development or, if they do, what it means. Further, the lack of clarity on how school tax capture worked, even among multiple government employees overseeing these programs, meant enlightenment was probably not forthcoming soon. The moral legitimization and non-controversy over developers' capture of school tax money precisely *because* of a community's poverty shows how deep development ideology goes.

The logic behind the Harbor Shores TIFs matches the logic of earlier and parallel business and development incentives. Benton Harbor has been host to decades of variations on Enterprise Zones: it had the first such zone in the state, in 1983, for which observers noted the irony of Benton Harbor having to emphasize its distress, "a town that is literally putting its worst foot forward," in order to qualify for the benefit (Porterfield, 1985). Another notable program, HUD's Section 108 plan, allows cities to make unsecured business loans to entities promising development or local jobs, with no enforcement mechanisms or security necessary and a low repayment rate (with their own CDBG money held as collateral). Benton Harbor is now undergoing its second round of long-term debt payments made to CDBG to cover the loans businesses failed to repay. In each case, extractive policies are stronger precisely in the most vulnerable

areas, with the justification that these bad deals and gambles are the only hope for distressed cities—the same narrative of “this or nothing” I found in the stories about the industrial wasteland on which the golf course was built. Through these programs, which were designed to bring needed attention and money to poor districts, business interests have a perverse incentive to locate in these districts. The logic behind these programs is that when government entices self-interested business ventures to locate in high-poverty areas, everyone wins. But these localities pay for the eventual cost in a shell game that hides the cost to taxpayers. Thanks to the present discursive consensus on economic development, very little attention is being paid to this upward redistribution of wealth in which community distress, whether through debt or development, now serves as a source of capital for the same power elite. Still less scholarship examines the relationship of these policies to soaring municipal debt and asks whether the programs ostensibly designed to stimulate urban growth actually worsen city finances. At a 2014 meeting, Commissioner Boone reflected back on Harbor Shores as part of a string of development ideas that had not yet turned around the city:

We went a long time on if instead of when. We’ve been giving property away on if, and maybe, and haven’t got a when. It sounds good. But it sounds just like...all these other developments that we gave away property to save, save the budget and all these other kind of things, and collaborated, and helped, and tax breaked and broke up the economy, and Benton Harbor yet is still on the decline.

4.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have illustrated how an apparently humanitarian economic development project can redistribute wealth upward. The white urban regime monopolizes moral authority and agency to set terms, allowing it to benefit even from arrangements expressly intended to benefit Benton Harbor. My examination showed how Harbor Shores' appropriation of public park land represents just one of many forms of extraction under the development. Some of the most insidious extraction mechanisms were far less public or visible, but led just the same to the impoverishment of the city. The white urban regime has turned the effects of previous generations' extraction—financial distress, industrial blight and pollution—into its financial resource, while avoiding blame for those outcomes. Organized under the banner of development and wealth creation, these financial arrangements are perfectly legal and even common—which is why careful attention to their context and outcomes is essential to fully understand them. These arrangements also ensure that Harbor Shores and its funders get paid first, before Benton Harbor sees any revenue.

I also showed how shifting narratives, organizations, and staff allowed development advocates to evade accountability for earlier promises of city revenue, local jobs, and community support that would have at least gestured at fairness. While boosters suggested these early optimistic figures were simply subject to the vicissitudes

of the Great Recession, many of those projections formed the basis for grant, loan and other incentives accruing regardless of the actual outcomes. By tracking the actual promises through to the present, I have been able to show how these arrangements shifted to the advantage of the white urban regime and the cost of the city. As this project evolved, the ground was pulled from under the feet of city officials—sometimes literally. The white urban regime in Benton Harbor, acting through Harbor Shores and related nonprofits, was able to extract multiple types of resources from the city. Here, I review these elements. Harbor Shores captured public park land for an elite golf course and replaced it with inaccessible parcels. Beyond the specific acreage appropriated for Jean Klock Park, the overall development, comprising the golf course, beach, housing, hotel, even the recreational paths, serves to communicate that a significant swath of the city's territory is not for the use of Benton Harbor residents.⁵ I am unmoved by the justification that this land, as former industrial brownfields, was already underused: the golf course was not the only potential use of space. Nor does this explanation account for local former manufacturers' culpability in abandoning that area.

Beyond the extraction of land, I have laid out several additional ways in which resources promised to Benton Harbor residents were redirected away from the city. The

⁵ Sitting outside my apartment one evening, I got into conversation with a five-year-old girl, and asked if she ever went to the beach a few miles away. She said she had never been. Her mother had told her there were sharks in the lake.

project's Community Benefits Plan, consisting of programming and funding repeatedly promised to residents, and specified in multiple grant, loan and other financial requests, is already in shambles (but not acknowledged as such)—because it was committed based on nonexistent revenue. Although the project was justified on the basis of job creation, and some amount of effort was expended to hire locals, very few local Benton Harbor residents are currently employed. The large hotel to be located in Benton Harbor is so far nonexistent, but another one was constructed inside St Joseph's boundary. Infrastructure costs in St. Joseph and Benton Township will be reimbursed to Harbor Shores because property was temporarily placed inside Benton Harbor's boundary, to capitalize from Benton Harbor's distressing demographics. School and city taxes generated from the project will be captured indefinitely, but at least for the next decade.

The Harbor Shores project represents part of a contemporary form of consumerism that sells the idea of doing good while buying shoes, going on vacation, and doing other self-oriented acts. If the wealthy can reassure themselves that Harbor Shores' wealth will trickle down, then inequality is no longer problematic. We are encouraged to believe that this is the only possible way development can go. But working within this paradigm severely foreshortens the scope of possible futures.

In the following chapter, I turn to examine my second exemplar case illustrating the white urban regime's operation of an extraction machine in Benton Harbor. I

examine Benton Harbor's time under emergency management, its reasons for distress, and narratives justifying emergency management.

Chapter 5: When Democracy Disappears: Emergency Management in Benton Harbor

5.1 Introduction: Emergency Management as a Lens

On the heels of the great physical transformation of the Harbor Shores project, which had promised the economic revitalization of the city, came a more sobering development. The city of Benton Harbor was declared in a state of fiscal emergency by a state review team and put under state-led “emergency financial management” in April 2010. Benton Harbor’s second major intervention of the past decade removed all power from its elected officials for five years, locally disenfranchising its population. Examining this period can help understand local black governance and citizenship, and even larger dynamics of race and politics in the contemporary era.

In selecting this case for study, I wanted to show how emergency management took shape in the city, and what its likely impact would be. But as my study developed, I realized other factors were in play. The construct of “emergency management” was instructive not only for examining in itself, but for what it showed about the larger political climate. At this moment of “low tide” in local governance, another governing structure became visible, one that was usually largely hidden: the white urban regime. I show how this case illuminates local racial politics, and the white urban regime’s operation, by discussing three aspects of emergency management in relation to racial governance in crisis.

First, emergency management came in response to Benton Harbor's fiscal crisis—but this crisis was necessary because of previous extraction efforts (taxation, white flight and business tax avoidance). The process of emergency management legitimates the systematic defunding of Benton Harbor and other postindustrial centers by pinning the blame on financial mismanagement rather than these structural factors. Emergency management also facilitates additional extraction of the city's assets, from land to services to water to pension funds. The concrete extraction under emergency management matters, but the narrative justification of emergency management is a critical and underestimated tool for the white urban regime. In examining this case, I focus primarily on how emergency management illuminates the ideological dimensions of the extraction machine.

Next, I examine the law's logic as a political blank slate to reset "problem" government, logic that obscures the asset capture implicit to the process. Emergency management uses blank slate logic to obscure the relationships producing inequality. The idea of the blank slate suggests (erroneously) that emergency managers are neutral administrators providing better governance, reinforcing the white urban regime's depiction of black city officials as hopelessly inadequate. The blank slate also puts an artificial cap on external involvement in Benton Harbor, maintaining the illusion that the city is otherwise isolated (and therefore, that future problems will again be the fault of

elected officials). By valorizing an abstracted notion of “change,” it facilitates the same disruption that is elsewhere identified as part of Benton Harbor’s problem. As such, emergency management serves as one of many mechanisms by which the extraction machine destabilizes the city, keeping it in a state of crisis. Whether through shifting management, unclear recordkeeping of agreements, or less-than-transparent governance, emergency management inhibits the creation of institutional memory. The city is always starting over at zero, thanks to “blank slate” ideology, resulting in lost institutional memory, facts and agreements. Emergency management is not a *solution* to crisis, but one disruption in a series of human-made crises.

Third, I show how emergency management consolidated a white power structure (the *white urban regime*) already in place surrounding Benton Harbor, shutting black city officials out of information networks as well as governance and control of local resources. The period of emergency management illuminates extreme race-based differences in social networks and resources, including access to setting the terms of debate, even in writing laws and policies. Emergency management builds up the shadow governance of the white urban machine, both through material assets and by symbolically legitimating its members’ shadow governance. If elected government can’t be trusted, then the white urban regime’s own shifts and inconsistencies are much less salient. Emergency management is one tactic in a broader political dynamic

undermining both black citizenship and elected black governance, and providing alternative, depoliticized and limited forms of participation.

5.1.1 Competing Perspectives: Story-Telling

I found a polarized debate when I began studying the impact of a state-appointed emergency manager replacing Benton Harbor's all-black elected government officials. Some residents were arguing, in the strongest possible terms, that their disenfranchisement through state takeover was part of a long-term plan to drive out the city's 90% black and poor population. They noted that most cities under emergency management were majority-black, and alleged the law itself was illegal. A commissioner claimed at a recorded 2011 city commission meeting: "If this works in Benton Harbor, and we have disenfranchised Benton Harbor citizens for a generation, to not stand up for their democratic rights, then it will work anywhere else in the country. This is not just Benton Harbor. But it is just Benton Harbor because we're the test tube baby" (Friends of Benton Harbor, 2011). But the other side claimed this law was a necessary administrative tool to restore order to the city whose democracy was not worth fighting for. One columnist, Julie Mack, wrote in 2011, "Who in Michigan would have guessed that Benton Harbor, one of the state's most dysfunctional municipalities, could become a poster child for the virtues of local control?" She continued, "What's worse for Benton

Harbor: A financial manager with dictatorial powers or an utterly dysfunctional city government?" (Mack, 2011).

While commentators like Mack claimed to present "facts" against the dictatorship "story," those facts were not so easy to ascertain. When I first arrived in Benton Harbor in April 2012, the emergency manager's material actions were subordinate to local beliefs about his work. For instance, I was told by someone introducing me to the community, a white woman working for a non-profit, that the local consortium of black ministers was conflicted on emergency management. They deplored the removal of democracy, she said, but were happy the budget was balanced. In fact, EM Harris never balanced the budget during his tenure—but it is an understandable mistake, given uncritical local media coverage of Harris' statements that the budget would be balanced for that fiscal year and that he expected to leave shortly (Moor, 2011; L. Smith, 2011a, 2011b).

I begin with this conflict to show how the power to set the terms of truth and "facts" drove outcomes in Benton Harbor. As I have noted in my methodology section, my negotiation among types of claims was itself informative about the ground-level, social meaning of emergency management, which had real repercussions for the community. Each strand of my argument below is informed by the ways stories, information, and claims of credibility contribute to Benton Harbor's long-lasting

“emergency”. The differing perspectives on the meaning of emergency management are not just stopping points on the way to find the truth, conveniently located between two poles. Instead, the differences themselves encapsulate key dimensions of the local political conflict. Who monopolizes truth, who can claim neutrality, who can back up claims or get their questions answered—all this matters immensely.

5.2 Emergency Manager Law—Background

Michigan’s Emergency Manager law (PA 436, in its present iteration) permits the state to replace local government with an emergency manager for cities in financial crisis. The idea is that a single state-appointed person will be able to fix municipalities’ problems faster and cheaper than elected government. In 2014, eight cities had state-appointed emergency managers or consent decrees. Michigan has had an emergency financial manager law since 1988 (PA 101), but the law was significantly strengthened in 1990 (PA 72) and expanded again in 2011 (PA 4), giving emergency managers power over every aspect of local government. While PA 4 was overturned by voter referendum in November 2012, the state legislature passed a new version (PA 432) within a month, with the specification that this law cannot be overturned by popular vote. Under orders to balance a city’s budget, emergency managers have the power to break contracts, sell public property or utilities, and fire any public employee. They can even dissolve the

city. Emergency managers are not accountable to local residents and are allowed to specify the remaining power of elected officials.

Under all its iterations, the emergency manager law has had large racial disparities in its implementation. Including Detroit (placed under state receivership in April 2013), half of all blacks in Michigan had no local elected representation in 2014, as compared to only two percent of whites. Further, the six cities most heavily populated by blacks were all under some form of state administration. The law is supposedly triggered when cities' fiscal health scores are elevated, but the review process means there is discretion in applying the law. In a 2014 State Supreme Court decision in a case attempting to overturn PA 436, Judge Steeh dismissed several of the plaintiffs' claims but upheld their equal protection claim based on the law's racial impact, despite it being "facially neutral" ("Order Granting in Part and Denying in Part Defendants' Motion to Dismiss (Doc. #41) and Denying Defendants' Motion to Stay Proceedings (Doc #47), Catherine Phillips, et al v. Richard Snyder, et al.,"). Steeh noted that the "fiscal health" scoring system used to put cities under watch or review was only triggering black cities despite equivalent scores in some white communities. To assess the role of race, researchers at the University of Michigan's Public Policy school have done preliminary analysis of the probability that a city would be taken over by the state. Holding the city's

fiscal stability index¹ constant, chances of state takeover rise fifty percent with every ten percent increase in black population (Kirkpatrick & Breznau, 2014).

Further, the idea of “racial threat” (J. E. Oliver & Wong, 2003) could be active in whites’ support of the 2011 iteration of the Emergency Manager law, PA 4. When PA 4 was repealed by voter referendum in November 2012, the only six counties voting to keep emergency managers were suburbs of majority-black cities with an emergency manager.² Residents of the mostly-white upper portion of the state may have considered the issue on universal grounds, while white residents near black cities, with a more concrete idea of the law’s implementation, supported it.

Michigan’s Emergency Manager law falls in a tradition of racialized autonomy loss. Back in the 1970s, Holden claimed the emergence of urban non-white ethnic majorities had historically led to “outright 'ripper' legislation [by state government] by which critical functions are simply taken away from the city government” (Holden, 1971, p. 68). More recent state takeovers have ranged from the black-founded town of Princeville, NC, to Oakland, Baltimore, and Newark’s public school systems. Clearly, anyone interested in race and voting rights, local participation and citizenship should be

¹ The fiscal stability index is composed of 20 distinct measures of fiscal health, and is supposed to be the sole determinant for receivership.

² Berrien County, where Benton Harbor is located, was one of the six voting to keep the Emergency Manager law. Benton Harbor has only 6 percent of the county’s residents, so its voters, who voted two-to-one against the law, could not have been influential in the referendum.

invested in the origins and outcomes of emergency management. Sociologists studying race and citizenship have tended to focus on the racial consequences of felon disenfranchisement (Alexander, 2010; Davis, 2005; Uggen & Manza, 2002) or other voter reforms (Chatman, 2012), but have not examined the emerging case of whole cities being put under state receivership. While urban regime analysis minimizes the significance of electoral power and participation in these elite-run cities, none has yet considered a case in which elected local representation was actually invalidated. I build on both urban regime analysis and Reed's "black urban regime" intervention by examining a case in which black elected leadership was supplanted — who holds power in the urban regime when the state takes over?

In what follows, I lay out my major findings. To reiterate them briefly: first, emergency management helped reframe a structural problem as a management problem, justifying prior rounds of extraction. Second, the "blank slate" ideology behind emergency management keeps local politics in crisis, facilitating future taking. Third, emergency management shut out black elected politicians, but facilitated white urban regime governance. In other words, emergency management reflects local whites' understanding of Benton Harbor's problems, while reproducing the same dynamics at play prior to emergency management: dynamics of crisis, institutional forgetting, extraction, revolving governance, and indebtedness.

5.3 Individual Blame for Structural Problems

Whites working in business and non-profits around Benton Harbor commonly deplored the city government's "dysfunction," or lack of ability to get things done—remember the earlier comment comparing the commission to "Barnum and Bailey." white urban regime members (if interviewed anonymously) talked at length about this dysfunction, whether attributed to lack of education, "self-serving politics," stupidity, nepotism, or corruption, as the causal origin of Benton Harbor's problems justifying state intervention. One member of the white urban regime, "Steve," commented, "The city is not bleeding anymore [since emergency management ended]...It was just total complete stupidity and mismanagement." Unlike Steve, "Eric," another white urban regime member working downtown, tried to soften his language, but ended up with a similar conclusion:

To be a city commissioner, I think, is a pretty complex job. You have to have a wide range of, in some ways, education, but certainly a wide range of experience in what it actually means to run a city, to be part of developing a city, especially a city like this that needs to go from nothing to something. There's a lot of people that don't have that education, that are ignorant, maybe stupid—I don't know—but certainly ignorant about it.

"Donald," whom I introduced earlier, had no such qualms about how he would sound. He suggested I speak to all the city commissioners (breaking with others' practice of suggesting only the "good ones"), but added,

They're all whacked. They're all whacked. Meaning, they're from one end of the spectrum to the other, in terms of good, or bad, or crazy, or otherwise. But I would interview every single one of them.

LS: And what do you mean whacked if you say they're all over the spectrum?

Donald: They're whacked out. Meaning you can have some that are whacked out left, and then whacked out right. They could be--but it's a very polarized group. Now that's another dissertation. The commission.

These comments reflect what many white urban regime members think of the black officials running Benton Harbor. These descriptions of black commissioners effectively devalued that group's perspective. The content of their political disagreements was entirely erased by focusing on the fact that commissioners were politically divided. Focusing on individuals and their alleged deficits parallels the use of "culture of poverty" narratives attributing black poverty to behavior. Even city commissioners agreed that city governance had traditionally been fractious, divided, and often poorly run. But from attending commission and committee meetings, I saw the substance of their political disagreement was often highly important. Moreover, some commissioners pointed out that the disagreement itself was not causally responsible for the city's problems.

Even some whites who opposed emergency management recognized the strength of the "dysfunctional" narrative in the context of a black city. In a Detroit interview also attended by a key informant, Troy, a white lawyer, complained about the

tendency to focus on small-scale corruption and dysfunction in black cities like Detroit and Benton Harbor as the supposed causes of structural problems. But in his opinion, that narrative was hard to fight given the "tough crowd" in Benton Harbor:

Troy: That is, and they've done a good job of putting that narrative out, is that it's a bad job of managing money, incompetence, and you know, incompetence and/or corruption. And it's a pretty easy sell when you're--

Key informant (overlapping): When your mayor's in jail--

Troy: Yeah. And you point to a black city in white America. You know? Kwame [Kilpatrick] doesn't help— And, you know, folks in Benton Harbor, like I said—it's a tough crowd? you know? We got [*names a resident*] at the podium, you know. Even if I like someone individually, it's—they don't help combat that image.

In trying to fight the emergency manager law, this lawyer noted the difficulty in obtaining plaintiffs for a lawsuit against emergency management: "It's a challenge. Because Benton Harbor's a dysfunctional community, I mean, it's hard. Who do you have represent that?" He said it was worse for Ecorse, another city in the suit: "Every time a person we got referred to us—they might be fine people, I don't know, but I can't have someone who was arrested two months before, and two months before. But it's the nature of a community that's fractured. It's dysfunctional, you know?"

Here, the lawyer is expressing a conundrum of racialized citizenship in Michigan: the very state institutions that disproportionately affect Black residents *interact* to restrict black voice and participation. Our racially disparate legal system and

economically/racially segregated cities mean that black residents are more likely to have a criminal record (especially after the scandal I addressed in the first chapter, in which detectives planted drugs on hundreds of people (Warfield, 2009). In turn, that background labels them untrustworthy, even laughable, when they speak against a law that is restricting their democratic voice. What is more, the criminal record patterns are not simply racially unequal, but (it is alleged) represent whites' ability to employ local legal institutions against black resistance. In the case of Benton Harbor, I encountered many allegations that the county's legal system was particularly repressive against blacks who spoke out.

If Benton Harbor elected officials were assumed to be incapable and therefore deserving of emergency management, so were the city's citizens. When asked about the antidemocratic element inherent to the emergency manager law, many locals who represented the white urban regime's point of view, black and white, dismissed this concern. They felt locals lacked the political acumen to make good decisions, due to what they saw as generational welfare dependency. For instance, the mayor, who has been accused by some of "representing" Whirlpool, alleged individuals who got evicted despite subsidized rent of what he said was \$8 or \$16 a month would not choose a successful candidate at the ballot. He was not alone in claiming housing subsidization was a disincentive to political action, rather than an indicator of residents' poverty.

When I asked her about Benton Harbor's loss of local democracy, Florence, a black elite member, told me the following:

Well, the demographics of Benton Harbor are such as they have this raft of really, really young families. I mean kids, literally, that are heads of households, young women that are 16, 17, 18 years old. The welfare system provides them with money to get into an apartment. There they sit with their one or two babies and I don't know if they could even articulate to a commissioner what they really need.

Florence's derogation of Benton Harbor residents' political acumen evokes multiple raced and classed stereotypes, from "babies having babies" to a passive, inarticulate welfare-dependent young woman incapable of even conceptualizing her needs. She uses these stereotypes to suggest that all Benton Harbor residents' political voices are irrelevant (conveniently, she no longer lives within the city and would not have been disenfranchised). Another frequent theme when talking about the city's democratic process was to invoke the claim that Benton Harbor's low voter eligibility rate and low electoral participation rendered elections meaningless as a representation of local will. Several people claimed that commissioners were getting elected based on the size of their family, although the precise numbers varied. For instance, "Pete," a white man who worked in development, claimed,

You still have the individuals that might be getting a win by ten--we had a city commissioner couple years ago that was voted in and it was, like, a total of sixty-two votes. I mean there's *families* out there that are 60 people and so—and he's probably not the right guy for the job, but he just happens to know—have 60 family members and [they] rallied around him, the next thing you know you're

elected as a city commissioner, you've got no business being in the city commission seat, but you are now running the city!

Pete laughed at the absurdity as he finished. Of course, his focus on how voters make decisions, besides invoking yet another racist trope of family size, avoided any discussion of political content in an election—nor is it against any rule to vote for a family member. Nor did Pete address how whites usually make local voting decisions, but I wonder how informed the majority of our citizens are (knowing how uninformed I am about my local politics). And in the context of *Citizens v. United* and “dark money” in politics, in which “ingratiation and access” no longer qualify as corruption (Gerken, 2014), the quality of our democracy seems dubious. In other words, if our democratic practices at every level and locale had to live up to certain benchmarks (like motivation for voting) to count, few elections would hold. Beyond the question of voting for family, Donald, who also referred to “voter turnout here” as being “at a paltry single digit sometimes,” did allege that old-fashioned vote-buying in Benton Harbor was easy: “You can offer potato chips and a hot dog, find a bus, take them to the polling place, and they will go. And you will buy a vote for literally three or four bucks, in terms of transportation or food.”

By invoking young women with children, public housing, large families, and cheap vote fraud, these respondents drew on specific racial stereotypes emphasizing characteristics supposedly in conflict with those of a “good citizen.” Their talk ties into a

long history of invalidating black citizenship based on irrelevant characteristics (Glenn, 2002; Piven, Minnite, & Groarke, 2009; R. Smith, 1997), such as the improbably difficult “literacy” tests, involving complex constitutional interpretation, once imposed as a means of voter suppression of Southern blacks. They also tie into a long history of whites suggesting black voters are suggestible, lacking their own political will, and that giving them the franchise would only embolden predatory whites to manipulate their vote (Roediger, 2007). It could go as far as back as the three-fifths “compromise” in the Constitution, in which slave owners could claim a partial vote for enslaved people on their plantations.

This demeaning talk served to dismiss the claims of Benton Harbor residents that their democratic rights had been violated. If Benton Harbor’s democracy could be symbolically rendered worthless prior to emergency management, then its loss was less important than it would be in a city with less “suspect” citizens. And despite the progress of the anti-emergency manager lawsuit claiming racial discrimination, whites around Benton Harbor did not engage much with the possibility that the law’s implementation was racialized. When I brought up the statistic about black cities’ increased vulnerability to takeover, “Donald” simply commented, “I don’t know if I buy that.” But the white urban regime’s focus is also self-interested. By drawing attention to the “spectacle” and “circus” of Benton Harbor’s City Hall, they preemptively

delegitimize black officials' claims against them. This is a refusal, not only an inability, to hear.

I often heard Benton Harbor "politics" disparaged when I talked to white people in Michigan. I came to understand that this was in part because of a very specific local view among local white businesspeople and many nonprofit workers about what constitutes "politics" in Benton Harbor: the angry, conflict-ridden, dramatic tensions of emergency management, commission meetings, and allegations of racist or exclusionary motivations among the white businesspeople involved. By delegitimizing elected government, white urban regime members simultaneously rendered their own, unelected role more legitimate. Their criticism of others positioned themselves as the presumed arbiter of what a city really needs.

It gradually became clear that avoiding "politics" did not mean avoiding political and economic strategy; it just meant avoiding Benton Harbor politicians. For instance, when I asked "Eric," one of the white urban regime members I quoted above, what it had been like working with the city, he replied,

Generally, you don't. You don't even work around them because they're so disengaged from what's going on. It kind of changed a little bit during the emergency financial management. *Kind of, a little bit.* There's more attempts to make this city function more like a proper city. But still not really. There's still such a long way to go.

Eric was by no means alone in "not even working around" Benton Harbor officials.

Below is an excerpt from my field notes interviewing an organization director, Brad, who said he would be more honest if I did not record our conversation (phrases in quotes are written verbatim). Brad told me in a somewhat ironic tone, that they work with many municipalities in the area,

but “the one municipality we don’t work with is Benton Harbor.” I asked why, and he said it was because of their “self-serving politics.” Brad said something about how a good partner, “they don’t care what color you are,” but that this was not the case for the self-serving politics. He had said that the reason why they [at the organization] don’t work with Benton Harbor is because they really don’t get into politics. I asked Brad to clarify: “So you do work with politicians, in politics—but you mean something else by politics?” And he said yes, and referred to the Benton Harbor city politics that was just about fighting and said they don’t get into that. He sounded pretty disgusted with it.

Brad was drawing a distinction between his organization’s work and “politics,” used in a derogatory sense to describe only Benton Harbor’s officials. Without this rhetorical work keeping the attention on black officials, they themselves might come under scrutiny for their political actions. They accomplished this by characterizing their work as related to economics, development, and philanthropy, and based in agreement and collaboration—all of which require intense political involvement.

At least some white urban regime members were willing to state explicitly that their goal was to facilitate the political rule of outsiders. For instance, Pete told me his organization’s orientation was

get[ting] people interested in being a part of Benton Harbor, being more involved in Benton Harbor and when we can get that, along with allowing them to have places to live inside the city, that's when we really can start getting a higher-quality person that can essentially then be a part of local politics and get involved in...the mayor's office or *whatever* it might take. But right now if we don't create that environment that those types of high-caliber people or well-educated people want to be involved in, they're never going to be in a situation where they go, 'You know, I really enjoy what's going on here, I want to be a bigger part.' And until they live in the city and then buy into what the city's doing, maybe through the Conservancy as a start, they're never eligible to be voted in as public officials.

Pete is most likely using some degree of race and class closure in his conception of "higher-quality" and "high-caliber" people who will be better suited to run the city.

Such talk was tolerated locally because of the wide acceptance of the idea, even among many Benton Harbor residents, that city officials were unqualified and too political to govern. (This approach may herald a broader shift: the return of white mayors in major cities like Washington DC, Atlanta, Detroit, New Orleans, and Baltimore has been hypothesized by some to represent a resurgent white interest in electoral politics (Owens & Brown, 2013).)

While City Hall meetings were often acrimonious, I finally realized that my witnessing disagreement was possible because commissioners were generally following the rules of representative democracy. I sometimes heard commissioners express concern about following open meeting laws that prohibited a certain number of commissioners speaking together, even ensuring they were within the law at committee

meetings attended by non-member commissioners. Consider, as contrast, a Parks Conservancy meeting I attended, in which a new president was nominated and elected in less than five minutes with joking and no discussion. While that meeting was also nominally public, it was poorly advertised and held outside City Hall. Moreover, the board members are not elected or publicly listed, as Benton Harbor commissioners noted. On the surface, humor in meetings may be interpreted as easy agreement, but here it seemed to signal mutual recognition that the rules of meetings were just trappings of democracy.

In part, I argue, the contention in Benton Harbor City Hall comes from the fact that there is little to no “second face of power” (Bachrach & Baratz, 1962). City officials lack the material resources to persuade one another through back-room deals (which could be called corruption, depending on how one defines it). Instead, they argue publicly to hash out their differences. There certainly is a lot of contention at Benton Harbor city meetings, some of it personal. When I asked Commissioner Norton about the conflict, she conveyed disgust with what she saw as machismo: “Oh, man. It’s politics. It’s men, and their egos. Oh my.” She paused. “They’re just after each other, no matter what. It’s just unbelievable. They’re like little boys. I want to come in, with a big bucket of cold water and ice cubes, and throw it on all of them.” But without those resources that do so much to smooth over differences, their “back room” ammunition is

limited to threatening phone calls or accusations, setting inspection or police on one another, or initiating election recalls against each other.

The conflict, infighting, and inefficiency of Benton Harbor's elected governance may be so salient to white urban regime members because they are accustomed to taking care of business out of sight. Everyday observers can witness occasional off-the-wall ideas from commissioners and arguing or conflict in meetings precisely because consensus has not been achieved prior to the meetings, as is done in a white (elite-based) urban regime. In a "normal" (white) growth machine, much of this conflict would be happening behind the scenes. As I previously noted, urban regime and community power scholars have long noted that decisions in cities are usually made far prior to the public staging of debate (Bachrach & Baratz, 1962; Hunter, 1963 [1953]; Stone, 1981, 1982). Frequently, what looks like a well-oiled exercise of democracy proceeds so calmly because observers are watching democracy theater—the actual political process, both contention and agreement, has already occurred. My data show that the "oil" keeping the political machinery running smoothly is the many resources pooled by the white urban regime. Growth machines usually work because people working within the machine have common *material* interests.

Here we see the important justifying role of racialized morality in rendering certain actions as corrupt and others as not just commonplace, but valued. Because

white urban regime members can set and revise rules, policy and law, they can shape daily arrangements in their interest, without the need to engage in “corrupt” (i.e., extra-institutional) behavior. Prior research has shown black politicians are disproportionately likely to be accused of corruption (Musgrove, 2012). I argue that black politicians’ disproportionate vulnerability to this accusation comes from their exclusion from white networks of favors and informal agreements. “Troy,” the Detroit lawyer I spoke with, distinguished “stupid corruption,” the embarrassing, individualizing kind that gets headlines, from what he called “institutional corruption” and Olivier de Sardan calls “legitimate corruption” (2005)—corruption that is frequently legal, pervasive, and undiscovered. The cyclical discovery of singular “bad apples” is predictable, not an erroneous personal failure but the sign that someone has not perfectly navigated the dance of legal political favors and influence. Participants who are well inside the network practice “legitimate corruption” which is usually legal in no small part because network members write the laws. Within the network, members do favors for friends, facilitate deals and meetings, trade sponsorships and philanthropic contributions, start new organizations, lobby for policy change, tell one another about grants and opportunities, or suggest loopholes. They also, as I have noted, police the boundaries of the network by telling one another who is and is not “friendly,” and collectively rewrite the official narratives as necessary through their shared storytelling.

Certainly, these favors and boundary-shaping practices lead to mutual increase in wealth. But while these same in-group members shake their head at the supposed “stupid corruption” of outsiders, they would likely not view their own behavior within the urban regime as problematic. Indeed, I postulate their emphasis on the great value of “cooperation” depends on this kind of exchange of material favors. Meanwhile, practices related to normal governance are assumed to be corruption when it is done by a black official, from enforcing the local-resident quota for contracting, to managing an underfunded budget. Or the boundaries of “corruption” are themselves stretched, as Pete shows: “I’m not, you know, *assuming* or saying that there’s *corruption*, but thirty years of bad *decisions* could be considered corruption or *bad management*.”

Further, the white urban regime’s fixation on contention at Benton Harbor’s commission meetings (mostly from second- or third-hand accounts) portrays the city as an outlier, and suggests that this contention is causally responsible for its problems. But I read about or witnessed several local political conflicts among whites that got contentious. This is not to mention the state of our federal politics, where Congress continually uses political tricks and loopholes, as well as combative debate styles. Most of us never heard about the 2012 Republican presidential nomination system’s breakdown into chaos, shouting, and violence (Maddow, 2016). In predominantly white contexts, political chicanery is an expected aspect of politics. But in majority-black

environments like Detroit and Benton Harbor, contention is extremely salient (to white and black observers alike), and seen not only as shameful but a major cause of the city's distress. We could compare this discrepancy to the media interpretation of black public protest and occasional violence on city streets ("thugs") to white riots following sports events or holidays ("hooligans" who were "getting carried away").

Argument and debate are usually heralded as the pinnacle of democratic practice. But black commissioners' debates over political conflicts and principles of transparency, its rules and bureaucracy, may be part of what so offends the white urban regime about their "dysfunction." The unsightly disagreement is more salient than the content of the disagreement. Members of the white urban regime who write off all commissioners and city meetings as "whacked," nonsensical or dysfunctional use that perspective to justify ignoring the substance of what black officials say. City commissioners' political divisions are real, and their contentious expressions of those divisions are not the cause of the problems.

5.3.1 Upstream Determinants of Municipal Crisis

By focusing on low-level mismanagement, the white urban regime pointed away from the potential role of business and the state in driving the city's distress. Most people glossed over or did not mention the property tax values that plummeted from white flight. Nor did they mention the business incentives that provided a total of \$52

million in tax waivers and credits for Whirlpool's downtown campus alone—these were just the cost of business in today's economy. And they certainly did not mention the state of Michigan.

The logic of the emergency manager act positions the state as concerned supervisor to step in when individual cities manage their finances poorly. But Michigan has been whittling down cities' share of sales tax in order to balance the state budget. In Michigan, cities receive a relatively large portion of their funding from state revenue sharing. But in 2003, legislators cut this revenue for all cities, diverting over \$6.2 billion away from cities by fiscal year 2014 (Minghine, 2014). Because this portion was the redistributive component of shared revenue (determined by a formula that rewarded tax "effort" as opposed to tax revenue), it disproportionately hurt already-poor cities. For instance, Benton Harbor's revenue loss was consistently almost double that of its wealthy neighbor St. Joseph. By fiscal year 2010, when Benton Harbor was put under emergency financial management, it was consistently losing about half a million per year from this one cut, for a cumulative loss of \$4 million. The amount of the loss fairly closely matched Benton Harbor's annual deficit—the deficit that partially triggered Benton Harbor's takeover. Detroit lost \$700 million during the same time period, which should complicate the traditional reasons given for that city's bankruptcy in 2014. For fiscal year 2016, Benton Harbor is anticipated to receive \$1.7 million – still \$900,000 a

year less than it was receiving in 2000 (without standardizing for inflation). In other words, the problems ascribed to individual black politicians in Benton Harbor were caused by the same state actors who imposed emergency management.

Several city commissioners cited revenue sharing as being directly responsible for their deficit. Commissioner Norton claimed, "the state of Michigan...created the problem in the first place with revenue sharing. They took the money and gave it to somebody else...And that's why I said yesterday that we need to sue the state, because they started this. And then they come over and take over communities and start selling off everything, and bringing in their buddies to capture anything that's left." I asked whether people were talking about that in Benton Harbor, and she replied, "Oh yes. Oh yes." "But where?" I pressed, and she said, "Among ourselves."

This is part of a larger story. Holden has noted that African-Americans' rise to power in local politics has often put them "in command of an empty vessel," where defunding and disinvestment has brought them

cities and other local governments that are short on investment capital, weak in their tax base, and faced with problems of poverty, poor educational systems, and higher crime rates. Such problems may be local, but they can rarely be solved locally. (Holden, 2006, pp. 181-182)

Black city officials then serve as a convenient scapegoat to explain the city's suffering.

5.4 Emergency Management as a Blank Slate

For the white urban regime, who constantly emphasized the need for “change” at virtually any cost, emergency management presented the promise of extreme change – and, on top of it, the possibility of new people in charge. Emergency management represents an ideal tool for proponents of the “empty slate,” with its promise of radical change from the status quo. Donald talked at length about emergency management and Benton Harbor’s needs, “look[ing] at it from a 60,000 foot view.” As he put it,

Listen, every good government needs a good enema. And that's exactly what the EM does. It wasn't working locally, so how do you get radical change to occur? I guess that's the influence that I'm looking for. It's all about inertia. So you have to break those chains. Just like we talked about the generational poverty...you have to do the same thing with government. So the government contracts--think about it really, in its purest state, it's really, truly a libertarian idea to be able to go in, have a magic pen, and wipe out every contract, to be able to take every employee and strip it down... I've got free market, I can now negotiate based on--forget collective bargaining and all the other bullshit that goes along with the NLRB [National Labor Relations Board], and all the other stuff. We want absolutely--so what I need is a benevolent dictator, for a short term, to get it back on track, and then let the market take over. But you can't do that unless you can wipe it all out. It's chemotherapy. It's government chemo, and that's what we need.

For Donald, emergency management represents the necessary “enema” or “chemo” to wipe out contracts, practices, and possibly also the people who had been part of governance.

A more qualified accounting-oriented person is supposed to be free of local ties, nepotism, or corruption. Though they are appointed by the governor, emergency managers are supposed to represent a neutral point of view, unburdened by politics as usual. For instance, in an editorial, a white retiree suggested that “the city leadership of Benton Harbor calm down” and cooperate with the emergency manager, whom he repeatedly called a “professional”:

a professional manager without the “baggage” of the local folks is a good thing. There is an old saying: A new broom sweeps clean. After all, was the old system working for Benton Harbor?...It would appear to me that a nonpolitical professional with special expertise would be the best person to make those decisions, with the help of the locals. (Emrich, 2014)

A white small-business owner from the previous chapter, “Kathy,” articulated similar themes of neutrality and lack of “politics” in an interview with me:

think of it as someone watching over--someone from the outside coming in. A fresh set of eyes, a neutral person who doesn't have these long roots in the community, where they owe somebody, and they owe somebody, and ten years ago he did this favor. There's so much of that that goes on, I think. And that's what makes it seem so toxic.

In general, the position that Benton Harbor’s local government is simply incapable of self-rule meant the “disinterested outsider” was assumed to be more qualified and make better decisions than elected officials. In practice, it is not difficult to become an emergency manager. In 2012, the Secretary of Treasury was running two-day training workshops for interested parties. Because of this cursory training and constant law

change, it would be difficult for anyone to have a perfect grasp of the emergency manager's role. And in fact, even the trope of emergency managers as "neutral" is belied by the salary structure written into the newest iteration of the law, PA 436, specifying that private interests to contribute to emergency managers' salaries (raising troubling questions of representation). For instance, Governor Snyder's secret "N.E.R.D." fund from anonymous contributors was paying for Detroit EM Kevyn Orr's Detroit condo, on top of his \$275,000 salary (AlHajal, 2013). Moreover, the presentation of emergency management as an administrative or neutral law obscures not only the racial disparities in its implementation, but also the political conflict behind its establishment and subsequent iterations, including the voters' rejection of emergency management in 2013. While activists and legal teams have challenged the law's legality on several fronts, those challenges have not disrupted emergency management in Benton Harbor.

Two individuals, Joseph Harris and Tony Saunders, were hired over this period (Harris from April 2010-January 2013; Saunders replaced him for the final year), under a title that varied between Emergency Financial Manager and Emergency Manager as the law shifted.³ Both are African Americans who had worked in Detroit's government prior to arriving in Benton Harbor. The first emergency manager, Joseph Harris, had come from serving as finance director and Auditor General in Detroit. He had retired in 2005

³ For ease of understanding, I will refer to the position throughout as Emergency Manager or EM.

until he was allegedly asked to be on the state treasurer's list of possible emergency managers in 2007 (Genellie, 2011). The second, Tony Saunders, was just 26 when he was hired after serving as a consultant for a marketing group and chief of staff to several Detroit city councilmembers. While both emergency managers were black, they also both came from outside the area, as is common for emergency managers statewide.⁴ One white respondent claimed state actors had been loath to be seen as "racist" by taking over a black city. Given this claim, and the predominance of black emergency managers assigned to majority-black cities, it is possible that both Joe Harris and Tony Saunders were chosen as race-matched emergency managers, in an attempt to soften the look of an unelected person governing a black city (although some in Benton Harbor allegedly talked about colorism when Harris was first chosen (Reedy, 2013). But since their job gave them no accountability to Benton Harbor residents, their relationship with citizens shows the true limits of assuming black politicians govern according to black group interests.

5.4.1 Crisis Time

As I have established, the thinking behind emergency management is that a drastic change provides great opportunity, following Milton Friedman's adage, "Only a

⁴ Benton Harbor's city managers also frequently come from outside the city, and both emergency managers and city manager seem to follow a rotation through nearby cities.

crisis - actual or perceived - produces real change" (Friedman, 1982 [1962], p. ix). Even the title, "emergency management," helps reinforce the idea of crisis—although some Michigan bodies, like Detroit's school system, have been under emergency management for decades, or cycled through repeatedly. The shared logic of emergency management, charter and turnaround schools, and even tax-free districts like Enterprise or Renaissance Zones, assumes traditional governance is the problem and something new offers the solution (even if it relies on the same funding and larger structures). In these "reform" programs, advocates can confuse change with progress. The constant imperative for change of whatever type, without knowledge about what came before or foresight for what comes next, becomes its own stasis, simple rotation in place.

Ironically, the emergency manager's role in disrupting what had come before actually represented continuity for Benton Harbor, which was already suffering the effects of constant staff turnover. While black and white observers alike bemoaned the "revolving door" of city managers (around seventeen over the past two decades), this phenomenon was in part a product of white urban regime involvement. Commissioner Norton complained to me that every time the commission hired a new city manager to replace the old one, they'd start out saying the right things, but that people at Whirlpool's nonprofit, Cornerstone Alliance would gain influence over him. She reflected, "it was always a battle for that position...city manager." Someone in the white

urban regime told the same story from the opposite side, complaining that as soon as they got somebody thinking the right way, the commission would go and fire him.

On the ground, the insistence of all parties that they want change, the intractable disagreements between elected officials and the growth machine, staff turnover as a result of the former, and the lack of institutional memory has led to a status quo that is characterized by constant change. In this respect, the installation of an emergency manager who was supposed to wipe Benton Harbor's slate clean was actually more of the same. While personnel turnover is a normal feature of business, it can be extremely harmful in cities, as multiple people pointed out with the revolving door of city managers. Enforcing accountability for decisions or agreements, even written ones, is difficult when representatives change every year—a huge impediment to institutional memory. The two emergency managers continued this tradition with their own position and rotating staff and committee membership, and little transparency about daily operations.

5.5 Constricted Black Governance

Beyond the disparate impact of black residents' vulnerability to emergency management, the law has also temporarily invalidated the office of 75% of the state's black elected officials, according to some of the law's opponents. In the law's

implementation, there was yet another racialized impact: as Benton Harbor citizens and government officials were shut out under emergency management, another group was let in. Emergency management allowed unelected members of the white urban regime to consolidate their access to City Hall –and a set of social rules governed who was able to wield influence.

EM Harris was almost universally described to me in interviews as a petty tyrant who took the absolute power of his title too seriously. Harris quickly signified his allegiances by failing to attend his first public meeting, allegedly at Lansing’s request—although two weeks previously he had “met with about 100 bigwigs at an April 8 invitation-only gathering in which he announced that city employee layoffs would be necessary” (Goodenow, 2010). This did not go down well with residents who noted the city had to pay his \$11,000/month salary. An anti-emergency management activist, “Rodney,” described him thus:

Harris was a terrorist himself. He was no picnic in the park. He thought he had so much power. He was arrogant...He came in telling commissioners off left and right, telling the mayor what he’s going to do and what he ain’t going to do. He said you all could have a meeting, take notes, and I want you to close it right then and there. Don’t vote on nothing. Don’t.

Even before Harris’ powers were expanded under the 2011 law, citizens were resisting their own expulsion and that of their elected officials. As the father of a city commissioner put it,

We spent a lot of time beating the bricks to to get people to get get [sic] out and vote for the nearly elected legislators/elected officials...I want to ask the question of the citizens, if there is a law that they (commission) cannot be able to speak or to or sit in on anything that is going on here with this financial director?
(Heibutzki, 2010)

Within a week of the state's expansion of Emergency managers' power under PA 4, "that's when hell broke loose," Rodney reflected. "One of the first things that Harris did was show them that he had absolute power. He took the mayor's desk out of the office and put it in the basement. He took the keys and cell phones from the commissioners." Harris issued a resolution limiting the power of the mayor and city commission to opening meetings, approving minutes, and adjourning said meetings. Two months later, Harris further ordered that no city official or staff member could appear in an official capacity without his approval. He added that if the Commission issued any resolution, the city clerk must append a statement that the action was "NULL AND VOID, AND OF NO FORCE OR EFFECT" (EM Order 11-21). He also told a reporter that although he had planned to attend Commission meetings, he soon decided " 'there is absolutely no way,'" adding of the commissioners, " 'they're not in my way. It's not an issue'" (Genellie, 2011).

To save money, EM Harris fired employees, raised water rates, and merged the police and fire departments to cut staff. In one of his more widely-publicized actions, Harris (illegally) posted the city's radio station and equipment on eBay (Savage, 2012),

possibly to silence the commissioner who had been hosting radio shows criticizing emergency management. Harris closed and attempted to sell Benton Harbor's community center and the city's small-business incubator, both recently established with public funding. Harris also cut essential personnel, assuming many of the roles himself. In February 2011, Harris told attendees at an Emergency Financial Manager training: "the City Manager is now gone -- I am the City Manager. I replaced the Finance Director. So I'm the Finance Director and the City Manager. I am the Mayor and I am the Commission and I don't need them. All I need is the expertise" (Savage, 2011). Harris destabilized the operations of City Hall by temporarily eliminating these positions required by city charter: they cannot easily be outsourced and would have to be replaced later. The gap in staffing harms institutional memory in city government, which was already at a premium due to the high rate of staff turnover; significantly lessens oversight for the emergency manager's actions; and raises questions about how City Hall was expected to function once the emergency manager left. Harris also communicated his distaste for elected leadership in his attempts to modify the city charter. In Order 11-31, Harris introduced a number of items to the 2011 city ballot that would have reduced the size and power of the city commission and increased the power of the city manager. His proposed system would further decrease oversight in finance, where auditors had already identified the lack of sufficient staff.

While Harris initially allied with local elites and against local residents, city hall staff, and commissioners, the relationship soured. Ultimately, Harris was expelled after Whirlpool and government representatives met with state leaders in Lansing, and select city commissioners agreed to support a millage renewal in exchange for a new emergency manager. The “dictator’s” reign ended because he did not understand the tight interplay of government and corporate power in the region: he thought his political power superseded all. As Rodney said of Harris, “He thought he was bigger than Whirlpool. He didn’t realize that Whirlpool was one of the reasons he was here.” That quiet meeting shows the limits of even “ripper” legislation compared to corporate voice in Michigan (setting aside voters’ voice altogether).

5.5.1 Consolidating White Outsiders’ Access

When Harris’ reign ended, so did the era of openly combative emergency management. But as I will show, the differences between first and second emergency manager were more style than substance. The “first emergency manager-bad, second-emergency manager good” narrative I heard so frequently turned out to be a story about racialized access. Most people who made that comparison were white. As Rodney noted, the first emergency manager, Joseph Harris, did not understand that other local entities, including Whirlpool, still held sway: only the *elected* government was displaced in emergency management. What made Saunders good, when Harris was bad, was his

sympathetic leadership style. But from the stories of privileged access told by white urban regime members, Saunders knew whom to listen to in terms of local power.

Saunders continued Harris' austerity-style goals of cutting staff and benefits (*City of Benton Harbor, Michigan: Financial Statements Year ended June 30, 2012, 2013*; L. Smith, 2013). Only weeks before he departed, Saunders handed over control of Benton Harbor's parks to a brand-new non-profit. At the same time, Saunders also transferred city employees' pensions to the Municipal Employees' Retirement System (MERS) (*City of Benton Harbor, Michigan: Financial Statements Year ended June 30, 2014, 2014*), as have other MI emergency managers. The MERS has been expanding into risky direct private investment (Sanchez, 2014), following the lead of the former venture capitalist Governor Snyder. Thanks to the emergency managers' pension grabs, politicians are essentially gambling on their friends' ventures with the livelihoods of predominantly-black municipal employees. Saunders' delivery of key assets to outside interests shows how emergency management concretely facilitated the extraction machine. These actions from the emergency managers also reinforced Benton Harbor's funding structure, in which money is steered *away* from black elected city government.

White urban regime members and associates expressed that Benton Harbor's future was in doubt, even post-emergency management, if commissioners maintained control over city funds. Repeatedly, I heard some variation of the phrase, "I don't know

what they'd do with the money," as a justification for this steering. This narrative effectively stigmatized black officials while setting up unelected white urban regime members as better financial stewards. Here I provide one startling case related to the Conservancy, showing the thinking behind at least one person's determination to keep money away from Benton Harbor City Hall.

"Stan," a white urban regime member involved in philanthropy, attributed Benton Harbor's poor financial performance to "cultural differences" between blacks and whites. He believed black officials' supposed preoccupation with "looking good" set their priorities for city funding and led to the crumbling of public infrastructure:

I think that the black culture definitely has a certain way of looking at things, not only in as far as the residence or their home or in their communities, a lot different than what the white community does...in my opinion, what I've noticed is that the black culture in Benton Harbor is very much into looking good. No matter if that's a—good-looking car, or that's good-looking clothes, whether that's good-looking parks, and what they consider that to be...

Stan went on to accuse city officials of ignoring city infrastructure, as an invisible but important part of the city, and thereby not a priority in their "culture":

And they have to manage that, and they have to budget for that, and they have to see why it's important. And this is where the cultural differences come in, in my opinion. Because you can't see those. You can't see the sewer lines underneath the city, or the water lines underneath the city. And yet they're extremely important and see that we have businesses here that are taken care of."

Although he admitted to never having attended a commission meeting, Stan claims the degradation of local infrastructure has occurred due to officials' "black culture" and their poor priorities, not the systematic defunding of the city. As a well-connected and well-respected white urban regime member, Stan may not represent all other members' views, but he occupied positions that enabled him both to act on his ideas and to spread them to others. Several people suggested I talk to him, indicating he was not a philosophical outlier.

The rules around EM Saunders' establishment of Benton Harbor's Parks Conservancy in 2014, on the advice of white urban regime members, was an explicit example of this steering. The Conservancy was composed of almost two dozen regime members and associates and managed and hosted by Kinexus, a local development non-profit. The organization's expressed goal was to take over funding and operating Benton Harbor's parks from its underfunded Public Works department, convincing organizations to "adopt" a park (for instance, Whirlpool adopted Riverview Park, which happened to lie adjacent to its new downtown campus building on the river). In itself, the Conservancy represented extraction of park assets from city commissioners—but the details of its formation were also revealing. Stan emphasized that in its very structure, the organization was designed to minimize oversight by elected officials: first, by ensuring the Conservancy only had to report to the city manager (not the city's public

safety committee). He complained of the commissioners: "Every one of them think they have the responsibility that you report to them. Kind of like they're kingmen."

Moreover, Stan noted it had been harder than expected to collect even the promised donations because of local reticence to support the city commission: "I think they're waiting...to make sure that they are totally separate."

So one of the things that's in our management agreement is that any money that's donated to the Conservancy, even if the Conservancy falls apart, that money will be given to another non-for-profit, it does not go back to the city.

Stan said he had to do extra work to convince potential funders of this clause, "because they thought, you know, the city's just going to try to get their hands on this money." As Stan is explaining, local donors were uncomfortable donating to a newly-created and white urban regime-dominated Conservancy if Benton Harbor city government had any chance to use the funds. They felt better about the vague proviso that funds would go to "another non-for-profit" than they did about the possibility that Benton Harbor City Hall might ever get to use the funds for its parks, despite the unclear future of the Conservancy (see Ulam, 2013 for a critique of these "creatively financed" park agreements).

While Saunders seemed friendlier, his arrangements noted above facilitated white urban regime extraction of city resources. But Saunders's rule was also striking for the degree to which he involved the white urban regime at the expense of elected

officials and residents. Crucially, while the second emergency manager's reign involved participatory rhetoric, black residents and officials were still shut out of politics. Rodney commented:

Not only was Whirlpool happy [to get rid of Joseph Harris], but the citizens were happy, the commissioners were happy, because this guy [Harris] was something else! He didn't take no mess either...I figured the governor had a hard time dealing with him! Now he's gone, and Saunders is in here, who speaks softly. He speaks softly, you see? I went to see Minister Farrakhan and he went with us. So he was trying to play both sides of the fence to see where we was at. But yet he's still, during that period of time, steady taking the last things we had.

Most people I interviewed in 2014, both those for and against emergency management, agreed Saunders at least seemed better than Harris. Saunders solicited opinions; he did not issue histrionic orders; he got along with the locals. He even seemed charismatic: a city commissioner described Saunders as a "dictator, but with a smile" (Gryczan, 2013). But as Rodney put it, "Saunders came in here, did a lot of stuff behind the people's back. About as two-faced as you can get. If I had to choose I would take Harris over him, you see? You know Harris is going to do something. This guy was doing stuff undercover. That was the difference." The second emergency manager was better at employing the discourse and symbolism of participation, and also pleased observers who believed that Benton Harbor's problems occurred from overly-generous government spending. Saunders' friendlier demeanor won him union concessions like reduced benefits, pay cuts, and fewer staff, as well as more furlough days. But, as I discovered, Saunders'

“friendliness” did not evenly translate into access for all. Where Harris went wrong in considering his political appointment above and separate from business, Saunders worked closely with the white urban regime.

When I engaged in cross-case analysis to compare how all my respondents described relationships with the emergency managers, those respondents I identified as white urban regime members, all white men and business owners, reported positive and personal relationships with one or both emergency managers. Donald described both emergency managers as “dear friends.” Eric said he met with the second emergency manager “all the time. Basically once a week.” Eric explained his local knowledge was useful to Saunders: “downtown there’s not a lot of people who are more involved and been here longer than me, so I kind of have a good understanding of the history...He was interested in that.”

Several men also mentioned giving Tony Saunders input and having an easier time in getting their own needs met during emergency management. Donald was fairly explicit about how much easier it was to accomplish his goals with an emergency manager:

If you properly work the situation, and you have a good case, you could probably get a lot more done with the emergency manager if you have a good relationship with him, because it's one stroke of the pen, as opposed to ongoing bureaucracy, going in front of the commission, having all kinds of debate, public forum, and people criticizing you for not doing it.

Here, Donald identifies not only the “bureaucracy” of normal city government, but also the public participation inherent in democratic governance, as obstacles for business and development.

White urban regime members also painted a picture in which they were not only being solicited for their opinion, but occasionally reported receiving information from the emergency managers in confidence. For instance, “Monty” explained,

One of those state-directed managers before he left stopped in to see me. His comments to me were: “We’ve still got a long ways to go. We’ve still got a lot of work to do on the city commission. We’ve got a lot of work to do on people really understanding cities are all about—schools, and streets, and financial responsibility.” There was a time, I was told, that there would be checks coming in and laying around for quite a few days before they got deposited.

Later, Monty mentioned that, during his visit, the emergency manager “was not very complimentary about what there is to work with in the intelligence side of things.” The emergency manager legitimated for Monty the widespread perception that city officials were unintelligent. Such assumptions will undoubtedly govern future action. Similarly, “Steve,” involved in business and boards downtown, alleged at length that in city hall, “There was a lot of corruption there...They used to go down in there [the Water Department] and they’d find drawers full of bills. A lot of the bills were torn up. Any bills that had cash in them, torn out and money put in people’s pockets. A lot of checks

were never turned in – a lot of stuff. The whole billing thing was just a fiasco.” As I was wondering how he knew these stories, Steve continued,

I asked the [first] emergency manager one day because he was telling me all this stuff and I’m like, “How come you didn’t *prosecute* these people?” And he goes (emphasizing point with finger on table), “Steve, I was not brought in to prosecute. I was brought in to balance the budget and get it going.” He goes, “I had to get rid of a lot people that were corrupt and doing bad things, but I couldn’t—I didn’t want to prosecute. I just wanted to fix.”

In fact, I am not sure the information these men received from the emergency manager constituted the equivalent of state secrets. But white urban regime members, who felt they had been sidelined by black elected officials, finally had inside access to hear how bad it had "really" been. Hearing these stories gratified them, validating their opinions of city government. This access performed the important function of gossip, to establish solidarity and to draw a thicker boundary around "those corrupt, dysfunctional officials". And it indicates the trust the emergency managers displayed in the white urban regime—that intimacy of confiding, the gesture of respect inherent in visiting a powerful businessman in his office, may have been performed intentionally to curry favor. But I played a role in this process as well, as the credentialed researcher who was supposed to carry these stories into the real world and stamp them as fact.

5.5.2 Race and Voice: Black Insiders Left Out

Given the nature of the emergency manager law, which replaced local governance with a single appointed official, it is unsurprising city officials lacked this close contact with both emergency managers. As I have shown, these relationships were difficult if not outright antagonistic. Given several commissioners' public stance opposing emergency management, it is unlikely they would have admitted to getting along with an emergency manager. But even members of the local black elite, many of whom were neutral or positive regarding emergency management, did not describe similar access to the emergency managers. I would have expected black elites outside the deposed city commission to report close relationships with or informal access to an emergency manager, as did the white urban regime. This was not the case. A large part of my evidence from black respondents consisted of the *absence* of any description of a relationship with an emergency manager. When black respondents did describe interacting with the emergency managers, their experience was not positive, much less friendly. "Cecily" occupied an intermediate position in Benton Harbor's hierarchy as a black board member who was not willing to be what she called a "muppet-puppet on a string" to keep her position. Cecily related an experience with EM Saunders to explain how she saw local black residents being used as symbolic representation. When Saunders invited her to join a committee, Cecily was incensed when her first vote was

invalidated by Saunders' final decision. She explained, "I thought, according to all the stuff that I read, that they made all these important decisions." But Cecily continued,

I found out all these boards are the same. Legally, they have to exist so people have to be on them. But they have to get the right kind of people on them for people not to care, and to just do what they say. I found out, this is just a dummy board! The EM makes these decisions!...He's just wanting you to make a recommendation so he can say he has something to counter his thinking...I was *so mad* at Tony Saunders. And I called him up. And I said, "you know what? I don't have a lot of time like that. I really resent you using me in that way."

He said, "Is that what you think I've done?"

I said, "Yeah, I do. I think you think that we share some like-mindedness. And I think you think that I could be a part of whatever majority that you're looking for to support whatever outcome that you're going to take from whatever the recommendations are." I said, "I've seen this before, so I'm not a novice."

But if anyone could have expected to be part of the informal "advisory board" for an emergency manager, it was "Darlene." A black elected official above the city level (and therefore not vulnerable to emergency management), Darlene was one of the most prominent members of the community. Between them, she and her husband had racked up decades of service on boards and political leadership, and made appearances throughout the community as elder statespeople. Born and raised in Benton Harbor in the 1940s, Darlene was still extraordinarily involved in politics (I witnessed her campaigning for reelection many times in my field work). She was also known, both by supporters and opponents, as someone who cooperated with Whirlpool: a white observer said of Darlene and her husband approvingly, "They're farsighted enough to

realize the give and take that has to take place between Whirlpool and Cornerstone Alliance [Whirlpool's nonprofit development arm] and Harbor Shores [Whirlpool's golf course development]." Darlene considered herself a go-getter ("I know how to get up and get out"). She reads the legal section in the paper every day and shares the information with her friends. She also invoked the Open Meetings Act to demonstrate that, while other residents might feel apprehensive about attending meetings, "I think you should use those kinds of things; if you feel like you're not supposed to be there -- they can't keep you out. They will welcome you."

But instead, Darlene told me at length of her frustration at being ignored by both emergency managers. She said of the first emergency manager, Joe Harris, "He was a terrible person. He treated us like we were fools. He never wanted to listen to anything anybody had to say." After describing Harris' tone-deaf behavior, she continued,

Darlene: Then the next man [Saunders] came. I thought he was good. I had great hopes for him. I thought he wasn't scared. I liked that. He was amongst the people. I would see him at games and different things... he wanted to go. I felt like he was doing things and he was in a hurry to go...And so when he was started announcing, he would be gone by-- I said, "Is he through? Are we finished? Are we done? Are we fixed?" Because I didn't know. I had no way of knowing.

Just like I said to the one man, Harris, I said, "We need to talk. I'm the county commissioner." I needed to talk to him. What do you want from the city? What should I be saying or to be able to tell him some things, because I know plenty. And it's no secret, but I'm just walking around with it; who am I going to tell it to?

LS: Right. And he never contacted you either.

Darlene: No. Nor did the next one. Saunders. I think he did some good things. We have land, and he was selling everything he could and consolidating. So he did some good things. But I don't like it when you come into a community and you don't try to know what was going on or what do you want or what is needed. Just to fix it and give it to you? That's ugly, in my opinion. That's what I think. So ugly things were done without any input from the people that we had voted in, and the citizens. There are citizens that have thoughts, or other elected officials. It should have been some time when they brought us all together and said, "What's going on. Tell me. What's going on here?" Because we could take them somewhere and they wouldn't be able to find their way back. There are no signs on the streets.

Although she was frustrated that neither emergency manager was asking for local opinion what Darlene did not know was that both emergency managers were soliciting advice and historical memory—just not from black Benton Harbor residents. Even as an elected official at the county level, within a “working” unit of government, Darlene did not have access to Harris or Saunders. Darlene's passionate, engaged view of citizenship, involving actively seeking out relevant information, putting people and ideas together, and insisting on her right to attend meetings that are often otherwise all-white, may paradoxically be what distances her from the white urban regime. White citizens around Benton Harbor did not worry as much as Darlene about the front-stage political activities. Darlene has to stay involved because she knows that otherwise the valuable information would be kept among whites, as she still does not have access to the “back rooms” that produce that information.

While even Darlene was shut out, the unofficial, majority-white and well-off shadow governance was *not* disenfranchised under emergency management. This is a crucial and unexpected finding in understanding the racialized impact of emergency management. So far, analysis of the law's racially disparate outcomes has focused on its concentration in majority-black cities containing half of Michigan's black population. Critiques of the law have focused on the elimination of local democracy and stripped authority of local officials, reducing power to a single, appointed individual. But only fine-grained analysis reveals something even more serious. Before emergency management, Benton Harbor's political system was already structured to bypass locally-elected (majority-black) governance. Under state receivership, elected black governance was destabilized, shut out and restructured to reduce future input. The white urban regime's governance of Benton Harbor continued without interruption—if anything, with easier access to City Hall, especially after the first emergency manager was deposed by an informal committee's Lansing visit.

5.6 Rumors and Institutional Memory Loss: Contested Truth

What did city officials do without this informal access to the back rooms? They made do with less than full information, particularly if they were among those opposed to emergency management. With no reliable official sources of information, the extreme power inequalities between the business-oriented political machine and the

impoverished residents, and Benton Harbor's isolation among dissimilar communities, truth gets mixed with fiction in this "walled" city. But the extremity of claims made by the side protesting emergency management, whether true or false, makes them easy to dismiss by the white business elite. With a discursive monopoly on "neutrality" and the local papers, legal/political monopoly over the courts, legislature, and county government, not to mention the predominance of financial resources, the shifting stories and rumor-based knowledge of the white urban regime still maintain the confident air of truth. As a result, many Benton Harbor residents both mistrust official news and cling to documentation of facts or misdeeds. In the constantly-shifting set of conditions and players, with little historical memory either in City Hall or among business leaders, facts are at a premium. But facts that do not match the official narrative seem to lack some essential adhesive and melt away—echoing Mead's observation that "if a thing is not recognized as true, then it does not function as true in the community" (Mead, 2013 [1936], p. 29).

For instance, while the technical abilities of the emergency manager were celebrated by the white urban regime, the emergency manager's detractors argued that both failed in this single role—to better manage finances. In my interviews, several people mentioned the budget-balancing strategy of interfund borrowing as an example of terrible financial management that characterized the ineptitude of city staff. In fact,

this was one of the practices discovered by the 2009 state review that triggered receivership. However, the 2011 audit revealed that Harris engaged in the same practice—something that was never pointed out by those who criticized Benton Harbor’s elected officials. A commissioner alleged,

What they said about us was that we were mixing, co-mingling funds, and not paying the pension. Joe did the same thing... What he did was he closed out all of the bank accounts and had one checking account, and all he wrote--he was the only one to sign. He was the treasurer, he was everything. And he wrote one--paid everything out of one checking account. And he co-mingled funds...We don't know what he did. A lot of it is still coming out right now.

In fact, Harris was caught misappropriating 2011’s pension funds into the general fund, then called it a “payroll error” from contracting out the process (L. Smith, 2012b). In an interview, Harris attributed this error to “too little staffing,” but neither he nor the reporter noted that Harris himself had been reducing the staffing in the finance department (L. Smith, 2012b). The 2011 audit also found that Harris had simply erased the accumulated deficit to the pension fund from Benton Harbor's books. When Saunders took over, he ratified his predecessor’s decision as a “write off of accrued pension distribution” (Order 13-28). A reporter for Michigan Radio, summarizing the audit finding, reported the cumulative deficit reduction by over \$1 million (presumably as a result of this write-off) as only “a sort of onetime accounting fluke” (L. Smith, 2012b). When the 2011 audit came out, the state treasurer declined to comment to the

press and did not investigate Harris. And despite this negative review in 2011, the 2012 audit, conducted by the same company, no longer had any problems with Harris' activity or addressed past issues.

While I had initially hoped to compare respondent claims to the "true story" hidden in city audits, I finally realized that would not be so simple. While audits carry the credibility of technical neutrality, some residents asserted those audits were fallible documents made within the same system that produced emergency management. I heard stories about City Hall record-keeping, including departmental budgets maintained on legal pads, and believe them at least enough to question the validity of audits. I heard about, but was unable to locate, a "second" 2009 audit that supposedly told a different story than the audit that triggered state review and emergency management. On an anti-emergency management blog, activists alleged that the 2011 audit was mathematically flawed. Activists also questioned how the 2011 audit could be critical of the emergency manager's budget management, when the 2012 audit by the same firm no longer mentioned these concerns. Eventually I came to see city audits as one more set of contested documents *producing* authoritative "fact."

And how did that lack of access play out in the realm of story and rumor? On two occasions, I was told a story that I ended up viewing more as metaphor than as literal truth, but importantly, the story was itself about access to the truth. City

commissioner Rhonda Stanley asked me rhetorically during an interview, "Why would an emergency manager come in here shredding up documents?" I tried to confirm, "he was destroying documents?" She replied,

I didn't see it, so I can't say, but the person that was—ex-commissioner _____, he said, "You didn't see that big ol' truck out there? That was a shredder!" And I do remember seeing somebody taking some boxes of something...but see this is why they don't want us approaching... This is why the emergency manager and the state has tried to change the arms of how they report—that they don't have to answer to us. But I represent these people and if I want some information I should be able to get it.

As unusual as that story was, I had heard a similar version from a friend I spoke with frequently around town. He said that about seven years ago, "they" (he didn't know who) came and took out boxes of documents from City Hall— a lot of information. I took this story metaphorically, representing some black commissioners and residents' feeling that valuable information had been taken from City Hall. For instance, Commissioner Norton explained her difficulty obtaining documentation of the emergency managers' actions.

LS: So who has access to what he did do? Who has access to that—

Commissioner Norton: Right now? Staff does. I mean, I tell them all the time, "give it to me. Just give me all the contracts." I've asked for it three times now. I asked for it before Tony left--Saunders. He promised me, "Commissioner, I'm gonna give it to you. I'm gonna make sure that you get it. It's gonna be a big document, but you're gonna get it." OK. So, a little at a time, I get one piece of paper here that says this, and another document that says this. I'm holding it together. And, some of the other

commissioners asking different questions and getting--so we come back together and say, "oh, now, that happened? Oh, we didn't know that he made a contract with this person." And most of it were bad, bad deals.

In the public meetings I attended, the commissioner's claim was backed up by my observations that commissioners and committee members were repeatedly rebuffed or delayed when they asked for more information, while meetings of the Transitional Advisory Board (R-TAB) supervising commission decisions had more complete access. The disruption of five years of emergency management is compounded when those years' activities are not made clear, at least to city officials. Meanwhile, white urban regime members could draw on other sources to get information, from Whirlpool's development nonprofit Cornerstone Alliance, to the County Building and courthouse in St. Joseph, to St. Joseph City Hall's more accessible records, to related state departments, and even local historical associations maintained by whites. Besides, they were often the people who had drawn up the documents themselves. This led me to consider who was ultimately harmed by Benton Harbor's lack of memory, and who benefitted from that constant forgetting.

5.7 In Perpetual Transition: Partial Local Control

Questions of management aside, Saunders is broadly viewed as being successful because he balanced the city budget and was able to leave within 13 months. While most attribute this success to Saunders' cost cutting, he would not have been able to leave

without the state's granting a \$2.3 million emergency loan to the city (Harris had earlier applied and been rejected for a larger request). The loan represented the emergency manager's alternative to the city commissioners' 1% income tax proposal placed on the November 2013 ballot, which was unpopular in the business community as it would have taxed the income of non-residents who worked in the city (including the majority of Whirlpool employees). In online comments and a white urban regime-conducted survey of business people's opinion on the proposed tax, some complained of "taxation without representation." Their invocation of the patriotic cry has an interesting twist in a city where local residents had lost political representation much more brutally.

The "emergency" loan seems to foreshadow continued state dependency and distress. Over half the new loan was retained by the state and county government to repay prior debts. In an interview, Commissioner Palmer compared the loan to "sharecropping, where you never get out of debt, which means you can never leave the plantation. You're not a slave, based on the law; however, you're still under my control." The state's arrangement also seems to insure the loan will hang on the backs of residents for a long time to come. For instance, Saunders told media that the state emergency loan conditions allow interest-only payments for 10 years, but "we are not doing that. Year one, we are going to start paying on that debt service""(Gryczan, 2013). Paying only interest for ten years would mean the city would have to pay seven hundred thousand

dollars annually for the final five years of the loan. From reading through archives, I learned this is not Benton Harbor's first emergency loan: a series of loans were also obtained between 1981 to 1985 for a total of \$2.4 million. Indeed, it was only in 2005 that the city finished repaying this prior round. But this prior loan was not part of the discourse about the current loan. One city commissioner reflected, "The EFM claimed he was coming to fix the financial situation. How did he fix it? Get a loan. If that's the case, why didn't the state give us a loan a long time ago?"

Within a week of receiving the loan, the city was declared to be "in transition" under the authority of the Receivership Transitional Advisory Board (R-TAB). Of the people I spoke to, members of the business community felt almost unanimously that it had been successful. But they were concerned about returning control to elected officials. As one white observer put it, "I think by and large people think, "Well, now emergency manager did what the emergency manager had to do to keep the city from going bankrupt and people are worried that the commissioners will get the city right back into the same trouble it was in before." Even Jasper, a pro-emergency manager commissioner, said of the commission, "the only saving grace that I think we have right now, is that we still have a transition advisory board. And I know that goes against, you know," he assumed an angry voice "'doggone, it's democracy! They should be allowed

to run this city!' Even if it runs into the ground, even if—you go bankrupt," he laughed, "I can't agree with that."

However, the legacy of emergency management was still very present in the city in 2014. City officials still get reminders through the multiple lawsuits incurred through the emergency managers' actions—while emergency managers have the power to break contracts, that doesn't prevent affected parties from suing over the breach. The city, not the emergency managers, is considered liable for emergency managers' decisions (Saunders is co-defendant on only one lawsuit). The emergency managers' legacy also persists in their orders, irrevocable for two years following emergency management—for the commission, that is; the advisory board does have the power to change them. Further, the city manager's powers have been greatly enhanced by fiat, where electoral politics failed. In his final flurry of orders in 2014, Saunders significantly enhanced the powers of the City Manager, making this position more like a permanent emergency manager.

Several commissioners attested during meetings and interviews that they feel that power has not actually been restored to elected government. One commissioner compared Benton Harbor to post-invasion Iraq, with the same external governance. When I asked Commissioner Palmer what it was like now that emergency management was over, he replied,

Well, it's not *over*...and actually I have, the emergency manager's final order, where it became more sophisticated, in that, the TV was controlled where you had to get up and turn it...But now, through remote control, you don't even have to--now you can, through your phone, record something through DVR, and you don't even have to be at home...So the way that they have transferred power, is where they don't have to have an emergency manager *physically* here. However, the idea can still, not only exist, but control what happens.

Commissioner Palmer also said EM Saunders told him a transitional advisory board would be need to be in place "'maybe 20-30 years.'" Between the R-TAB and the expansion of the city manager's power, external rule has been institutionalized. It is problematic enough to have democratic self-rule temporarily removed in the name of an emergency. But the long-term solution appears to be founded on the same position: that elected oversight of local functions is the key problem. While formal emergency management has ended in most Michigan cities, most are still overseen by some kind of transitional board.

5.8 Conclusion

In this chapter, I evaluated Benton Harbor's time under emergency management as a manufactured crisis that destabilized local government rather than solving a problem. I showed how support for emergency management was couched in a framework that blames individuals and management styles for structural disinvestment, especially at the state level (over the past ten years, state revenue sharing cuts to Benton Harbor nearly equal its deficits). The emergency manager law is legitimated by racial

stereotypes regarding black governance, in which black citizens' right to self-rule and black officials' leadership are devalued. Moreover, we can understand emergency management as the state-sanctioned consolidation of power in the unelected white urban regime, whose informal access to Benton Harbor City Hall increased, while all black city residents I spoke to were shut out. Finally, I discussed emergency management as one stage in an ongoing dynamic of constant change. Both emergency managers' tenure, and the changes they instituted, disrupted city government precisely when their ostensible job was to improve the city's function. This raises questions about how the emergency manager law is supposed to actually help cities in the long term, and why it seems to have instead positioned Benton Harbor for decades of future indebtedness and state control.

5.8.1 Post-Script: Note on Flint

By now, it should be clear that emergency management and its fallout matters greatly for how we understand racial citizenship, especially in black-led cities.

As with my larger project, my understanding of the story and meaning of emergency management has evolved in real time. When I began this project in 2012, I assumed I would be one of several researchers engaging directly with this law. By the end of 2015, I was surprised to discover that relatively few academics have engaged with Michigan's emergency manager law. For instance, in 2012 I was in contact with the Ford School of

Policy at the University of Michigan, where researchers were conducting several waves of a statewide survey soliciting municipal officials' opinions on local and state governance and financial issues. Back in 2012, the researchers generously shared their data with me and suggested I may be able to write future questions on emergency management for the survey. By 2015, when I got back in touch with them, they responded that they were no longer including any questions about emergency management, as it did not seem to be a "hot-button issue" any more. That email came on October 6, the day before I heard that Flint's water system had been poisoned by an emergency manager's decision, a crisis which threw emergency management back into the news.

Following the Flint crisis, where state and emergency management decisions and coverups led to the poisoning of a whole city, revealed the limits of assuming the emergency manager law is "all about" a singular goal. Flint's case, especially as illustrated in the internal emails and memos within state government and other agencies, emphasizes the power of Michigan's ideological stance on majority-black and poor cities, what they deserve, and how they should be governed. The costs of fixing Flint's water system have been estimated at \$1.5 billion, but this leaves out the secondary costs to the city, in the form of lost property value (Minghine, 2016) or the health costs of treatment. Those costs will exponentially outweigh any cost-saving

opportunity of emergency management as a whole, or even its extractive benefits. But they would not have incurred had state officials not belittled and downplayed the concerns of local residents. The case of Flint illustrates a prevalent logic at play in Michigan: that poor and black residents cannot count on their most basic urban services and infrastructure. It is my hope that, by illustrating the logic justifying this state of affairs, my analysis helps address these injustices.

Chapter 6: Discussion

The previous two chapters provided two specific case studies through which I illustrated Benton Harbor's white urban regime and its operation of an extraction machine. In this chapter, I direct attention towards the utility of the emergent theoretical framework that guided my study. I elaborate on my theoretical constructs and the relationship among them as they render conceptual and empirical understandings of this walled city.

This chapter is organized in accordance with the four major principles I outlined for each of my two primary constructs in Chapter Two: the white urban regime and the extraction machine. In addition to highlighting the theoretical relevance of these constructs for my empirical analysis, I also illuminate particular mechanisms that facilitate these larger processes. Some of these mechanisms represent additional theoretical contributions which merit further elaboration (they are italicized in this section). The new concepts I name here arrive from emergent findings, but in many cases I am putting names or more explicit definitions to concepts that have already been discussed, to some degree, in various literatures on development, race and politics.

For the white urban regime, my main emphases comprise the following: First, the white urban regime uses racialized networks to govern outside elected roles, showing the true limits of electoral democracy. While white networks provide essential means to take and hoard resources, the "*land of do*" myth allows the white urban regime

to emphasize cooperation while conveniently ignoring the networks and resources making their cooperation meaningful. Their actions are coordinated through value agreement, although this coordinated process of taking resembles a conspiracy to many black residents. Second, the white urban regime engages in selective and conditional inclusion of black elites as members, although these black elites lack the network power to fully access white social, economic and political entities and are therefore limited in their agency. Third, white urban regime members occupy contradictory roles as owners with property interests in the city who publicly present themselves as outsiders. Finally, the white urban regime legitimates its actions by setting and reframing local narratives to its advantage.

Next, I flesh out the four primary components of the extraction machine. First, I illustrate how creative destruction in an urban context serves the goal of extraction, and how the white urban regime's use of the *empty slate* narratively serves that process. Second, I review my exemplar cases to show how the white urban regime generated economic growth by taking city, state and federal resources, while the city government wrestled with the consequences through a city-level version of the *high cost of poverty*. Third, I explore how this iteration of extraction from Benton Harbor has required the generation of new forms of resources for the taking, which I call the *commodification of inequality*. The exaggeration of the city's crisis and need for experimental trials

legitimizes the white urban regime's actions. Fourth, I show how the white urban regime reframes local inequality by using mechanisms like the *charity model*. Inequality is explained not as the outcome of the white urban regime's actions, but as the rationale for continued extraction.

To expand the discussion, I move between theoretical analysis and empirical illustrations for my argument, frequently extending beyond the two primary cases that grounded my earlier chapters. This broader point of view is essential to understanding what the two cases (the Harbor Shores golf course and emergency management) were cases *of*. Also throughout, I emphasize how the white urban regime and the extraction machine combine and deploy three additional key constructs in my work: race, power and relationality.

6.1 White Urban Regime: Shadow Governance and Racialized Citizenship

My focus on the white urban regime's unelected role in a black-governed city reframes an old debate on black municipal power—that is, whether majority-black and black-governed cities are suffering because of their own bad decisions, or because of the disinvestment represented by white flight and job flight. There has been a confusion of cause and effect in interpreting the outcomes of the half-century experiment in local black governance, when black officials inherited disassembled and looted cities. Even

some proponents of the counterargument, by focusing on white flight as a previous iteration of extraction, have missed the continued role of white ownership and white exploitation in these supposedly-abandoned spaces.

6.1.1 Value Agreement and the “Conspiracy”

Framed in contrast to Benton Harbor City Hall’s negative “politics,” as I showed in Chapter Five, the white urban regime relies on a positive atmosphere of shared values to accomplish its goals. Some observers (Reedy, 2013) and locals have noted the “conspiracy theory” in Benton Harbor, in which citizens see Whirlpool’s machinations everywhere. Some black elite members declared confusion about other black residents’ belief in the “conspiracy.” One black official, “Jasper,” expressed frustration that residents thought he was working for Whirlpool. Adopting a fake angry voice to impersonate his critics, he sneered, ““He’s for Whirlpool. He’s for the man, he’s for—”” He interrupted himself and continued. “Every time I see one of the Whirlpool execs, I always tell them, you know, ‘you owe me a check. Because everybody said you bought my car, you bought my house, you bought—”” he laughed. “I don’t get any of that. But that’s the goods that they sell.”

In my own analysis, I have interpreted “Whirlpool” as a metonym for the white urban regime—but how is a white urban regime different from a conspiracy? Certainly, white urban regime members did not consider themselves in thrall to Whirlpool. For

instance, Steve complained that city commissioners thought he was passing on orders from Whirlpool: "every time I would talk to them, they would just be like – I'd say, 'you know, I think we need to –'" Steve interrupted himself to play the part of a Benton Harbor commissioner, affecting a grumbly voice: "'Well, what's Whirlpool think?'" He resumed his regular voice. "It's a lot better now, but, I mean it was always about, what did Whirlpool think of it, whatever. I'm going, 'I just thought of the idea five minutes ago, I haven't talked to anybody from Whirlpool, I'm not sure what they think of it!'"

The misunderstanding between Steve and the commissioners relies on the fact that culture, habitus and ideology can guide individual thought to produce particular ideas. There are "back rooms," but the discussion in those rooms is unlikely to be what we think of as a "conspiracy." In Floyd Hunter's book on community power in Atlanta (which he called "Regional City"), he found no evidence that "there is a group of men who scheme and plot frauds to perpetrate on an unsuspecting populace" (Hunter, 1963 [1953]) (1953, 180). Instead, Hunter found that

The men of power usually operate openly with one another and on equal terms. They know full well that the manipulation of various factors in the community – such as the departments of government, the labor force, and the press – is to their advantage. The relation with these parts of the community is not one of deceit, in the main, but one of value agreement. If the little fellow comes out on the short end of affairs, or if he was "not in the know," as the popular expression goes, it is for reasons other than fraud. (180)

The significance of “value agreement” is why the role of symbols and culture is so crucial to unpack if we want to understand how inequality is reproduced. In a classic illustration of Lukes’ “third face of power” (Lukes, 1974), the white urban regime believes they are implementing universally-shared goals with good values. Discussions in the “back rooms,” at least in the white urban regime meetings I observed and anonymous interviews I conducted, are more likely to contain mystified musings on why city politicians and residents do not share their values. The very philanthropic activities and meetings that mark them as “apolitical” are the sites in which their connections and goals are forged. As Stone notes of his “urban regime,”

What makes the group informal is not a lack of institutional connections, but the fact that the group, as a group, brings together institutional connections by an informal mode of cooperation. There is no all-encompassing structure of command that guides and synchronizes everyone’s behavior. There is a purposive coordination of efforts, but it comes about informally, in ways that often depend heavily on tacit understandings.”(Stone, 1989, p. 4)

Steve was so offended by the notion that he was taking direction from Whirlpool because of this “tacit understanding.” To Steve, his aims simply represented common sense, although they were reinforced by his white habitus of organizations, businesses, charitable events and informal relationships. As I show in the next section, these network connections were crucial not only to establish shared understandings among regime members but to facilitate goals.

6.1.2 The Land of Do: Racial Networks and Resources

The white urban regime is a racialized network with ties to other racialized networks in both public and private spheres. The golf course development's very success shows the cumulative advantage inherent in racialized networks, outside resources and relationships, access to grants, and the ability to rewrite laws and agreements to suit. Similarly, the white urban regime's formal and informal access to political entities under emergency management ensured its stability in a time of great disruption for black city officials.

While these networks were extensive, white urban regime members underplay their role. Whether scolding recalcitrant black city officials or celebrating Harbor Shores' success, the white urban regime emphasizes "cooperation" to create the impression that anyone (no matter what race or class) could participate equally in these networks of equal individuals coming together. The narrative of "cooperation" reinforces the apolitical model of participation I introduced in Chapter Five, as an alternative to electoral democracy. It not only ignores the racial divides in these networks, but also obscures the resources hoarded by and shared within white networks.

On several occasions, white men told me about projects that were

accomplished without any outside funding, subsidy or top-down organization, as a result of people coming together and offering what they could – that hard work itself was enough to make amazing things happen. For instance, Stan repeatedly condemned black commissioners for living in the “land of talk, not the land of do.” As a comparison, Stan described a case of business owners coming together to create a small park in the Arts District:

Just people working together to get things done. There's no money from the city that went to the park. And that's how things get done, by individuals willing to work together, not necessarily takes a lot of money, it just takes people willing to work together! To get things done. And it's amazing what you can accomplish. It's kind of neat. Other communities do it, you know? So, again. You've got to get out of the land of talk and into the land of do. (laughs) It's pretty simple.

Despite Stan’s admiration at the individuals working together, he did not mention the \$2 million MDOT grant in 2006 that had provided streetscaping on that very block, certainly bolstering the owners’ momentum and amplifying their efforts. The same process was at hand in a media account of a white retiree who had singlehandedly taken on the renaissance of Benton Harbor High’s football team in Fall 2015. His turnaround was not only in his personal commitment but in the contributions he gathered from his friends “across the river” (in St. Joseph) who “lined up with discounts or flat-out donations of services and supplies—new lockers for the varsity team; new equipment for the weight room; furniture and carpeting for the coaches’ office”(Klemko, 2015). A

local black state trooper commented of the coach, ““he has a unique way of being able to pull resources together”” (Klemko, 2015). While a black Benton Harbor native-turned NFL player, Wilson Chandler, has been running local summer football clinics and donating cleats to the school’s team for several years, he lacks the extended networks that multiplies his personal wealth.

The mythologized version of cooperation highlighted in Stan’s story and the coach’s success promotes the idea that Benton Harbor residents could pull themselves out of poverty with hard work alone, even lacking the resources enjoyed by the white urban regime. It hides the resources of wealth, powerful friends, education, land, family, that made this success possible. What may be different between the “land of talk” and the “land of do” is that people in the “land of do” have the resources – financial, political, and social– to make the plans happen. For instance, during his interview Stan mentioned access to a number of organizations and individuals including a benevolent society, academic institutions, churches, large companies, boards, county-level officials and city staff, regional planners, and the Benton Harbor’s emergency manager. Stan’s latent resources also include the confidence and privilege to know that even when he calls up someone outside this network, people will give him their time and information. As Eric noted,

It just takes a lot of skill and a lot of money, essentially, to be able to tap into...tax credits and grants and all that...And if you don't have the money, and you don't have the skill, it takes a lot of time. A lot of time.

We already know that networks are racialized and provide differential returns by race for getting a job (Royster, 2003; S. Smith, 2007). The stark and growing racial wealth gap (Kochhar, Fry, & Taylor, 2011) multiplies exponentially across a family or whole community, driving differential access to start-up capital for a business (Valdez, 2011) or even mustering cash in an emergency (Kiel, 2015; Kiel & Waldman, 2015; Stack, 1974). Beyond personal networks of family and friends, whites still maintain control over most American institutions, private and public. For this reason, their means to muster resources via their network will far exceed blacks' in any context. The "land of do" myth renders white privilege invisible, similar to Oliver and Shapiro's finding that whites consistently underestimated the material benefits of intergenerational wealth (M. Oliver & Shapiro, 1995). For instance, Eric alleged the recent success of businesses in downtown Benton Harbor came from "poor white people coming in and doing something," people like himself whom he said repeatedly "had nothing" — except what he himself enumerated elsewhere: a good education, the ability to get a bank loan, and other specialized skills deriving from his background and cultural capital.

White urban regime members' extensive networks make them accustomed to cooperation-- because they can meet with powerful people and get what they want. The

informal nature of this cooperation ties itself engenders trust and facilitates the work (Hunter, 1963 [1953]). The web of formal connections (boards, companies, associations, clubs) combine with the informal links: time spent at Habitat for Humanity builds, cleanup days, St. Joseph summer concerts, PGA events. In a racially divided community, the two disparate cultures and social networks produce more than individual racial antipathy (although this is the focus of most racial analysis of the area). The networks structure access to political voice, and they also, crucially, determine the stories people hear, the beliefs they share, and the people they are willing to talk to.

Because of the invisibility of class and race-based resources, white urban regime members see black officials' lack of access to resources as evidence of their dysfunction or lack of work ethic. The "land of do" myth, by claiming to foreground individuals' participation (although with the backing of their various organizations), also represents a way to work around Benton Harbor's elected government. Because of their distaste for black Benton Harbor residents' alleged dependency, they rhetorically position the white urban regime as self-sustaining rather than government-dependent, despite the many and varied resources they seek from public entities.

Finally, residents' uncooperativeness was cited by white urban regime members not only in political contexts but conflated with Benton Harbor residents' refusal to perform manual labor. Both Stan and Steve complained of

commissioners' alleged lack of cooperativeness in community clean-up projects they'd participated in. In one story of such conflict, Steve recalled wanting to tell the commissioners, "bend over and pick up the trash yourself!" Getting into the mood, he continued excoriating imaginary commissioners: "Pick up the trash!...Pull up your pants!" Similarly, Monty complained about the city's condition: "Personal upcare. Yards. Trees. Simple things. Houses. Steps. Sidewalks. Junk." He went on to tell a story:

Fifteen, eighteen years ago, I was alongside [a white urban regime member]—he and I were on the ground, hands and knees, pulling weeds out of the sidewalk to make it clean and a car stopped. There was some black persons. And he said to us, "What are you guys doing?"

We said, "We're cleaning."

"Would you come down to my house when you finish here?"

So, how do you think the two of us felt? Pretty high up in our particular companies and doing our, trying to set some kind of example. People sitting on their porch watching us. We never did it again. Why? Pretty simple.

What seemed to be a misinterpretation of one man's passing joke had made a crucial impression on Monty. Monty, Stan and Steve all seemed fixated by themes of trash, white outsiders cleaning up after black residents, and the latter's alleged lack of willingness to participate. The frustration that Benton Harbor residents allegedly "talk" rather than "do" is mixed up with the frustration at cleaning up after ungrateful,

nonparticipating black people—that the charity they muster is not even appreciated. Of course, the symbolism of a locally powerful white man cleaning or pulling weeds in another city as an act of charity is very different from that of a poor black person cleaning “their own” trash. The “land of do” myth enables a vision in which poor people can at least tender their sweat equity as “cooperation” to contribute to the community or symbolize their appreciation.

Importantly, in his interview, Stan conflated the “hands-on” labor of cleaning with the other kind of work that is required, in the “land of do:” the glad-handing, fundraising, and back-room meetings he found necessary in his unpaid, unelected role in the white urban regime. Arguably, this is where the “real” work is done, in the agenda-setting conversations and friendly negotiations. For Steve, Stan and Monty, those “clean up days” are actually one more site for informal networking. To participate in those conversations, you have to have goods to offer, whether those goods are money, property, a favor from a politician or well-connected person, a change of law or ordinance, or tax breaks. Not everyone has equal access to those back rooms, or the resources to trade there, harming most black officials’ ability to seem “cooperative.”

Moreover, these concepts are highly racialized. As I discussed in Chapter Five, what is framed as cooperation among whites can strongly resemble what is decried as corruption among blacks—and, as I have said, accusations of corruption could actually

represent a measure of insufficient integration into the white networks of resource-sharing and favor-dealing. I should note that white urban regime members never identified any of the business or land deals benefitting other white urban regime members as part of the “corruption” they deplored. None mentioned, for instance, the first sell-off of Jean Klock Park land for luxury beach-house development in Chapter Four, for which, at least one black commissioner alleged, the mayor at the time may have received a kickback.

6.2 White Urban Regime: Black Elites’ Conditional Inclusion

The narrative of community participation and “doing the work” flattens access—no longer on the basis of electoral democracy, as pluralists would have it, but through nongovernmental means. Through frames like “cooperation,” the white urban regime provides stage-managed participation opportunities rather than democratic voice. Black elite participation is essential in these occasions to demonstrate buy-in from the black community and interracial solidarity, despite the intraracial economic inequality within the city. The role of the black elite as “caretakers” or spokespeople for the larger black community has been noted as far back as Du Bois’ “talented tenth,” the “exceptional men” who would “save the race” (Du Bois, 1903) p.34, and is a consistent theme in urban scholarship ever since (Connolly, 2014; Drake & Cayton, 1993 [1945]; Frazier, 1997; Pattillo, 2007). Several classics in urban politics also address the role of this group as

mediator (Hunter, 1963 [1953]; Stone, 1989). What I emphasize here is how both the racialized character of the informal networks and the dominance of business/landowner interests limited black elite access to these spaces of shadow governance.

Much of the Benton Harbor officials' conflict, so derided by white urban regime members, derives from the fact that commissioners are fighting a proxy war. No matter who is on the commission, the body is generally split between commissioners supporting Whirlpool and commissioners resisting Whirlpool. For this reason, white urban regime members frequently call for the nine-person commission to be reduced to five members, requiring fewer votes for a majority—both emergency managers attempted to change this part of the city's charter. In white urban regime representations of the city commission, personal infighting is conflated with political disagreements and real conflict over resources.

The social world for black elites is structured by church, work, family, college affiliations, fraternities, and benevolent organizations, just as it is for whites. For the most part, the factions represent a class divide, where black Benton Harbor residents from prominent local families tend to support Whirlpool (and by extension, Harbor Shores and the PGA). However, there was no neat division process to show inclusion

and exclusion in these organizations. In 2014, one commissioner opposed to the white urban regime worked for Whirlpool, to the bafflement of white urban regime members.¹

Black elites in Benton Harbor tend to espouse strong respectability politics (Higginbotham, 1993) and a moralizing narrative of responsibility. As Pattillo noted for the “black middlemen” she observed in development around Chicago’s Southside, in turn drawing on Frazier’s “black bourgeoisie” (Frazier, 1997), these narratives performed important class-based distinction work to differentiate the “virtuous behavior of the black middle class” from “the depravity of the black poor” (Pattillo, 2007, p. 105). As I noted in Chapter Three, in interviews, meetings, and observations, as well as online comments and news media, I frequently encountered black elites as well as whites who spoke of sagging pants, littering “papers,” lack of initiative to get jobs, “babies having babies,” the culture of poverty, dependency, and self-limitation from opportunity. One tactic of distinction I observed among the “black elite” was to identify themselves as belonging to the first wave of black migration in the 1920s, as compared to the second wave in the 1940s. I was told several times that the earlier arrivals were more skilled, more educated, more entrepreneurial, and more culturally assimilated than the

¹ As one of the area’s primary employers, opposition to “Whirlpool” was surprisingly nuanced. Even Rodney, Whirlpool’s biggest political opponent, reiterated several times in his interview that he didn’t want Whirlpool to leave: instead, he begged them, “Just pay your taxes!”

second round of less-educated black migrants, who “brought the South up with them.”

As Florence described it,

When I was a girl it was a disgrace to be on welfare...I mean you just didn't do it. No family wanted to be on welfare. Okay, families sent south for other family members. Come to Michigan. They're giving money away. All you have to do is come here. And people came. They didn't come to work in the foundries because the foundries were closing. They didn't come to work in the fruit farms. The Hispanic, the Mexican people were beginning to come and work for far less than many other people were willing to take to pick fruit and vegetables. So you had this influx of people to Michigan just to be on welfare.

Seeing poor blacks in Benton Harbor as a distinct group facilitates the black elite's participation in the anti-welfare rhetoric. This historical divide still drives present-day racial politics because the black elite see their families' emphasis on education as the means of their own success, while the values of the “newcomers” drive their poverty. Frequently people mentioned their own success to express that determination could overcome all, and that others' failures were the result of what one speaker at the NAACP called “self-hate.” Jasper, a black elite member with a high-level administrative job, described it as

all those personal issues. That people have. I call them insecurities. Happens a lot in African-American communities? Because I have worked to be where I'm at. I started out in this organization--when I was in high school, mopping floors. Taking out trash.

Of course, these cultural explanations for black poverty hold little water, especially in light of what Glaude has called the past decade's “Great Black Depression” (Glaude Jr.,

2016), in which black wealth was halved in five years, and unemployment has still not returned to pre-2007 levels.

I was able to use my own status as a white outsider to hear the stories black elites share with people like me, and understand some of the selectivity in their telling. Many elites, black and white, told me about the infamous overpriced trash contract with a local black businessman, the single specific case of alleged corruption I heard about at least five times. Florence told me about participating in a committee to provide home loans in poor communities in compliance with the Community Reinvestment Act:

Banks...in a high level poverty area are required to make loans available to them and to reach out to that particular community. They made loans to people I would never have loaned money to and I said that in a couple meetings. I wouldn't loan them any money...these concessions that we made, some of it enabled people. Some of it just set people back and made it too easy... I don't believe in lowering the standards.

Here, Florence focused on the “lowered standards” for individuals, and portrayed herself as the Cassandra on the committee, warning against the overly-generous behavior of a local bank. Florence did not mention the local home-loan studies conducted by an organization she herself had participated in for decades—studies that had found, repeatedly, that local banks were discriminating against qualified borrowers in Benton Harbor. In fact, someone else said Florence herself had given presentations on that data; but Florence did not think this information worth telling me in her interview.

Black elites were approvingly mentioned by white urban regime members in

glowing terms like “some very educated, very common-sense oriented black people in the community.” Because the white urban regime interacts most frequently with the black elite, these beliefs have material consequences. They provide cross-racial amplification of middle/upper class beliefs about the origin of Benton Harbor’s problems, what information is relevant, and who can be trusted. White outsiders can feel like they have access to a black “insider” who told them what was really going on—and because their black friend said it first, they think it is not racist to repeat it. Meanwhile, black elites feel they have the ear of people in power, so they can get the inside story. And they do get a privileged position: to be able to sit in the room. They are invited to collaborate, but they are not often given independent power. While black elites may form part of a “growth coalition,” racial differences in resources limit their voice in the informal agreements, as I showed for Darlene in Chapter Five. Because of the racial differences in wealth, personal networks, they cannot bring the resources of a Stan or a Monty to the table. They are not spearheading plans, and they are not applying for the large state grants.

I also observed that equal representation on a board did not entail equal voice or participation. Looking closely at the orchestration of mixed-race meetings showed a racial etiquette in public governance. I attended one meeting in which the two black members of a five-person board, both former or current employees of a white urban

regime business, rarely spoke except to second motions and vote. An hour later, I saw the three white men from the board having lunch at a local restaurant. One of the two black board members owned the restaurant, and was back at work, but he was not eating with them. I frequently observed the owner engaging with other customers, including my family, on our visits, so his lack of interaction in this case was notable. This small example shows a small, but important, informal event at which lines of information and access are shaped. Racialized networks shape who interacts in those all-important friendly ways, not just in the formal atmosphere of the board meeting. It matters for appearances of “participation” to have two black locals on a board, but they are not privy to the conversations over lunch.

6.2.1 “They used them and let them go.”

Throughout this dissertation, I have emphasized the transitory nature of local organizations, agreements, employees, and politicians. Membership as a favored or “good” black commissioner or board member, city hall staff member, or community spokesperson was similarly shifting and far from secure. Some of my respondents predicted that many black “in-between” helpers of the white urban regime were destined to experience betrayal. One respondent, “Marcy,” who was involved in local politics, talked about “the people that, they didn't kill them, they just used them and then let them go...They did _____ like that. He couldn't find a job peeling *bananas*.” She

continued, “See, they get these black people. They really don't know them. They just know that they've agreed to be controllable...” She named another person who had a significant role in the community:

they knew some things about him. That's why they didn't want him when he applied [the first time], because they knew some things...they didn't want him, but...they had no other choice but to deal with him. So they know what they did with him? They found out what his weaknesses really were. And when they find out what your weaknesses really are: they get evidence of your weakness.

In Marcy's view, the white urban regime could use these weaknesses to threaten black residents with nominal power into compliance. At the time they were no longer needed, they could be discarded. (By the following year, the person Marcy named had come under investigation and been removed from his position.)

When acceptable candidates for this crucial role could not be found within the city, according to some I spoke with, black outsiders can be induced to represent the white urban regime's will, in a superficial politics of racial representation I noted at play for the emergency managers in Chapter Five. Just as the insiders are “let go,” these outsiders also leave when their work is complete. The emergency managers played official versions of this role in Benton Harbor, but their rotation through the city was not so different from the “revolving door” of city managers brought in from outside—another indicator that emergency managers fit in a local political pattern of governance.

One “outsider” in particular, Marcus Robinson, whom I wrote about in Chapter

Four, was an ambassador from Whirlpool to the black community and spokesperson for Harbor Shores for years. A local activist blog and by a few of my interviewees alleged Robinson did behind-the-scenes maneuvering to get favorable outcomes like new NAACP leadership or control over a new hire. Just a month after the NAACP election in which Robinson was publicly involved, he moved back to Chicago to form a jazz band.

Commissioner Palmer described this outsider as having a manufactured persona:

They had a kind of a Mr. T, if you will, to basically carry the bag. And when I say Mr. T, he was sued for five million dollars because he was not responsible for his own image. Somebody created the image for him. Like Nicki Minaj, with the blond hair, to where now somebody sued her because all of the money that she made off of this image, but the image was not your idea. The image was given to you. Just as with Mr. T, with the gold chains and the mohawk...But, anyway, they created a person like that, who became—he had a doctor's degree in hypnosis, and he forwarded their plans.

“He seemed to leave in a hurry,” I commented.

“Well, they all do,” Commissioner Palmer replied.

It's quick and dirty work, you know. So it's hard to stay around...when you are hitting and running—for lack of a better phrase. Which is a crime... and it's not personal, but, I mean, when you're doing something like this you have to have different players. So he's in Chicago now...He's no longer the doctor. I mean, he's still [a doctor]—but here, he was Dr. Robinson. But now, he's back to the guitarist, the vocalist, trying to make his way in music. While here, he was somebody else.

Commissioner Norton observed the larger pattern of which this “Mr. T” was just a part. “They bring different people--the funny thing about it, I think it's funny now, but

they always bring another African American into our community and they say, 'you go in there and get'em. You get'em. You make them feel comfortable, and then—' And I'm like, 'I'm not comfortable with you, because I know who sent you.'" She continued later in the interview, "and we've had some that just quit. Said that they refused to do what Cornerstone told them to do and they just quit." I asked her for examples, and she gave a name. "He just quit," she said.

He just said—I mean, they had him in the paper, 'oh we got a good guy. He's full of energy and knowledge and he can do this.' I saw him in the store, he said, 'I quit. I'm quitting. I can't, I can't do what they're asking me to do.' He wouldn't tell me what they asked him to do, and then right before they had his leaving party, he told me, 'I had to sign a disclosure. I can't talk about it' ...So, even the ones that left on bad terms, they had to sign a disclosure.

The exclusion of black elites (and all other Benton Harbor residents) from full membership in the white urban regime shows why I specify this as a *white* urban regime. Despite possessing class solidarity and shared values, black elites are kept at a distance from whites' racial privileges.

6.3 White Urban Regime: Owner/Outsider

In the previous chapter, I wrote about the appeal of the emergency manager's supposedly neutral role to local whites, who thought Benton Harbor's governance would be better carried out by an outsider. The emergency manager as neutral outsider adheres to broader themes employed by the white urban regime: that as apolitical

agents, they are less vulnerable to messy, “self-serving” and subjective politics. Local white urban regime members also described themselves as outsiders, whether geographically, as nonresidents, or politically, as operating outside of the status quo. Whites’ monopoly on neutrality and fairness has long been noted by feminist standpoint researchers who expose the subjectivity in these supposedly “unbiased” positions (see S. Harding (2003) for an overview).

Just as the white urban regime can claim centrality by taking on a “neutral” role, members also emphasize that their work in economic development, and the success of their businesses, are in the interest of universal growth for the city and county as a whole. Because their trickle-down economic philosophy holds that all boats will rise when they benefit the most, the white urban regime has rendered its interests (business-friendly tax and development policies and land arrangements) as universal. Even disparaging comments are made in the context of these values: many white urban regime members see Benton Harbor residents and commissioners as divisive, resentful, unwilling to support progress or cooperate, and even as racist for fighting white gentrification. Black commissioners’ interests are “self-serving politics” where white urban regime interests are simply common sense. This narrative is similar to Bonilla-Silva’s primary colorblind frame, *abstract liberalism* (Bonilla-Silva, 2013), which emphasizes equality of opportunity. This frame, which sounds pleasantly egalitarian, is

often used against racial minorities: if everyone is equal and deserves equal chances, then white people are harmed by programs like affirmative action.

In fact, as landowners and business owners, white urban regime members have more direct personal stakes in the region than most city officials, and their networks grant them many personal favors. By taking on the "outsider" role, these personal connections are obscured under the mantle of neutrality. Despite the narrative of the city's "abandonment" by white flight, whites still own a significant amount of property in Benton Harbor, thanks to land speculation, decades of proven local bank discrimination, and the profitability of renting property in the city as opposed to selling it. Until the foreclosure process was updated, speculators went wild with tax liens on Benton Harbor property with unpaid taxes, which discouraged landlords from improving their property. The Berrien County treasurer explained he had kept city foreclosure auctions offline to reduce the number of out-of-state speculators, which he still estimated at twenty percent of all buyers. A drive down Benton Harbor's main point of entry, Pipestone Drive, reveals a number of stately and rotting mansions; the city inspector says he cannot enforce rules against the owners or even make them board the windows, since many live out of state. (The issue of absentee ownership has been a concern for decades: a white minister argued in 1990 that the city's housing equity had been "raped" by absentee owners who kept money out of the community (Tita, 1990).)

Several white investors have held major landmarks for decades, waiting for Benton Harbor's promised comeback to give them a fat profit, or else walking away. Eric complained about the "millionaire-type people" who own several major properties in Benton Harbor who "just have no desire to participate." I asked, "What's their goal?" Eric replied, "I can't imagine what their goal is. Maybe to have someone come in and say, 'OK, I'll give you a million dollars for that building.' I'm assuming that. I suppose that's a goal because it's all about money for these kinds of people."

There's still abandoned buildings, fallen-down buildings that people just won't do anything with. People that have the money won't do anything with them because who knows why? I don't know why...Some of the people that have these properties are some of the wealthiest people in the area. Lots and lots of money. They just have no desire to do anything.

Others were more sympathetic to the "millionaire-type people." A white urban regime member told me of his friend's decision to shut down one of these significant downtown properties: "'I'm just going to buy it out. I'm going to lock the place down. When the city gets back, I'll do something with it.'" With additional public money available for renovation and costs of abandonment covered, and with some network-based power to set property value high or low, according to their interest, land-owning white urban regime members are not financially hurt by the entropy or blight that sets in while waiting for that brighter future.

To take one example, Mercy Hospital, one of Benton Harbor's largest structures, was literally left to rot in 2011 by its owner, white developer Winn Wolf, when it was no longer profitable. Mercy had been the superior hospital when it was merged with its St. Joseph counterpart to create Mercy-Memorial Medical Center in 1977. As an amateur historian told me, "Mercy Hospital even up to the point of the merger and the closing of Mercy Hospital was more up to date and more functional than the hospital in St. Joseph that the Tiscornias and the Uptons built." He said that an \$11 million endowment to Mercy Hospital in the mid-70s was what "allowed them to renovate the hospital in St. Joseph to even make it somewhat modern. And eventually, they just—they had a little meeting and decided that only one hospital was going to survive. And they knew which one." In 1986, Mercy Hospital was turned into Clinic facilities, moving its hospital functions over to St. Joseph. Winn Wolf acquired the building in 1994 and maintained it as a health center with various non-profit providers. When his main tenant moved out in 2011, Wolf stopped paying taxes and allowed the county to take the property in foreclosure. The county is now facing the million-dollar-plus cost of the hospital's demolition, or other significant repair costs just to be allowed to try and auction the property. The county has no recourse with Wolf—although interestingly, the county administrator (the highest county position) is Winn Wolf's brother Bill Wolf, who sold

another landmark city building to his brother when he was the “last white mayor” of Benton Harbor.

When will the city “get back”? What happens to a city perennially waiting for the turnaround? With houses at such low prices, investors waiting for a rise in property values have little to lose—but also little to gain from basic upkeep (Edin & Shaefer, 2015). Their actions, or non-actions, represent a good example of nondecision-making (Bachrach & Baratz, 1962). Perennially revolving around that turning point, as Benton Harbor has for decades, means always starting from zero. Moreover, efforts to get to that blank slate can legitimate very destructive policies. What the white urban regime experiences as the constant drive for an empty slate wiped clean for new opportunities, officials experience as a series of crises that hurt the city. Commissioner Norton described the experience thus: “They get a crisis and they keep you off guard because it's another crisis. You got to deal with this all right now, and all the other stuff goes away. So that's what they do to us.” She and another commissioner both mentioned Naomi Klein's (2008) *Shock Doctrine*, which argued Milton Friedman's crisis-as-opportunity philosophy has served as a model of creative destruction in sites as dispersed as New Orleans and Iraq, as an apt framework for their experience. In my fieldwork I watched the “crisis” mode play out as, seemingly every meeting, there was a new conflict to resolve or proposal from outside.

6.4 White Urban Regime: Reframing Inequality

Finally, the white urban regime is continually shaping and reshaping the local narrative explaining their role and that of the other key players, as an essential component of establishing their legitimacy. Throughout this dissertation, I have given numerous examples of the white urban regime's selective presentation of facts and construction of narratives: from the value of the industrial brownfields pre-Harbor Shores, to the golf course's success, to the role of emergency management and the city's black commissioners and residents, and more broadly, on the need for their own role as neutral benefactors and providers of local development. Below, I elaborate two of the white urban regime's reframing mechanisms: the desire to seed Whirlpool's ideas within the black community; and the use of local media to plant stories and suppress others.

6.4.1 "Let them think it's their idea": The Question of Propaganda

I have already established that the white urban regime had many ways to make their voice heard, whether through the emergency manager, city hall staff, or by using personal networks to maneuver around elected officials. Despite this access, the white urban regime still wanted the trust and support of the black community (as would be predicted from Lukes' (1974) "integrative" face of power). On some occasions, white urban regime members were surprisingly forthcoming about the degree to which they sought to wield influence in local decisions. In Chapters Four and Five, I have sketched

out a depoliticized model of community participation in Benton Harbor. Residents were solicited in stage-managed settings for guided input for projects like Harbor Shores, while their role as citizens was devalued and rendered irrelevant (as seen under emergency management). While some local black residents' "conspiracy theory" saw Whirlpool behind every new proposal, some white urban regime members and supporters actually agreed that Whirlpool's continual challenge was to find ways to introduce their plans more organically. The community development non-profits from Chapter Four and the outsiders I mentioned above represent two of the strategies the white urban regime used for this purpose. Donald stated bluntly, "Cornerstone [Alliance] is nothing more than a puppet for Whirlpool...It's all driven by Whirlpool." In another interview, Brad told me about a new community organization, Whirlpool's newest attempt to find "what vehicles can we use" to give them some legitimacy in the community. "Janet," a government worker in development, concluded her interview by mentioning a big problem she saw occurring in the city: that corporate influence was not able to cloak itself sufficiently.

There is some kind of public-private partnerships, but a lot of the influence is usually driven by – you know, the corporate thumb. And that doesn't have to be a bad thing. But...the approach is never executed in a way where they think—you know, the whole, let them think it's their idea, and then they love it?

To explain what she meant, Janet gave a hypothetical situation in which

Whirlpool is giving a bunch of money to...maybe put a market in. For a grocery store. Well...the delivery of that information needs to make it sound like the city, the people, the city of the people, have come up with this idea. And then, they applied for funding, and they got it. (laughs). You know what I mean? But without that, then they're always going to feel like they are – a corporate town. And it's somebody else always controlling it.

In this example, Janet suggests Whirlpool needs to improve its dissembling by publicly reversing the order of events (making Whirlpool the grantor for solicited funds rather than the plan instigator).

While several local participants were honest about the degree to which Whirlpool and other organizations sought to frame events and plant ideas, this does not mean there was a conscious effort throughout the white urban regime to mislead or delude black residents. As Hunter notes, it would be impossible and also unhelpful to assess how much every member truly believes the stories constructed by the white urban regime:

it is preferable not to enter into a philosophical discussion as to whether propaganda is fraudulent and deceitful...many of the men who, in the early stages of the campaign, may know that propaganda tells only a part of the truth, begin to believe their own propaganda as it unfolds. Are such men deceitful? One must let social philosophers decide the question. (Hunter, 1963 [1953])(181).

Within the closed-off communication network I have identified, it is easy to see how the white urban regime believes its own story.

6.4.2 Media: Setting Terms of Debate

Local media played a key part in the generation of “sincere” (Trilling, 1972) propaganda, as was often evident when I read a news summary of a meeting I had just attended. Moreover, where black commissioners were painfully aware of their portrayal in the local media, as I discussed in Chapter Five, the media’s role in white urban regime meetings was very different than at City Hall. In one Downtown Development Association (DDA) meeting, the local reporter, “Stacy,” was identified and publicly praised by the meeting’s leader: “One thing, I have to brag about her, because I’ll tell you what: She won’t just go by hearsay. She waits until she gets the truth – true stuff before she prints it. She likes to make sure. She checks things out. I’m okay saying things in front of her.” Such a comment built trust between the white urban regime and the media, but was also a performative display of honesty on the part of the DDA head. The speaker’s public reference to his decision whether to “say things” emphasized a front-stage/back-stage distinction, where ostensibly back-stage commentary could be issued in a safe, nominally public setting. While this meeting did, indeed, have plenty of commentary (jokes and eye rolls at the commission’s expense) that would not have been shared at City Hall, no real secrets were shared or major decisions made.

Performing honesty created a jovially conspiratorial environment, making attendees feel they were in the “backstage” of power and shaping the boundaries of

inclusion and exclusion. (As Herzfeld has noted, "Privacy and secrecy...must be performed in order to exist at all: they are socially constituted" (2009, p. 146)). As Bachrach and Baratz argued, behind the visible face of power presenting issues for consideration and making decisions lies a second "face of power" which suppresses other issues from entering the debate (1962). The white urban regime maintains the pretense that select organizations, with select black members, are working within that "second face," which is a stage-managed version with yet another face behind it, as in Goffman's discussion of artificially back-stage regions and "styles" to signify greater honesty (Goffman, 1959).

Not only was Stacy the reporter praised at the DDA's opening, but another speaker asserted influence over her reporting at the same meeting. The black chief of police, giving a report on recent policing efforts (a more extensive and friendly report than any I observed to his superiors at City Hall), was criticizing a commissioner's argument in the previous week's commission meeting. He noted, "One thing about police cars, somebody commented on our commission, like 'oh, it's just a car, my car needs to be replaced too.' Well, there's more wear on those police cars...than yours. Which is, of course, common sense, if you think." Then, as an immediate aside, he added to the reporter, "don't print that, Stacy," which elicited general laughter. Not only was he expressing criticism of a commissioner's intelligence to a majority-white audience; he

was joking in a particular room about the group's power to distinguish private from public talk, even in a public meeting attended by the press. The fact that it was a joke emphasizes their collective comfort in this privacy.

In another example, "Steve," a white urban regime member, proudly told me in an interview about his influence over local TV reporters, who, he said, frequently called him looking for material: "'Steve, I need a story. I need a story.'" Steve not only successfully pitched a story on the re-urbanization of Benton Harbor, but was also asked to provide interview contacts. He played the resulting clip for me online, after which Steve said of the reporter,

She's so green it's like she doesn't know what she's doing. I hate to say it this way, I've worked with a lot of these girls and they're always coming up and asking me questions and wanting to do stuff and whatever and I'm kind of guiding them through some of these things. They're just looking for stories.

While black commissioners struggled with their public portrayal in local media, white urban regime members enjoyed privileged access to shape public representations of themselves, strategically attracting attention toward and away from themselves when needed. The white urban regime approached me in a similar fashion, as somebody who could represent their commonsense position to a broader public. Of course, the gendered element in each of these cases is also notable, as men explicitly and implicitly direct female reporters' access and coverage, and in Steve's case, called them "girls" in

need of guidance. (I would not be surprised if at least a few of the white urban regime members felt similarly that I was in need of guidance.)

6.5 *Extraction Machine*

Having expanded upon my four major principles explaining the white urban regime, I now turn to show how white urban regime members operate an extraction machine. In Chapter Two, I argued that extraction in Benton Harbor has followed multiple phases: first, profit from land and labor; then, extraction of institutions and resources. Contemporary extraction in Benton Harbor profits from the very destruction caused by these prior iterations, taking both physical and less tangible assets. In my two empirical chapters, tracking both the construction of the Harbor Shores golf course development and the framework and outcomes of emergency management in Benton Harbor, I showed several of the ways contemporary extraction takes place in the city. To briefly review some of these forms of extraction: in the Harbor Shores development, we saw the extraction of land, but we also saw how white urban regime members supporting the golf course were able to extract tax revenue from the city, as well as recapturing financial resources promised as a precondition for the golf course. In the case of emergency management, I noted how both emergency managers stripped both the city and public employees of assets and resources. By obtaining an emergency loan rather than supporting a city income tax, the second emergency manager assured

Benton Harbor would remain in debt to the state (another form of extraction). I also showed how the racialized narratives surrounding Benton Harbor's government and residents both facilitated the above forms of extraction and justified *future* extraction and resource hoarding on the part of the white urban regime.

In this section of my discussion, I focus on the ideological precepts undergirding local extraction, from the notion of the *blank slate*, to the idea of growth and the *charity model* I saw operating in Benton Harbor. My goal in doing so is not simply to understand the level of culture or discourse in generating the extraction machine, although this is crucial to understanding how such a system is able to exist. Instead, I analyze these narrative frameworks as a prism to reflect back on the local economic arrangements that might otherwise be concealed. That is, the justifications for a system can help illuminate how the system itself works. For instance, I show how "empty slate" mythology helps justify and obscure the harmful impact of creative destruction in the city. Perhaps most importantly, by proposing the *commodification of inequality*, I explain how white urban regime members have generated new forms of extraction that operate through the very mechanisms intended to alleviate the conditions for which local businesses and elites are responsible.

6.5.1 Extraction Machine: The Empty Slate

Over decades, as I have noted, the articles about Benton Harbor's potential turnaround have suggested the city may have reached the "turning point" at which people will start reinvesting in the city. Here, I show the framework underlying the imagery of the "turning point," and what that logic produces in the form of action, drawing on the perspective of Donald, a white urban regime member who has been featured extensively so far. The public face of the white urban regime is constantly suggesting the city is at that turning point. From Donald's point of view, however, the city could not truly turn around until it hit bottom, a true clean slate—in part to facilitate his own interest as an investor. Speaking of the city, he explained, "I decided we were gonna flip this. In my world, it's gotta get worse before it gets better." Donald's line of business in Benton Harbor demanded predicting where that "true bottom" lay, a skill of augury he called a "black art. This is not science or data driven." Donald drew out his model for me on a whiteboard, with a practiced air that suggested he was delivering a presentation he'd given before. Sketching out a graph depicting time and value, Donald drew two curved lines, one signaling declining real estate values over decades and another declining real estate units. Donald explained that "hitting bottom" was not only the lowest possible real estate value, but the fewest possible remaining houses to live in as "we start to demolish houses... They get condemned, they fall apart, there's no need

for them... I'm talking about a blight situation." Marking off the base of the real estate unit curve, Donald explained,

When it gets to the bottom here, that's where I want to see it. Because, Louise, that is the ocean floor. You can't get any deeper than that. There's only one way to go: up. And when that happens, it's just a matter of time. So if I've got a thousand blighted houses, I've got a big problem, but if I'm Detroit and I take and I raze that land, and now I've got two square miles of urban farming, it doesn't get any--it's fine at that point, because I've stabilized it. So this is a stability issue. Make sense?

LS: Mm hm.

Donald... You then are able to say, "Now, I've got the platform to work with," because it wipes out—gangs and drug lords don't live in a grassy lot. They can only live in beat-down houses. So I want to see this inventory that's crap, essentially, get to here. Because once it gets to here, the slate is wiped. So now I've got a clean slate. It's gotta get bad enough before it gets good enough is the point. Same thing in government, same thing in education... Once it gets bad enough, then we can bring it back, but it's gotta get to the point where we can do true change. Not 10% or incremental, but orders of magnitude change, and that happened with government with the EM.

Here Donald is echoing Milton Friedman's economic philosophy of the use of "shock treatments" (Friedman & Friedman, 1998) during "real or imagined" crises (Friedman, 1982 [1962]) to open up opportunities for privatization and reform. As Donald himself noted, the philosophy can conveniently be applied across domains of housing, education and government, justifying the city's emergency management takeover as well as charter schools. I hadn't expected to hear someone openly claiming that his interest lay in worsening Benton Harbor's plight, despite his participation in the white urban

regime's public efforts to improve the city. What did not seem to concern Donald about this new field of "urban farming" was the human displacement that would inevitably occur—the families who, like "gangs and drug lords," also cannot live in grassy lots.

Donald had a financial interest in wiping the slate, and his position seemed fairly extreme. But only a few days before this interview, Jasper, a member of the black elite and elected official, had approvingly related a conversation with a white urban regime member, possibly Donald himself:

he said, I'm going to say something you're probably not going to like, but it's a fact. He said, "sometimes things have to get worse before they get better." And what he was referring to is that, sometimes you have to allow properties come to a point where they're not worth restoring, so you tear them down and someone can buy them at a reasonable price and build them up.

Like Donald, Jasper, who worked with the white urban regime, did not mention the human collateral damage that came from these assumptions. Moreover, when I passed this idea by a white woman, "Janet," who works on the public side of development, she also agreed with Donald's perspective. Indicating one of the primary neighborhoods of Benton Harbor on a map, about five blocks by eight blocks square, Janet continued, "We call this area Ground Zero...if we could just literally get this to be the field and have it just be urban gardening, because it's just—it's ground zero." Janet's deployment of "ground zero," the term for the spot closest to a nuclear detonation, evokes the

structural violence inherent to urban renewal, and is a remarkably similar framework to the blank slate.

6.5.2 Empty Slate and Creative Destruction

The violent logic behind the empty slate points to a key dynamic at play: creative destruction.

As a local resident reflected early in my fieldwork, “It seems to me that the people are collapsing the city so they can buy it up for a penny and then sell it again.” His analysis matched this “blank slate” philosophy espoused by these white urban regime members and supporters, and shows how the principle of creative destruction works to their benefit. Creative destruction fuels the extraction machine, and is a major example of how the process of development can be lucrative to elites no matter what the outcome. Schumpeter’s (1975) thesis, originally intended and still employed as a positive feature of capitalism, held that new innovations would always destroy the previous mode of production. His argument has been extended to show how the process of destruction could itself be lucrative, in providing the impetus for new generation, whether through “accumulation by dispossession” (D. Harvey, 2004) or profitable disasters (Klein, 2008). Harbor Shores is an excellent example of creative destruction, creating and destroying value and cycling from industrialization to deindustrialization

to brownfield redevelopment. Harbor Shores is the culmination of many iterations of creative destruction across the city.

Thoroughly applying this theory to urban settings require we look at creative destruction not only in the realm of construction, as in the Harbor Shores development, but looking carefully at the many ways to create destruction. One major area for reconsideration is the role of blight and entropy in swiftly un-doing neighborhoods, community projects, and once-new developments. Scholars, policymakers and media alike tend to use ecological, naturalized (and racialized) imagery of like “blight” and “decay” to describe scenes like Benton Harbor (Aoki, 1993). By making these seem like natural disasters, people avoid blame. If there are any people in the story, they tend to be the residents who are blamed for “letting things go” or lacking the personal responsibility for upkeep. Highlighting the role of creative destruction, in contrast, permits the reading of “blighted” landscapes and impoverished cities as the result of active processes of dereliction (Jakle & Wilson, 1992) rather than the accident of passive, inevitable and near-biological processes of blight, or bad husbandry by its poor occupants. Industrial ruins are alternatively left abandoned, re-used, regenerated, sold, or demolished. They are never static objects, but are in a constant state of change across time and space. Thus, this study of industrial ruins is framed in terms of “ruination” rather than “ruins” (Mah, 2012).

With the blank slate as a priority, destruction and demolition are acceptable substitutes for construction or improvement. Moreover, a development orientation supports a focus on construction rather than upkeep, leading to the cyclical construction of expensive buildings without money to keep them open, resulting in their swift decay, necessitating another round of funding for renovation or demolition for new construction. City commissioners, usually in vain, asked for money to go towards services and upkeep rather than new projects. Finally, if key players are either waiting for or actively working to create an “empty slate” in Benton Harbor, and particularly if these events are not perfectly coordinated, the turning point is not a single moment but an ongoing experience constantly “resetting” the terms of agreement.

6.6 Extraction Machine: Growth from Taking

The “empty slate/ground zero” narrative falsely implies that the city is starting over from nothing, while residents continually insist on the city’s many natural and human capital advantages. In this way, the empty slate functions like Neil Smith’s “frontier thesis,” where gentrifiers construct the landscapes they are taking as empty and unpopulated (N. Smith, 1996). By suggesting that the wealth represented in Harbor Shores is “new,” rather than recaptured assets and resources from an already-impoverished city, the concept of the empty slate essentially launders money as it is redistributed upward.

6.6.1 “Shifting and Changing” Development

Journalists writing about the public money flowing through Benton Harbor usually focus on its schools and housing projects. Less scrutinized, but just as consistent, has been the flow of public money to encourage private business and to clean up the mess industry has left behind.

The Harbor Shores development follows on the heels of several prior attempts at renovation, each following a trendy “big idea” in development. These ideas have ranged from reopening the canal that once connected downtown Benton Harbor to the St. Joseph River, to redeveloping the waterfront, to creating an “airport corridor” of businesses, to turning the area into an “industrial park” along the lines of Research Triangle Park in North Carolina, to Community Renewal Through the Arts. For each of these ideas, public funding was solicited and received for exploratory studies, road improvement, demolition, zoning, or tax breaks. Vestiges of these prior ideas are still sometimes barely visible on the landscape or legible in a new plan, although frequently, the new plan ends up benefiting only a select few. For instance, money to reopen the canal, obtained sometime in the early 2000’s was instead used to divert Ox Creek to accommodate Atlantic Auto’s new building. The company was sold under bankruptcy in 2010, a year after exacting a new tax break from the city (Swidwa, 2010a).

St. Joseph's Edgewater commercial and residential development, just southwest of Harbor Shores (see Figure 2), is another major example of how developments' "shifting and changing," to quote Commissioner Stanley, can wind up benefiting white outsiders at the expense of Benton Harbor. Edgewater was originally planned to extend over the border to Benton Harbor-- and the project was awarded grants with that expectation (Dobberstein, 1998). Just one component of Edgewater ended up being in Benton Harbor: a new technology training center ("M-TEC") for Lake Michigan College, funded with \$4 million from the state and \$1 million from Whirlpool (Reidy, 1999). But even this element has been taken back by the white urban regime: after only 14 years in operation, Whirlpool bought the building from the college for an undisclosed amount (Jennings, 2015). Moreover, although most of the development ended up taking place in St. Joseph, Edgewater was the basis for Benton Harbor (under the auspices of Cornerstone Alliance) receiving and administering a new round of Section 108 business loans (Dobberstein, 1998). Those loans in turn were the prerequisite for Edgewater receiving additional grant money—although the loans, as I noted in the end of Chapter 4, mostly went unpaid. Repayment of the business loans now costs the city a hundred thousand dollars per year in forfeited CDBG money. Finally, the MDOT-sponsored bridge modification for that project, which was ironically billed as a way to unite the

communities of St. Joseph and Benton Harbor, allows passage to Edgewater (and now, Harbor Shores) without ever passing through Benton Harbor proper.

Certainly, local manufacturers' evasion of environmental responsibility is not limited to Whirlpool. Edgewater was built in part on the 122 acres of land abandoned by the Auto Specialty Company (AUSCO), which was able to both break labor contracts and avoid responsibility for environmental remediation by declaring bankruptcy in 1988 (Lowe, 2004). Although Whirlpool briefly considered using the AUSCO property for a pre-Harbor Shores hotel and marina concept in the late 1980s, it abandoned the idea when it learned it would have to pay to clean up the site (Lowe, 2004). Eventually the state paid \$5 million to have the site cleaned up as part of its conversion into the Edgewater development due west of Harbor Shores (Reidy, 1999). Meanwhile, the owners of AUSCO, the Tiscornia family, still act as local philanthropists – the public beach on St. Joseph's north shore of the river is named for them in tribute to their generosity, directly adjacent to the site they abandoned.

6.6.2 Assets for Charity

Among city officials and residents, the enumeration of Benton Harbor's physical assets (its airport, river and lake access, many parks, water treatment plant, etc.) became a mantra that always ended with mystification that Benton Harbor should still be doing so poorly. Behind insisting on Benton Harbor's value, though, I wondered if those

invoking this list were also afraid of calling predatory attention to these assets. In the crisis mode Commissioner Norton described above, city officials were often pressured to sell land and buildings or surrender other assets, often at a pittance. Moreover, I found, land was far from the only asset available for sale. Future revenue was one non-land asset regularly surrendered by the city commission, in hope of obtaining future gains, or just to meet the onerous terms of various state and federal programs. As I will show in the following chapters, both the Harbor Shores development and emergency management created environments facilitating the white urban regime's taking of both material assets and more symbolic forms of value.

Several commissioners were intensely frustrated by the trade of assets for charity. In the meeting opening this chapter, Commissioner Boone asserted that the city had been collaborating with the white urban regime at "rummage sale rates" and always came up on the bottom:

We've given millions of dollars in tax breaks and all kinds of other things...is there a reason why the people think that we only deserve freebies, you know, free concerts and cookies and –

Commissioner Norton: hot dogs?

Commissioner Boone: --Juice and hot dogs?

The commissioners were referring to the free events organized by the white urban regime to build community buy-in to their events (like the Senior PGA concert series that had just happened downtown). They felt their commitment of hard assets and

forfeiting of millions in future tax revenue deserved to translate into more concrete benefit than the “juice and hot dogs” and other transitory freebies. They also resented the narrative served alongside the hot dogs, that Benton Harbor residents were charity cases (not political partners) who would take whatever was handed them.

The white urban regime’s agenda is met as much by steering money *away* from elected government as toward a specific goal. This steering both bolsters their own financial and political position, and also reproduces City Hall’s struggle for revenue. In the preceding two chapters, I have illustrated this occurring multiple ways: from capture of city and school tax revenue through Brownfield Tax Increment Financing (not to mention the additional significant tax exemptions provided to local businesses); to the creation of a Parks Conservancy intentionally designed to keep money from the city; to business-led opposition to a city-wide income tax. These material arrangements are bolstered by a narrative I frequently heard among whites doubting the city’s ability to spend its revenue wisely. That shared perspective helped legitimate the extraction process.

Baldwin noted in 1960 that “Anyone who has ever struggled with poverty knows how extremely expensive it is to be poor” (Baldwin, 2007 [1960]). Benton Harbor’s poverty is expensive, just as it is for individuals. Benton Harbor has suffered from the confluence of multiple financial impediments. Even a partial list of the city’s recent

financial troubles is overwhelming: low city and state revenues; multiple debts; significant overdraft fees and penalties; ineligibility for some grants because of prior inability to pay, or because they lacked matching funds; expensive fixes to keep broken-down infrastructure running; the loss of major water customers just after officials committed to a new loan for water plant renovation; and lack of institutional memory or documentation to enforce agreements. They held multiple debt obligations for long-gone commodities or earlier arrangements, resembling Ture and Hamilton's reflection on debt in poverty, in which

People pay 'a dollar down, a dollar a week' literally for years. Interest rates are astronomical, and the merchandise – of relatively poor quality in the first place – is long since worn out before the final payment. (Ture & Hamilton, 1992 [1967], p. 20)

Without negotiating power backed by resources, the city had no grounds to eke out fair deals. For instance, they had no means to enforce third parties' commitment to cover Department of Transportation (MDOT) matching funds for road construction and improvement grants, as when an organization might commit to pay the city's portion of a grant for a road benefitting the organization. MDOT penalized the city on these occasions by garnishing their road funds (this was also listed by the state review team as a reason for emergency management). Similarly, after the city made unsecured loans to local businesses using Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Section 108 loans, many businesses failed to repay the loans, so HUD is garnishing \$100,000 of the city's

Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) allocation each year. (This actually occurred on two separate occasions, in the 1990s and the 2000s.) When commissioners fired city managers they thought were unduly influenced by the white urban regime, the managers (among other employees) often saddled the city with wrongful termination suits and settlements. City officials felt like they were always left holding the bag.

All these factors made the city budget a virtual leaky sieve, but the city's cumulative disadvantage often directly advantaged the white urban regime and other government entities and debt-holders. Matthew Desmond has shown how eviction and other exploitive rental practices have made poverty profitable for landlords (Desmond). This relational approach can be extended to show how the city's expensive poverty is also profitable to the white urban regime and the larger white-dominated network of creditors and government actors – through penalties and fees, interest, and by using the city's poor financial track record to justify harsher terms. The benefits also come at the symbolic level. The high cost of Benton Harbor's poverty reinforced the outside perspective that city officials were bad at managing money. This interpretation of Benton Harbor's fiscal struggles of Benton Harbor is reminiscent of the superficial explanation for the Great Recession that has focused on minority homeowners' allegedly poor financial decisions— rather than on Wall Street's speculative and predatory financial tools, or the magical belief in an always-rising housing market. Just as the

homeowner-focused interpretation serves the purpose of investors and bankers pointing away from their own culpability, so does the narrative that Benton Harbor officials make bad financial decisions. As I showed in Chapter Five, the ideological opposition to “giving money” to City Hall, with an explicit comparison to welfare dependence, justified the lack of white urban regime funding for ongoing needs.²

6.6.3 “Anything’s Better than Nothing”: Benton Harbor as Laboratory

In an extraction machine, a hasty “anything goes” mentality allows poor performance and outcomes to be ignored. The irony here is deep, as Benton Harbor city commissioners and residents are consistently blamed for their lack of responsibility and their failure to accomplish goals (as in Stan’s critique above). The accountability weighing so heavily on Benton Harbor officials is nearly nonexistent for white urban regime members. Instead, the tax incentives and development projects, like the actions of emergency managers, are weighed in an artificial balance. Using the “anything’s

² In a September 2015 internal memo (released in the House Committee’s Flint investigation) explaining the EPA’s position that the federal government should not buy water filters for the residents of Flint, Debbie Balthazar wrote, “I’m not so sure Flint is the community we want to go out on a limb for. At least without a better understanding of where all that money went” ((Neavling, 2016)) The agency was criticizing Flint’s “poor financial practices” of using water revenue for public works projects—interfund borrowing of the type carried out both by Benton Harbor officials and its emergency manager. The invocation of “not knowing where the money will go” was a phrase I heard frequently among whites around Benton Harbor as justification for directing resources away from the city. In this case, we can see how far the narrative can be stretched—to justify opposition to providing a bare minimum of protection for Flint residents’ health, when EPA officials shared responsibility for the lead and other poisons in their water.

better than nothing” paradigm, the simple promise of benefit through jobs, better amenities or programs is often sufficient to justify funding, without their being held to account for these promises. The crisis situation means experiments or trials proposed by white urban regime members are considered viable prospects, because the supposed alternative is to have no change. Pete, who worked at a non-profit, said explicitly that Benton Harbor served as a trial site: “We sometimes get a little bit of slack for this, but if we have an idea of something that we want to vet out, or a program or a process or a model that we want to do, it tends to start in Benton Harbor.” I asked why, and Pete explained that in Benton Harbor, they could typically “find a higher concentration of a need.” He added enthusiastically, “I can find anything and everything that you need to do...in community development in Benton Harbor.” As such, the city served as his organization’s testing ground.

That experimental mentality, valorizing ostensibly new ideas while hiding or ignoring previous attempts or current programs, is actually part of the problem. Indeed, the constant emphasis on change, new approaches, and new developments has produced part of Benton Harbor’s stagnation inside crisis mode. Many of the issues facing the city are repeats of past problems—and even past solutions, although there is little awareness or public acknowledgment of the repetition. To take a minor example, masters students conducted a 2014 study evaluating sites for a potential business

incubator in town (after an identical study was promised by Harbor Shores in 2008). The site they ultimately recommended, with little acknowledgement of the irony, was a building the first emergency manager had closed and put up for sale—a building constructed in 1989, as a business incubator. Benton Harbor's second "emergency" loan from the state, the second cycle of Section 108 business loans that ultimately had to be repaid by the city, the periodic resuscitation of the city's Economic Development Corporation just to buy or sell land and be disbanded again – sometimes it seemed I could find historical precedents for all the news coming out of Benton Harbor.

The lack of institutional memory stems not only from lack of documentation but the high rate of turnover both within Benton Harbor city hall and among the white urban regime. The swift turnover of staff, agreements, initiatives and non-profit organizations, an expected feature of an urban regime, hurts Benton Harbor by making accountability nearly impossible and frustrating long-term residents who wish to participate. Later, when outcomes fall short, those who agreed to the emergency deal are blamed for having made a shortsighted decision; or nobody is left on staff to take responsibility for the decisions; or the goalposts are reset to reflect the new reality. These recycled organizations are not wasted effort for the white urban regime, since the organizations accomplish their temporary purpose; just as the repetitive meetings rediscovering the same problems and solutions for the city have a secondary function of

reinforcing the shared identity and collaborative spirit essential to an urban regime (Hunter, 1963 [1953]; Stone, 1989). This constant change benefits the white urban regime, which experiences cumulative gain from Benton Harbor's cumulative losses. As Commissioner Norton put it, "they start over, they change, they change staff, and they change names—and then they put a new group back together with the same people. It works for them."

As I noted in Chapter One, many local residents asserted the white urban regime's ultimate goal was gentrification, expelling black residents from a newly-refurbished city—this claim, of course, was anathema to many white urban regime members. After considering the longer-term trends and the counterarguments, I came to realize that the white urban regime was positioned to benefit whether or not black residents were actually pushed out, like an investor buying derivatives against his own speculations. The white urban regime did not need to have a singular goal, because its advantages were earned along the way. The deck is stacked in favor of the white urban regime because it profits off the *process* of development, no matter the outcome of that development. And, as Cecily noted in the first chapter, simply holding Benton Harbor residents in their "economic cells" without bars could be very profitable.

This scenario has led some to hypothesize that the white urban regime's plans were actually intentional. For instance, Commissioner Norton theorized of the outside

interventions in Benton Harbor, “most of it is a plan to fail.” “Why?” I asked. “Because it failed,” she said simply. Reappropriating a loaded historical term, the commissioner explained her theory about white urban regime members: “I see people coming in, then they leave. I call them good carpetbaggers. Because they come in with an empty bag, and when they leave, it's full. And they leave us with nothing.” Unlike Commissioner Norton, I do *not* claim that there has been any conscious plan to fail. However, I emphasize that the white urban regime’s failure to eliminate inequality has indeed been a profitable failure. Moreover, I have shown how its plans, although likely well-intentioned, were situated in a larger context that virtually assured the plans’ outcomes will serve wealthy white interests at the expense of poor blacks. As I have discussed, the very process of identifying the problem and coming up with possible solutions, frames the outcomes, as scholars of power have long shown (Bachrach & Baratz, 1962; Lukes, 1974). What I have added here is to show how the discourse framing both problem and solutions is entirely racialized in both overt and covert ways, with crucial repercussions for the reproduction of racial inequality. I have also showed how that process itself enriches the white urban regime, while hiding much of the actual resource flow upward (even from the white urban regime itself, most of which I believe maintains a “sincere fiction” (Bourdieu, 1988) about its role as benefactor in the community). To explain how

this occurs, the next section explains how the white urban regime has turned inequality and lack into a valuable commodity.

6.7 The Commodification of Inequality

One key to understand is that, despite mainstream narratives of moving “beyond” race since the legal and social changes wrought by the Civil Rights Movement, our economic structure is still organized around racial difference, and actually *thrives* on that difference, as it has since it was founded on a racialized system of slavery. Du Bois showed this in “The Souls of White Folk” (2012 [1920]) and *Black Reconstruction* (1999 [1935]), as did subsequent scholars showing how capitalist development could produce racialized underdevelopment (Manning, 1999; Rodney, 1972). Notwithstanding public proclamations of gradual improvement in racial disparities in income, Hall’s analysis of Gramsci is still relevant:

Certainly, whenever we depart from the 'Eurocentric' model of capitalist development (and even within that model) what we actually find is the many ways in which capital can preserve, adapt to its fundamental trajectory, harness and exploit these particularistic qualities of labor power, building them into its regimes... the regime of capital can function *through* differentiation and difference, rather than through similarity and identity (S. Hall, 1986)(24)

In other words, racial differences can be economically productive. As I will show, however, even this analysis is limited by still focusing on labor. In the contemporary era of “financialization,” capital itself, not production, is the economic driver. As I noted in

Chapter Two, this new mode of production requires new theoretical analysis to understand how cultural and ideological representations shift in line with economic changes. My dissertation has shown how the *absence* of labor, especially in a context of racial difference, has become a lucrative source of capital. The white urban regime has successfully commodified Benton Harbor's unemployment and poverty statistics (indicators of non-productivity and non-labor) in multiple ways. The white urban regime uses these statistics as justification for its extraction of Benton Harbor's resources and self-serving development; and it also uses them to produce new income sources for itself—namely by soliciting and extracting public and private dollars intended to help poor black Benton Harbor residents.

While more traditional forms of labor and asset extraction are still taking place, I argue Benton Harbor's contemporary era (late 1980s-present) is distinct. As I have noted, growth machine literature limits itself by assuming land is the only available urban asset for elites to monopolize. While traditional assets are captured in an extraction machine, new assets are always being created for capture as well. In an era in which cheap labor is no longer in demand domestically, US capitalists have turned the unproductive reserve pool of labor (Marx, 2012 [1867]) *itself* into a commodity, from prison contracts (Alexander, 2010) to charter schools (Ravitch, 2013) and social programs (R. J. Miller et al., 2015). Calling this process "privatization" obscures the fact that public money is the

primary (if not the only) funder of these programs. I call this process the *commodification of inequality*. In Marx's theory of commodification, any object produced by labor can be transformed into a commodity if demand can be generated for it (Marx, 2012 [1867]). Here I extend Marx's theory to a case in which an *absence* is commodified. Now that Benton Harbor is characterized more (by outsiders) for its lack of jobs and institutions, that lack itself has been rendered a source of extraction. The white urban regime's creative destruction extends beyond land to people. Where Eddie Glaude refers to the "privatization of black misery" (2016, p. 23) in terms of white society's refusal to see suffering, this phrase also holds true in the financial sense. Black misery is a booming market.

Urban development, heavily subsidized by local, state and federal government processes, has found multiple ways to commodify inequality. From the era of urban renewal to War on Poverty funding and beyond, government entities have provided a myriad of incentives for the private sector to operate in poor neighborhoods and cities. These incentives range from job creation programs to development credits; grant and financing opportunities; public housing development; blight elimination, rehabilitation and demolition funding; business loans; and economic "opportunity" zones. Development programs, several of which I outlined in Chapter Four, often offer special favors or more lenient conditions to projects in distressed cities, expressly invite outside

investors to seek out profit in our most vulnerable communities. As a result, developers and businesses alike have a financial interest in discovering or even defining distressed areas to profit from these incentives. The underlying structures of inequality are not addressed, leaving distressed areas vulnerable to exploitation and seeing little benefit from the money flowing in their name. These programs provide a perverse incentive for development projects to fail at their expressed goals, as continued poverty legitimates future development projects. In other words, businesses taking advantage of these programs are rewarded by producing systematic underdevelopment, often through the very programs supposedly designed to induce development and stability. The “trickle-down” philosophy underlying development projects allows community benefit to be optimistically projected, although tax revenues are deferred for decades, jobs do not materialize, and only wealthy outsiders seem to be enjoying the new amenities.

As several observers have noted (e.g., Mahler, 2011; Mouat, 1986), Benton Harbor’s poverty persists despite decades and millions of dollars’ worth of interventions, representing a range of approaches to fighting poverty, from housing grants to economic stimulus programs to public-private partnerships and even state receivership. One longstanding (and facile) explanation is that the millions directed to Benton Harbor might have disappeared due to city officials’ corruption (Mouat, 1986), although no such large-scale scandal has ever materialized. I explore the unsettling

alternative possibility that the city's persistent poverty could be an unintended *consequence* of development, even though ameliorating poverty is the target of these actions. Those administering funds have a range of practices, from setting the terms of the project, to shifting project goals, to administrative costs, that wind up directing money away from those who need it the most.

Multiple commissioners and other citizens cast doubt on whether money is touching down when it is filtered through outsiders' entities. As Commissioner Norton said at the meeting mentioned in the chapter opening: "*Always*— follow the money." She adopted a sing-song voice, dripping with pity: "'Poor Benton Harbor.' What do we do? We get grants off of our stats. No doubt. We've been like that for a lot of years and we could still get it, and we're broke now." Commissioner Boone expanded on Commissioner Norton's observation:

I don't want poverty to stay poverty in order for us to collaborate...I have no problem with collaboration, but...there's always a kind of a hidden little thing that's happening. And I'm not saying we're being used – but I think we're being utilized. And we need to find out why we're there.

Nine times out of ten, to get grants around here, it's because of poverty...what are we bringing? Are we bringing more than just our statistics? Are we bringing more ideas? Is [it] a stopgap, everybody going to throw their visions out there and say this is what we picture for Benton Harbor? Let's work the same way to work it? ...Or are we saying let's come together to make something other than Benton Harbor better, and if so, I don't think we should spend more years coming up on the bottom.

The commissioners were arguing that the entities seeking their collaboration were using the city's poverty itself as an actual resource for obtaining grants, in a new iteration of hundreds of years of racial and economic exploitation.

White urban regime members are aware of these commissioners' frustrations about "being utilized" to "get grants off of our stats," and several took offense. Brad, who ran a local nonprofit, told me that his organization had "very little ties to the city"—nothing legally binding, for example—because he thought city officials "don't have the capacity to govern." Moreover, Brad was angry about conflict over his organization applying for grants that city officials thought should be administered through the city. He repeated several times, sounding disgusted: "they think they own their demographics." Here I quote my notes from the conversation:

He talked about how they [officials] had shown up relatively recently asking about the grants that this organization had been getting on behalf of Benton Harbor and asking for the money to go to them, and Brad said that he (on behalf of the organization) responded, basically, why do you think you should get this?

Brad was offended at officials' effrontery for assuming that by representing the population, they "own" the people who live in Benton Harbor. He resented their belief that when Brad's organization obtained money on behalf of their constituents, they

should be involved.³ Brad wording the controversy this way brings up uncomfortable questions of who he thinks does “own” this demographic. The white urban regime’s philanthropic and apolitical pose makes members feel entitled to “owning” those demographics of poverty, unemployment and suffering. Several white urban regime members expressed a belief that black city officials’ contestation of their grant activities stemmed from greed and a petty desire for control. They had little awareness of the racialized networks and resources that made such grants much more accessible to white urban regime members than to the city.

6.8 Inequality Justifies Future Extraction: The Charity Model

As I have noted, my dissertation focuses both on the material resource flows and local narratives justifying or obfuscating those patterns of flow. The extraction machine would not succeed without the white urban regime’s public face as a charitable entity. Through its philanthropy and its initiative to build the Harbor Shores golf course, Whirlpool and its attendant nonprofit organizations portray local business as a benefactor rather than a culprit for the city’s hard times, despite its having cut thousands of jobs, left polluted land, and extracted tens of millions in tax credits. I call

³ Based on the timing, I was able to identify at least one of the grants Brad was talking about. I spoke with the relevant representative at the funding agency, who said “urban communities” are awarded “significantly extra” points in their evaluation process; he added about Benton Harbor, “they are very urban, so they get points in that category.” This suggests that Brad’s application did indeed benefit from Benton Harbor’s demographics.

the relationship between Benton Harbor and Whirlpool a “charity model” replacing a traditional tax-based relation based on obligation. As compared to earlier company towns, contemporary corporations rarely commit long-term to a location (especially now that most actual manufacturing has moved overseas). Instead, they constantly threaten cities with what Hirschman (1970) would call their capacity to “exit” to exact concessions (Sites, 2003). Both public and private entities have moved traditional tax obligations away from Benton Harbor, to be replaced haphazardly with corporate philanthropy and public grants. The charity obscures the fact that local benefactors have contributed to the need for charity in the first place by pulling jobs, industry and property taxes away from the city (and state grantors exacerbated the problem with legislation disproportionately harming these post-industrial cities).⁴ The charity model also obscures the degree to which businesses depend on continued public funds, whether through tax exemptions, grants and credits, subsidization and cleaning up of corporate abandonment and pollution, or grants commodifying inequality.

Finally, Whirlpool’s role as charitable agent has become part of its corporate identity, just as some scholars have found whites earn cultural cachet for appreciating diversity (Mayorga-Gallo, 2014). As Brad noted about Whirlpool, they “could have

⁴ These statewide changes range from state revenue-sharing cuts to the more recent elimination of the personal property tax, to emergency management itself.

stayed on the other side of the bridge.” Instead, he said, the company had invested in the city because they were *attached* to being from Benton Harbor and from being invested in it. He said, laughing a little, “because frankly, otherwise, they’re just a company that makes washers and dryers, so what?” In other words, Brad was saying, a significant part of Whirlpool’s branding of itself as a unique company came from its public commitment to serving Benton Harbor. In other words, its role as benefactor generates material capital for itself (as scholars have noted for corporate “greenwashing” of products

The role of philanthropic giving is central to both growth machine theory and urban regime analysis, and earned special attention by community power theorists Hunter and Mills. Through these benevolent and ostensibly apolitical donations, urban regimes can facilitate their own interests, either directly (in Benton Harbor’s case, as I have noted, by directing resources away from elected government) or by framing a cultural narrative of the problem to be solved.

The charity model creates a paternalist schema (Jackman, 1996) for the main players’ roles so future statements and actions can be interpreted accordingly. It depends on and perpetuates an ideological framework deploying the “culture of poverty” trope by providing programs that treat poverty as a problem of the individual (McFarlane, 1999), from job training workshops, to classes teaching middle-class

behavior and values (as I showed in the Community Benefits Plan for the golf course). In the case of the city, this stereotype is applied not only to individual residents but city officials. In both cases, the ostensible solution for the “problem” is to change the people involved. And in both cases, charity recipients are expected to be grateful for what they receive, mindful lest Whirlpool leave the city. If recipients fail in this role, several white men expressed anger at blacks’ lack of appreciation for their actions, just as Du Bois noted a century ago (Du Bois, 2012 [1920]).⁵ For instance, Stan alleged,

I’ve never considered myself a racist, some of my – my next-door neighbor is my best friend, he’s a black man, and I just, I love him to death. But there are people within this community that are black that are more racist than anybody I’ve ever seen before in my life!

LS: What does that mean?

Stan: it means that they don’t want anything to do with a white person coming in their neighborhood. Or doing anything for them. Or doing anything unless you just give it to them.

Some city commissioners expressed frustration with the constant assumption that ideas would come from outside City Hall. As Commissioner Norton said of the “good carpetbaggers” she observed:

⁵ “So long, then, as humble black folk, voluble with thanks, receive barrels of old clothes from lordly and generous whites, there is much mental peace and moral satisfaction. But when the black man begins to dispute the white man’s title to certain alleged bequests of the Fathers in wage and position, authority and training; and when his attitude toward charity is sullen anger rather than humble jollity; when he insists on his human right to swagger and swear and waste,-- then the spell is suddenly broken and the philanthropist is ready to believe that Negroes are impudent, that the South is right, and that Japan wants to fight America” (Du Bois 1920, 18).

when I hear one come in and say, "Well, you need this," I automatically want to punch 'em. You can't come in and tell me what I need. I'll tell you what I need and you see if you can help me. If I'm in a delusion that I really need this...If I say "I need X," and you say, "no, you need Y," then you show me where I need it and I guarantee you, if I really need Y, I'm going to accept your help.

6.9 Conclusion

Commissioner Norton's comments above address the larger framework of the white urban regime, specifically its assumption that whatever Benton Harbor needs, the solutions will come from outside the city. Across domains, from academia and policy, to philanthropy and increasingly, private industry, well-intentioned people and "social entrepreneurs" (predominantly white) are generating a significant part of the "financialized" economy by identifying, proposing and implementing solutions to social problems, which still tend to be premised on seeing black people themselves as a problem. Whites' interest in shaping black spaces and black bodies, I argue, is an overlooked but key stimulus for urban creative destruction, and a significant economic generator—but one that reproduces racial hierarchies and racial inequality, as it comes from *within* a racist system, not outside it.

My relational approach to understanding Benton Harbor's inequality has shown multiple facets of the dynamic between black and white governance and economic power. I have shown how extreme inequality resulted in the upward distribution of resources to the white urban regime. I have also shown how the fraught relationship

between these two groups in close proximity has *itself* reproduced inequality. Kovel argues that "just as the creation of white wealth pushed Blacks down, so must the presence of degraded black bodies have exerted a continual stimulation to the continued pursuit of abstracted money" (Kovel 32, cited in Roediger, 2007, p. 14). This is the key to the racialized contrast of wealth and poverty I observed in Chapter Four, noting the extra cachet accruing to Harbor Shores from its spatial proximity to black suffering. It is also key to understanding how black poverty and stereotyped black capacity justified white shadow governance in the urban regime, of which emergency management serves as one case. Through my theoretical development of the white urban regime and the extraction machine, I have shown how racial inequality itself is the fodder for whites' economic success.

Chapter 7: Conclusion—Breaking Down the Walls

The issues and relationships at play in this project are exceedingly complex. However, even within that complexity, I was able to illuminate several critical issues that contribute to knowledge both theoretically and substantively. First, I found that local whites around Benton Harbor monopolized and extracted the city's resources. Second, I found that this was accomplished through a white urban regime that bypassed elected government. Third, this was justified through a racialized ideology focused on the failure of black government and residents. My findings call for future research into these issues because of their relative importance for understanding how race, power, politics and inequality work in small American towns like Benton Harbor. In what follows, I first address some potential limitations of my research. Then, I lay out future directions for research, note the utility of my argument for future investigations and draw some connections across other domains, and conclude with some policy recommendations (and non-recommendations).

7.1 Limitations

In this dissertation, I integrated theoretical and conceptual perspectives and empirical data from a broad array of disciplines to explore the influence of the white urban regime and the extraction machine on the city and the lives of residents in Benton

Harbor. While this work is conceptually and empirically rich and contributes to social science in multiple ways, there are some limitations in this work that are important to note. First, this is not a directly comparative study, although I occasionally bring in comparisons to other cities, and my project is in ongoing conversation with other cases like Detroit. Instead, it is concerned with generating theory and the transferability of concepts rather than broad-based generalizability at this stage of its development. Benton Harbor is certainly a unique case, and I make no claims otherwise—but my case's very extremity offers up certain insights into dynamics I believe are at work elsewhere, if often more subtly.

Second, the large scope of my project prevented an in-depth study of either emergency management or luxury urban development in Benton Harbor. Certainly, the comprehensive book on Michigan's emergency management law remains to be written. My contribution here was deeper from considering both of these phenomena together, as two separate data points to illuminate a larger dynamic in the city. Simply investigating one or the other intervention would not have given me the requisite insight into local and state political and economic processes, and importantly, how those political and economic processes are inseparable.

Third, I do not claim to have a complete representation of all the political camps in the city. The primary gap I would readily admit to is the role of religious leaders in

the city. My entry point to the city was via a retired pastor who generously invited me to church events, which opened my eyes to this domain in the city. I was initially surprised by the extent to which religion enters into politics in Benton Harbor and St. Joseph, but this seems to be a relatively common phenomenon in small towns. This domain is key in disseminating information through racialized networks, and a major site to understand the gender politics of the area (another dimension deserving of far more attention, as I noted in Chapter Two). Given my lack of background in the sociology of religion, it seemed wiser to focus my data collection in other domains: locally, looking at the interplay of government, business and non-profits in decision-making around education, jobs, and land; and more broadly, at state budgeting decisions and development programs. In addition, Kotlowitz (1996) has already provided an overview of religion in Benton Harbor. Some excellent books have addressed religion, gender, and racial politics or development more directly, and I refer interested readers to them (L. Brown, 2008; Dillard, 2007; Frederick, 2003; Higginbotham, 1993; Wolcott, 2001). I see my role as laying out theoretical propositions for an overall political-economic structure, in which specific mechanisms for individual domains like religion can be developed and tested.

Finally, I am aware that my own personal standpoint, including a background in community activism, shaped my observations and conclusions. For instance, the seed for

my argument about the commodification of inequality was sowed at a 2010 meeting I attended at Durham's City Hall. At this meeting, a white developer successfully asked for a committee to declare a black neighborhood officially blighted, despite the protest of its residents and confusion of committee members, to qualify the project for financial incentives and eminent domain privileges. While I certainly chose this project as a site to study the issues that I had worked on outside academia, my investment in social justice and in ending racial inequality are themselves born from a sociological imagination. The key to theoretical generation is being able to find what is universal, rather than particular, about a given case.

My commitment to the principles of public sociology dictate not only that my work be accessible and policy-relevant, but also that my choice of topic should truly matter to everyday people. Within some sociological circles, there seems to be a consensus that studying events or processes that happen to have extreme effects is journalistic rather than sociological, or somehow distasteful. On the contrary, I argue (with many others) that these sites are where we are most needed – although we have to be careful to keep our sociological identity foremost. I never obscured my own point of view while conducting research--in fact, on some occasions, I had fruitful discussions after acknowledging my own opinion in an interview. Further, I followed methodological best practices for checking my work (Charmaz, 2005; LaRossa, 2005),

from writing down my impressions in order to consider them reflexively, to triangulating data, to testing theoretical hypotheses, passing impressions and ideas by people on the ground, and discussing field notes and theories with other sociologists.

7.2 Future Research

This research has implications well beyond the local context of Benton Harbor. First, I developed two theoretical explanations showing how white networks of business leaders bypass black government. I also developed the concept of an “extraction machine” that sees poor populations as hyper-exploitable and ultimately expendable. Although this work is not generalizable in the statistical sense, these theoretical tools will allow future researchers to examine other black-led cities to see if similar processes are at work. For instance, researchers could examine the fiscal crisis in Detroit—another majority-black city taken over by an unelected emergency manager—to see if my theoretical contributions hold. Beyond Michigan, black-led cities and majority-black neighborhoods across the country may be subject to systematic extraction as whites attempt to gentrify particular areas (receiving federal grant dollars for development that eventually pushes local residents out) or how white-owned businesses bypass local governments to advance their interests.

7.3 Utility and Extension of Theoretical Framework

My primary contribution is theoretical, offering two related concepts that each hold value for scholars in several fields. First, my white urban regime theory complicates our understanding of racial politics in the twenty-first century. We think of concepts like democracy, citizenship, voting, documentation as having even coverage over all inhabitants of a developed nation like this one. My theory raises the possibility of racialized political underdevelopment, just as we talk about economic underdevelopment. The white urban regime's existence and its success operating the extraction machine depend on a devaluation of black democracy, capacity, land, labor, and life. As Benton Harbor's stint under emergency management shows, the white urban regime does not need local democracy to carry out its goals, except as a distraction. Part of the reason I specify the white urban regime as "white," no matter its exact racial makeup, is for this identification in opposition to the elected black officials who were dispossessed for this period. As it is, the lack of shared culture, communication, ways of speaking, not to mention the lack of equity in resources, all prevent the "cooperation" the white urban regime claims to want. Beyond this failure to understand, however, the intense local focus on the failures of black officials provides a

convenient scapegoat for the city's failures and allows the white urban regime to operate without similar scrutiny.

Considering politics at the national level, Gerken raises the possibility that, with the growth of dark money, a "shadow party" of elites outside the official party now govern almost independently, leaving behind the party faithful in the "shell of the party structure" (920). She asks, "What happens if what really matters in politics happens in the shadow party, not the formal party?" (920) What worries Gerken about politics as a whole has already occurred in Benton Harbor. In even the most critical analyses by Marxist and "elitist" urban political scholars, local democracy exists, if attenuated or irrelevant. Again, I argue this is because urban politics scholars do not fully consider our country's long, fraught racial history in their analysis.

Common-sense understandings and mainstream scholarly treatments alike tend to conceive of citizenship's evolution in the US as consistently expanding in its spread and depth across former barriers of race, class, gender, nationality (R. Smith, 1997). But scholars of "racialized citizenship" show how racial minorities' hold on citizenship has remained tenuous, variable: sometimes tantalizingly close but never secure. If racial minorities possessed full citizenship, "ripper" legislation like emergency management would not be so consistently imposed in communities of color.

Second, my concept of the extraction machine is equally generative, offering a window into contemporary racial and economic dynamics occurring beyond Benton Harbor. The triumph of "trickle down" philosophy has meant that urban policy and government subsidy explicitly benefiting affluent, white neighborhoods, developments and corporations carried out in the name of helping poor, minority neighborhoods. The philosophy works across domains: in magnet schools and "selective" public academies (Quiroz & Lindsay, 2015); in special tax rules within Business Improvement Districts (McFarlane, 2003), Enterprise, Empowerment, and Renaissance Zones (McFarlane, 1999), or Tax Increment Financing mechanisms (Briffault, 2010); in "mixed-income" housing (Fraser & Kick, 2007); and the redirection of Community Development Block Grants to support private business (C. Walker et al., 2002). The expressed goal of government policy is to draw white capital and white people back into cities, hoping that whites' self-interest will ultimately benefit distressed communities—an example of Bell's "interest-convergence" hypothesis (1980). But thanks to the present consensus on economic development, very little attention is being paid to this upward redistribution of wealth in which community distress, whether through debt or development, now serves as a source of capital for the same power elite. Still less scholarship examines the relationship of these policies to soaring municipal debt and asks whether the programs ostensibly designed to stimulate urban growth actually worsen city finances.

To understand the contemporary phenomenon of extraction from loss (turning disadvantaged populations' very disadvantage into a source of profit), it is crucial to look across domains, scales, and geographic boundaries. Unsurprisingly, the areas most vulnerable to contemporary extraction have already been subjected to multiple waves of extraction. For this reason, extraction processes must shapeshift over time to appear legitimate and even necessary for vulnerable communities. Extraction machines can be found in the rise of policing as a revenue-generation strategy in poor and minority neighborhoods and cities (Apuzzo, 2016; Balko, 2014; A. Harris, 2016); in post-Katrina development in New Orleans (Adams, 2013; Gotham, 2013); in casinos on Native American reservations (Gonzales, Lyson, & Mauer, 2007; Mele, 2011) and in Detroit; in offshore banking on Pacific Islands (Christensen, 2012; Shaxson, 2011); and in Puerto Rico's profitable indebtedness (Stiglitz & Medish, 2015). Sometimes one place is vulnerable to a combination of these strategies, as Chatigny shows in the case of reservations (1998). For-profit educational companies opening charter schools in "underserved" communities could be classified as extraction machines. Several case studies in education have found whites' appropriation of public funding to address past discrimination (Freidus & Noguera, 2015; Joffe-Walt, 2015; A. E. Lewis & Diamond, 2015; Lewis-McCoy, 2014; Quiroz & Lindsay, 2015). At the state level, Dale Russakoff has noted that New Jersey took over administration of Newark's public school system

just after a huge increase of funding was mandated to remedy racial discrepancies, a billion-dollar bonanza referred to as “the prize” (2015). Some “social entrepreneurship” ventures that explicitly seek profits in helping vulnerable populations also merit the designation of extraction machine (For an overview of social entrepreneurship, see, e.g., Brooks, 2009; Nicholls, 2006).

Internationally, the US and smaller entities within it play a major role in maintaining extraction machines, frequently founded on colonial relations of exploitation (Du Bois, 2012 [1920]). The history of this country’s ambiguous role in promoting development and providing philanthropy is too voluminous to detail here, but this is certainly a ripe domain for finding extraction machines. To take one example, Haiti is a prototypical extraction machine, as was especially evident when the disaster industry descended on the country after its ruinous 2010 earthquake (Katz, 2013). One study showed that the Red Cross’s fundraising of half a billion dollars ended with six houses to show for the money (S. Elliott & Sullivan, 2015). This is in the context of Haiti’s role as a former colony that incurred immense debt to pay billions in reparations for the audacity of depriving France of its slaves (Forsdick, 2012) and a contemporary site of sweatshop labor for American goods (Werner, 2015). These domestic and international examples, by no means comprehensive, show the broad application of the concept of the extraction machine. Future research applying this concept will be theoretically enriched

by similarly polyvorous approaches, reaching across cases to develop a broader taxonomy of the extraction machine's philosophy, tactics, and outcomes.

7.4 Policy Recommendations and Conclusion

I am hesitant to recommend specific policy solutions on the development side. As I have shown, part of the ongoing problem in Benton Harbor has been the assumption that everything must change for the city to succeed. I can tentatively offer the suggestion that development projects ought to have specific accountability mechanisms built in, using tools like community benefit agreements. Much as I want to recommend stronger regulation of TIF agreements and the elimination of punitive conditions in economic incentives for poor cities, I am well aware of the limits of even progressive policies like these in the larger context of extreme inequality. No single policy is impervious to reworking or evasion, even expressly counter to its intended effect.

In thinking about policy solutions, I also want to emphasize my distance from the constant invocation, across almost every person I heard from in Benton Harbor, that city residents need "education and jobs." This phrase serves almost as a stand-in for class mobility, as we assume that education and jobs provide pathways out of poverty. But this phrase falls so comfortably off the tongue that I doubt its effectiveness. First, suggesting residents need "education and jobs" plays into the assumption that Benton

Harbor's real problem is its residents, who need to change dramatically before the city can be fixed. Second, in the last few decades, our economy and opportunities within it have shifted dramatically, but our discourse has not changed to accommodate those shifts. What if the jobs aren't there, and if education no longer ensures a job? Third, the downstream focus on Benton Harbor's need for education and jobs ignores the upstream squeeze on precisely those domains, and who is advantaged by constricting those opportunities. Applying the logic of creative destruction beyond Benton Harbor's buildings to its people shows the profitability of creating, discovering, and attempting to solve these problems.

All that said, my review of urban planning and policy innovations both within and beyond Benton Harbor have left me with a few operating principles for evaluating policy. In light of my concerns about the constant drive for extreme change, perhaps the truly different approach would be to start from the question, what should remain the same? Can the "changemakers" conceptualize any version of Benton Harbor as doing just "all right," with the same residents who are there now? What do modest dreams look like, and would those modest dreams protect Benton Harbor residents from the visionaries and entrepreneurs who want to make something spectacular?

Furthermore, I recommend careful attention to the role of time in policy recommendations. Amidst today's swarm of policy innovations, certain ideas stand out

because they incorporate a long-term approach. Rather than planning for the next few years, some frameworks assert a lasting “right to the city.” For instance, I am cautiously optimistic about land grant programs, in which individuals can buy a house on property owned by a community or organization, but the organization owns the land under it – often for a period of up to a hundred years. This model has been successful in the Dudley Street neighborhood of Boston, which has successfully resisted gentrification because its property is not available for speculation or creative destruction.

On the political front, my recommendations are fairly simple. Michigan’s Emergency Manager Law should be removed, reflecting both the will of the state’s voters and the harmful effects that have already accrued to cities placed under its hold. This should come alongside a return to a fairer division of state revenue, reflecting post-industrial cities’ contribution to the state and their disproportionate penalization under current arrangements. The Michigan Municipal League has noted the state legislature has been able to pass laws disadvantaging cities because there is no movement across municipalities to unite for cities’ interests. Under the current paradigm, cities are pushed to compete in a zero-sum game to attract corporate headquarters and factories, and are seldom able to identify their shared interests. Racial stereotypes about black governance in Benton Harbor and Detroit also drive much of the failure to unite. This is a significant problem that will require future research to investigate and remediate.

I have shown an extreme case of black disenfranchisement that forms part of a larger story of emergency management our society largely accepts. However, simply to conclude that black citizenship is irrelevant in Benton Harbor would be reductionist. Nobody, not even the white urban regime, can predict what the future holds. I want to conclude, perhaps counterintuitively, with a brief reflection on local black citizenship and its potential for rethinking our current values about democracy.

A number of Benton Harbor residents practice a grounded, local citizenship. They are intensely committed to the city and want to defend it, in a larger context in which local citizenship is devalued. Throughout my fieldwork, in courtrooms and City Hall, in community gardens, meetings and public events, and on local radio shows, everyday Benton Harbor residents were carrying on intense, theoretical, and political discussions to try and get to the bottom of the situation. They had to grapple with the devastation of their city and what was left behind. Their local citizenship expressed deep love for the city, its people, and its potential, drawing on a long tradition of black political engagement even in the face of exclusion and oppression (E. B. Brown, 1994; Du Bois, 1999 [1935]; Glenn, 2011; Macleod, 2011).

The model of local citizenship I outline above does not have much currency in contemporary discourse. Instead, political returns come to people and companies that are geographically mobile (Bauman, 1998) and make threats to "exit" (Hirschman, 1970)

– the "tantrum model" or "nuclear option". They extract resources by threatening to remove themselves from local citizenship, and hold a majority of political power as a result. Their citizenship is not bound to a single city, but is built on a consumer model: selecting the best package of amenities from among similar packages and moving as necessary to maximize value. There is no family beyond the portable nuclear unit, no sickness, no family plots in the cemetery. As a result, they do not have to reckon with the costs of their actions or do the long-term, often unrewarding, work of local citizenship. In an era valorizing "global citizens" and mobility, the people practicing traditional local citizenship within the "walled city" are left behind or even insulted for thinking that their voice should matter.

I raise this conflicting vision about the role of citizenship to frame my argument about the future of democracy. I was asked to conclude with an argument for what a truly inclusive democracy would look like, locally and nationally, but I hesitate to use the language of inclusivity. Generations of race scholars and historians have shown the painful costs of seeking integration or inclusion into an unchanged larger polity. Moreover, my relational framework has shown how universal success is far from assured. If mainstream society's success depends on the failure of hundreds of Benton Harbors, calling for the inclusion of black Benton Harbor residents into larger society could just mean the displacement of suffering onto another city like it. The difference my

alternative model would be the prioritization of people in political decisions about money and development, who usually are a tertiary consideration after money and buildings or land. A person-based model could break through the existing framework holding cities hostage with the threat that corporate and developer extortion is better than abandonment.

For that reason, I want to emphasize what would need to change about larger society for Benton Harbor to be included in it. My dissertation has provided ample evidence that what needs to change is *whites'* attitudes and practices. I introduce the notion of local black citizenship as part of an alternative framework. What if we see black localized citizenship outside of a deficit model, and instead use it as a model to which the rest of society should aspire? One in which we all have to live amidst the costs of our actions, instead of blithely displacing them onto others, and in which we cannot profit from others' suffering? This is just the beginning of the type of conversation I hope will be sparked by my research.

Appendix A: Timeline of Relevant Benton Harbor History, 1900-2016¹

1907

Mercy Hospital opens in Benton Harbor (BH)

1911

Upton brothers open Whirlpool Corporation

1930s

Fruit Market moves to downtown BH

Sears opens downtown

4500 people employed in manufacturing in BH

1950s

Memorial Hospital opens in St. Joseph

Benton Township opens first mall, Fairplain Plaza

1964

Urban renewal: city demolishes 281 houses and clears 121 acres for " new commercial development and light industry," primarily in the black Flats neighborhood

1966

Riot in Benton Harbor

1967

Fruit Market moves to Benton Township, near airport

1970

Benton Harbor Junior College is moved to president's property in rural Benton Township, forming Lake Michigan College

¹ Much of the pre-2003 data provided here comes from Harold Atwood's personal archives as well as his history of the city published in Benton Harbor's 1989 General Development Plan (available at <https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CZIC-hd268-b46-b46-1989/html/CZIC-hd268-b46-b46-1989.htm>, accessed 5/12/16).

1975

Liberty Theater and St. Vincent Hotel close downtown

1976

Fidelity Building closes downtown

1977

Merger of Mercy and Memorial, creating Mercy-Memorial Medical Center.
City of BH Economic Development Corporation founded

1978

Charles Gray Recreation Center opens

1979

Orchards Mall opens in Benton Township, Sears relocates from downtown Benton Harbor

1981

Wilce Cooke elected mayor
city obtains first emergency loan from state

1982

Michigan Chamber of Commerce ranks Benton Harbor most distressed community in state

1985

Michigan State University study of BH, led by John Schweitzer and funded by Whirlpool: dozens of professors and students investigate and pilot programs, many locals involved
Downtown Development Authority formed
city obtains final emergency loan from state

1986

BH declared first Enterprise Zone in state
Mercy Hospital converted to clinic facilities
Auto Specialty Company (Ausco) closes major manufacturing site

1987

MSU study ends when Whirlpool terminates funding
Community Economic Development Corporation (CEDC) is founded
Whirlpool closes its manufacturing facility on the Paw Paw River
City planning "city center" mall project, bulldozing several downtown blocks
Bill Wolf (white) campaigns for mayor of BH with slogan, "Change"

1988

Auto Specialty Company (Ausco) files for bankruptcy
Bill Wolf elected mayor
Vincent Hotel sold, sale invalidated, resold to Wolf's brother Winn
Plans for reopening canal

1989

BH hands Charles Gray Recreation Center over to school district (insufficient funds to run it)
City income tax proposal considered
Small Business Incubator built as part of "North of Main Industry Park"

1990

Whirlpool has 270 manufacturing jobs left
CEDC soliciting Edgewater plans on 300 acres of former Whirlpool and Ausco property
Charles Gray Recreation Center has been shut down for lack of funding, has already incurred \$120,000 of damage

1991

Funding obtained to reopen canal
CEDC merges with Twin Cities Chamber of Commerce to make cornerstone
Eric McGinnis dies (subject of *The Other Side of the River*)

1992

Mercy-Memorial becomes Lakeland Regional Health System.
BH seeking \$2.5 million from HUD to build a new community center
State revenue cuts--around \$100,000/year impact on BH

1993

Walmart opens in Benton Township
Airport runway expansion under construction

1996

State Brownfield Redevelopment Act passes

1997

BH Armory renovated to become Bobo Brazile Community Center

Target opens in Benton Township

Michigan State Troopers sent to patrol BH after named most violent city in MI

1998

Economic summit hosted in BH by CEDC to plan future development

Planning underway to reopen ship canal

City's first Economic Development Corporation disbanded and resurrected

Edgewater Development in St. Joseph/BH underway on former Ausco/Whirlpool property

Citizens for World-Class Communities (CWCC) founded

2000

MDOT commits to \$16M in improvements to Highway M63

BH obtains \$1.5M Section 108 loan for business construction in Edgewater

City of BH razing buildings and acquiring 45 acres of property around future golf course

2002

Sale of the 25 lots city manager "discovered" in Jean Klock Park to Grand Blvd Development

Whirlpool and Cornerstone Alliance start planning Harbor Shores

Arts district growing

Edgewater development complete

2003

Cornerstone Alliance working on "Harbor Town," downtown market-rate housing

Terrance Shurn dies, sparking uprising/riot

Governor's task force is formed within a week of Sturn's death

Granholm announces Whirlpool and state donating land for a golf course

2004

River Run, LLC formed as predecessor to Harbor Shores

Supposed merger under "same tent" of 4 organizations: CPC, CWCC, Cornerstone Alliance and Community Partnership for Lifelong Learning

City to make downtown center (bulldozed for mall) into a park
\$12 million redesign of Main Street by MDOT
Whirlpool moves into former Sears building on Main
Harbor Town project still underway
“Corridor corporation” formed between city and Cornerstone Alliance to develop an airport corridor: city contributes land
Beginning of federally-funded Hope VI housing grant
BH city budget deficit rises to \$2 million

2005

Jean Klock park first land sale finally gets through lawsuit
Enterprise Zone phases out
BH budget deficit rises to \$3 million
Jimmy Carter visits BH for Habitat for Humanity work project
BH finishes paying off emergency loans from state

2006

2.2 million MDOT grant for road improvement in Arts District
City sells land to Harbor Shores
Harbor Shores Brownfield TIF plans and tax credit approved

2007

Airport extension finished
Harbor Shores use of Jean Klock Park contested
Community Benefits Plan created

2008

Consolidation of CPCC, CPLL, and CWC into Consortium for Community Development
BH police corruption discovered

2009

State review of city finances blames city management
First half of golf course opens
Berrien County Land Bank forms

2010

Gov Granholm appoints Joseph Harris BH Emergency Financial Manager
Second half of golf course opens

Federal Neighborhood Stabilization Program begins in Benton Harbor (single-family home rehab and demolition), contracts with Cornerstone Alliance to complete its abandoned Harbor Town project

2011

Rick Snyder becomes governor

April-Harris becomes Emergency Manager under PA 4

Harris closes Bobo Brazile Center

Primary tenant moves out of Mercy Center, Winn Wolf stops paying taxes

2012

Whirlpool opens \$70 million downtown "Riverview Campus" with \$51 million tax incentive package

Whirlpool donates money (in lieu of taxes) to reopen Charles Gray Community Center

First Senior PGA tournament

PA 4 struck down by voters in November

Legislature sticks PA 432 (436) into an amendment, passes in December.

Consortium for Community Change ends programming

Harris closes Small-Business Incubator

2013

EM Harris replaced by Tony Saunders

Income tax proposal debated

Federal Neighborhood Stabilization Program concludes in Benton Harbor

formation of Parks and Recreation Conservancy

2014

Benton Harbor, under Saunders, obtains \$2.2 million emergency loan from state

Tony Saunders exits as EM

Benton Harbor Area Schools enter consent decree (alternative to EM)

City of BH Economic Development Corporation resurrected for third time, dissolved and re-formed

BH discusses asking school district to take over Charles Gray Community Center (again)

Study proposes opening small-business incubator in former Small-Business Incubator building

2015:

Mercy Hospital foreclosed

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Biography

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