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ETHNIC TRANSITION IN SLOVENIAN-CROATIAN NEIGHBORHOOD IN CLEVELAND, OHIO, 1920-2000: A QUANTITATIVE APPROACH¹

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ABSTRACT. Ethnic composition has been quantified and subjected to Markovian analysis for a Slovenian-Croatian neighborhood in Cleveland, Ohio, that has served as a gateway for immigrants for more than a century. Actual census data have been compared to values predicted by the stochastic assumption to assess the impacts of the great depression, the post-war wave of immigration, and the black riots of the 1960s. Second generation Slovenians and Croations are rapidly decreasing relatively as they move to suburban areas, but immigrants from Yugoslavia are increasing relatively while blacks and other races expand at advancing rates. If present trends persist, in the year 2000 immigrants from Yugoslavia will represent 34% and blacks 26% of the total population in the area. Other foreign born will approximate five percent and total foreign born will exceed slightly the native white. The gateway function of the neighborhood will probably remain intact for the remainder of this century.

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INTRODUCTION

Ethnicity is a subject of paramount significance to mankind since the evolution of kin group awareness, and probably developed in proto humans that preceded *Homo sapiens*. When combined with myths of racial superiority ideas of ethnicity have been the basis for many of the monstrous crimes of the 20th century; but, like all

ideas, the use can be for good as well as evil. The richness of thought and expression, the variety of belief and ways of life are encapsulated in ethnic studies. This paper is an attempt to quantify ethnicity and can be understood as a geographical approach to quantitative history. The methodology used is Markovian analysis, discussed in more depth in our earlier paper (Pavlakovic and Janson 1984). The focus of this paper is the evaluation of demographic changes and identification of

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major factors influencing the development in a Cleveland ethnic neighborhood between successive census periods; and, on the basis of present observation, a projection of future development.

STUDY AREA AND DATA SOURCE

The study area, known as the St. Clair neighborhood, is a clearly defined Slovenian-Croatian enclave in the eastern part of Cleveland on St. Clair Avenue (Bonutti and Prpic 1977, Pap 1973) and is one of the rare neighborhoods that has persisted against the forces of change that sweep through American cities. Slovenians and Croats are the two largest among the South Slavic nationalities in the Cleveland area. They share the same religion (Roman Catholic) and the same alphabet, though the languages are different. They also share much of the recent historical development in South Europe, particularly during World War II, which affected significantly the development of the St. Clair neighborhood (Bonutti and Prpic 1977, Brentar 1971).

The original development of the neighborhood started much closer to the downtown, approximately between East 24th and East 55th St., along St. Clair Ave. and north of Euclid Ave. (Bonutti and Prpic 1977, Cesen 1970, Ledbetter 1918). Slovenians, who were the first to come to St. Clair, moved gradually eastward and founded their cultural center between East 55th and East 79th (Cesen 1970, Pap 1973) with a rather firm south boundary at Superior Ave. and the industrial zone along Lakeshore as the northern boundary. To a great extent Croats succeeded the Slovenians in the older part of the neighborhood, and up to the present have generally followed the eastward movement of the Slovenians. The outward movement reflects the continuity between the inner city old neighborhoods and the newer suburbs, referred to by Bonutti as the "ethnic corridors" pattern (Bonutti and Prpic 1977).

The present study is limited to five census tracts east of East 55th Street between Lake Erie and Superior Ave. (fig. 1),

which form the heart of the present day St. Clair community (Bonutti and Prpic 1977). The spatial extension of Slovenians and Croats is, however, larger, as shown in fig. 2.

In order to determine the spatial extension more clearly a simple indicator has been used. It is defined as a ratio between immigrants from Yugoslavia and total foreign born in the area, expressed as:

$$\text{Yu index} = \frac{\text{Y.I.}}{\text{F.B.}}$$

As discussed elsewhere (Pavlovic and Janson 1984) the U.S. Census does not differentiate immigrants from Yugoslavia by national origin. Yu index has been calculated for each census tract, and the zones of various concentrations of immigrants from Yugoslavia have been shown for 1930, 1950 and 1970 (fig. 1). Although the limitations of Yu index as a single indicator are recognized, the Yu index of .50 and more, clearly indicates the heart of the neighborhood between St. Clair Ave. and Superior Ave. from East 60th to Addison Rd. The initial nucleus of the neighborhood west of East 55th St., has still attracted the post World War II

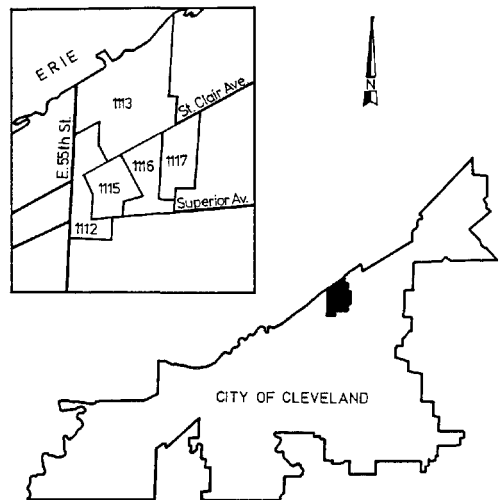


FIGURE 1. Location of St. Clair Neighborhood. (Study area by census tracts.) Scale: 1 cm = 8.7 km.

immigrants, although in less significant numbers (Bonutti and Prpic 1977, Pap 1973, Brentar 1971). It has persisted as a

small, continuously declining enclave, consisting predominantly of old people and transient population within the older industrial and commercial zone.

The historical development of the neighborhood, the community life and the socio-economic characteristics of immigrants have been presented in depth in several works (Pap 1973, Bonutti and Prpic 1977, Levy 1972). As documented with available census data, the neighborhood has been constantly losing its population since 1920 with significant changes in the overall ethnic composition. Markovian analysis is utilized to depict the abrupt deviations from trends expected on the basis of previous development and points to the effects of external forces.

Research computations have been abstracted and presented in table 1. The numbers in the table are percentages that specified ethnic groups and other segments represented in the neighborhood. The row vectors indicated as "actual" have been abstracted, calculated, and in some cases estimated from the census data. The row vectors indicated as "predicted" have been generated from the Markovian computations (Collins 1976, Sprecher 1976) and were based on observed trends defined by the two immediately preceding censuses.

THE GREAT DEPRESSION

Trends established in the 1920s are characterized by a rapid increase in the group of native white with foreign or mixed parents (second generation in census terminology), and rapid increase of immigrants from Yugoslavia. The character of the St. Clair neighborhood was being clearly defined as a Slovenian and Croatian ethnic center. Bonutti and Prpic (1977) wrote: "By 1930, the St. Clair community, like most other independent enclaves of Cleveland, was prospering. The neighborhood offered to its settlers everything they needed . . . A downtown visit was necessary only to deal with City Hall or the Courthouse."

The employment was provided by local factories, while the community's own

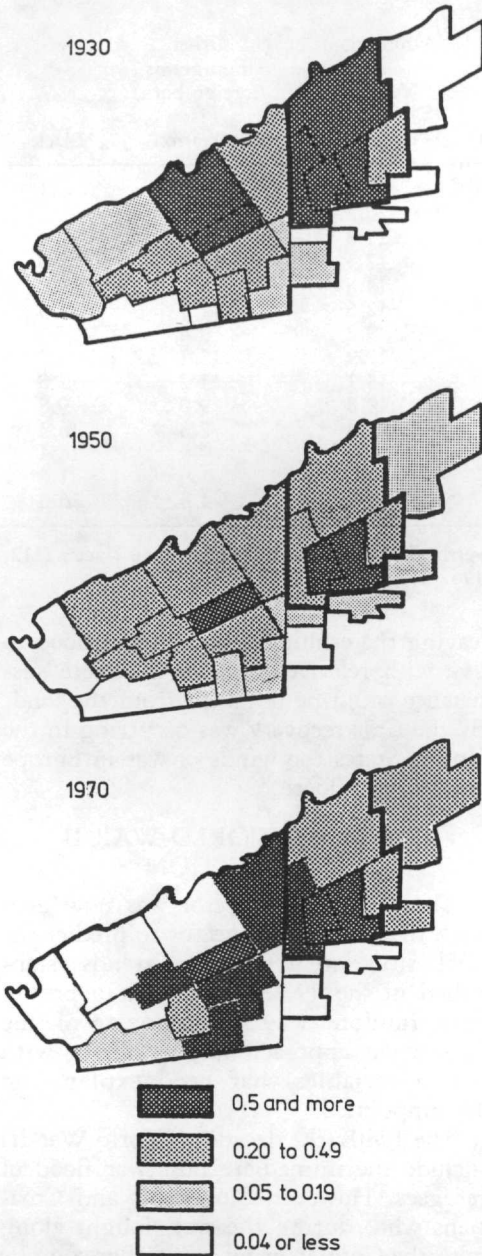


FIGURE 2. Spatial variation of Yu-index, 1920-1950. (Study Area Outlined.) Ratio between immigrants from Yugoslavia and total foreign born (Yu-index). Scale: 1 cm = 2 km.

TABLE 1
Ethnic composition of St. Clair neighborhood 1920-1970, and predicted development until year 2000*
(in percentages).

Year	Source	Native white with native parents	Native white with foreign or mixed parents (2nd generation)	Immigrants from Yugoslavia (1st generation)	Other immigrants (foreign born) (1st generation)	Black
1920	Actual	15.4	43.0	18.1	23.4	.1
1930	Actual	14.0	48.9	20.2	16.5	.3
1940	Predicted	12.7	53.4	21.8	11.6	.4
1940	Actual	27.8	42.0	17.3	12.8	.0
1950	Predicted	39.1	36.1	14.8	9.9	.0
1950	Actual	39.9	36.0	12.6	11.0	.3
1960	Predicted	49.8	30.9	9.2	9.4	.5
1960	Actual	44.7	29.5	12.9	11.1	1.7
1970	Predicted	48.6	24.2	13.1	11.2	2.8
1970	Actual	35.4	26.0	19.8	9.0	9.8
1980	Predicted	28.0	22.9	25.4	7.3	16.3
1980	Actual	—	—	—	—	16.1
1990	Predicted	22.2	20.2	30.0	5.9	21.6
2000	Predicted	17.6	17.8	33.8	4.8	26.0

*Row totals may not sum to 100.0 because of rounding error. Defined in terms of five census tracts: 1112, 1113, 1115, 1116 and 1117. (U.S. Bureau of Census 1942-1981, Green 1930)

financial institutions took care of saving and borrowing. Education, religion and other social needs were centered around the ethnic church.

The immigration law changed in 1924 and closed the door into the United States and into the St. Clair neighborhood (Govorchin 1961, Prpic 1971, Wareig 1978). The actual 1930 vector thus includes six years of restricted immigration after the change in federal law, but the drop in the Yugoslav immigrant population was so great that the actual value in 1940 was back down to 1920 level. More explanation than change in federal law is required.

The 1930s were a decade of global depression, and the urban center of Cleveland, Ohio could hardly be attractive to immigrants looking for factory work when 15 million Americans were out of work in 1932. This was a decade when city people returned to the farms. One of the survey respondents was interviewed in depth, and he vividly recalled his parents

leaving the ethnic urban neighborhood to live with relatives on a farm where sustenance could be obtained from the land. By the time recovery was occurring in the United States the winds of war in Europe were already loose.

THE POST WORLD WAR II IMMIGRATION

The actual 1930 vector was now used with the actual 1940 vector to predict the 1950 situation if the same trends established in the 1930s continued to prevail in a random way. The power of the Markovian approach is the clarity with which variables that need explanation are pinpointed.

The 1940s (the decade of World War II) include the immediate post war flood of refugees. However, Slovenians and Croats who, during the war, fought along with the German army in a rather complicated civil war situation in multinational Yugoslavia were refused entry to the United States until 1950 (Brentar 1971).

For that reason the actual share of South Slavs in the St. Clair neighborhood dropped from 17.3% in 1940 to 12.6% in 1950. This percentage drop was therefore above the calculated expectations based on previous trends.

THE BLACK RIOTS OF THE 1960S

Because the percentage of Yugoslavs had dropped so rapidly during the decade of the 1940s the same trend would have resulted in a 9.2% share by 1960. This did not happen. The ethnic call of the neighborhood was effective the minute the visas could be obtained by Croatians and Slovenians even though many of the visas were probationary (Brentar 1971). Instead of dropping to 9.2% the percentage rose to 12.9 in 1960.

The neighborhood has retained a strong "foreign" character with approximately 30% of the population of foreign origin. In the 1960s the native white population started to decrease, more rapidly by the 1970s. At the same time the blacks became absolutely and relatively more present in the area. The 1980 census revealed 16% of the area population are blacks.

A whirlwind of urban change was precipitated by race riots in the 1960s in some of America's great cities, including Cleveland. The black neighborhood of Hough is contiguous to the St. Clair neighborhood boundary defined by the five census tracts

used in our monograph, and Hough was the epicenter of Cleveland's travail.

Blacks as a proportion of population sharply increased in the big cities including Cleveland, even as absolute total population decreased (Uyeki 1980). In the 1960s, the inner city public schools deteriorated; parents that could afford the costs transferred children to private schools in most of America's large cities, although this was not significant in Cleveland. Small businessmen and merchants quit by the hundreds; industrial plants and warehouses moved to the outer rings of Cleveland — Bedford, Twinsburg, Aurora, Brunswick and farther — to Medina and Geauga Co. Private families and private industry both fled the urban environment, if financially possible. Crime in the streets became a slogan, and arson to unoccupied structures became regular, expected occurrences. Off the main streets many areas of the city on the black east side had derelict buildings. In the St. Clair area young, married couples with jobs, facing the relocation were affected by the turbulence and made decisions to leave the neighborhood (Bonutti and Prpic 1977).

The relationship between two groups in the demographic transition in the St. Clair neighborhood are of special interest: the immigrants from Yugoslavia and the blacks. Despite the pronounced outward trend of second generation and better-off Slovenians and Croatians, in the 1960s and '70s there was considerable influx of Croatian immigrants that spurred new vitality in St. Clair neighborhood (Bonutti and Prpic 1977). As late as 1960 there were less than two percent blacks in the St. Clair neighborhood. By 1970 the proportion had increased more than five times to 9.8% and in the '70s the proportion has almost doubled again to 16.1%. Table 3 will reinforce the points made in the text. Note that the black penetration was an accelerating force. In the 1960s and the 1970s the actual measured value for the black percentage was always significantly higher than the proportion predicted by

TABLE 2
Shifts of major segments in St. Clair neighborhood, 1920-1980

Year	Total native white population	Total foreign born	Black
1920	58.4	41.5	.1
1930	62.9	36.7	.3
1940	69.8	30.1	.0
1950	75.9	23.6	.3
1960	74.2	24.0	1.7
1970	61.4	28.8	9.8
1980	—	—	16.1

TABLE 3
*Percentage of blacks versus immigrants from Yugoslavia
 in St. Clair neighborhood, 1920-2000.*

Year	Immigrants from Yugoslavia		Blacks	
	Predicted	Actual	Predicted	Actual
1920	—	18.1	—	0.1
1930	—	20.2	—	0.3
1940	22.2	17.3	0.3	0.0
1950	14.8	12.6	0.0	0.3
1960	9.2	12.9*	0.5	1.7
1970	13.1	19.8	2.8	9.8
1980	25.4	N.A.	16.3	16.1
1990	30.0	—	21.6	—
2000	33.8	—	26.0	—

*Estimated

the Markovian chain, which was based on a trend established in the immediately preceding census decade. Even these figures underestimate the total effects because other races increased to 5.9%. The niche left by fleeing whites was occupied by blacks and other races.

CONCLUSION

The vitality and persistence of the ethnic forces of St. Clair are a remarkable testimony to the significance of culture, including language, in human geography. The ability to communicate in their own language mitigates the fears and anguish of the new arrivals—the cultural shock. St. Clair has served the immigrants from Slovenia and Croatia admirably, and the City of Cleveland, too, as the gateway to America.

The demographic trends in the St. Clair neighborhood can be seen within the inter-related effects of four dominant factors in the contemporary American urban development. First, the selective process of decentralization of central city population; second, the variation of international immigration due to changing United States policy and a complex of political and economic factors in countries of origin; third, the importance of old immigrant colonies for the residential location of successive immigration waves, and fourth, the ethnic, and more specifically, racial succession.

As a consequence the second generation is rapidly decreasing, constituting the mainstream of the white flight toward suburbia. The immigrants from Yugoslavia have relatively increased as the most dominant foreign born group in the area while blacks, and, to a lesser extent, the other races fill the niche at advancing rates.

Any projection about the viability of urban neighborhoods and especially ethnic neighborhoods should take into account a number of interrelated variables, such as the urban population shifts, rate of immigrant influx, population composition, economic conditions, neighborhood stability, and so on. The Markovian analysis was not meant to substitute for complex modeling procedures. Rather, the Markovian analysis delimits and quantifies the crucial time periods regarding the importance of contextual processes. We speculate: Had the same forces continued as they were in the initial period of 1920—1930, by the 1980s the dominant group in the neighborhood would have been the second generation; the immigrants from Yugoslavia would have comprised about 25%, and blacks less than one percent of the total population. If the 1950—1960 conditions had persisted, the 1980 demographic composition would have been dominated by native white of native parents in addition to the 44% of foreign stock (foreign born plus native born with one or more parents an immigrant), with less than four percent of blacks.

If the trends of change persist at the rate of the 1960s, by year 2000 the two largest groups in the neighborhood will be the immigrants from Yugoslavia followed closely by the second largest group, the blacks. The old cultural heart of Slovenians and Croatians—the St. Clair neighborhood—may well function as the entry point for immigration from Yugoslavia past the year 2000.

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