

# Race, Class, and Place

## Evaluating Mobility Outcomes for African Americans

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There is an ongoing debate about levels of segregation, their causes, and their long-term direction. The debate is between those who, while acknowledging some role for economic forces, place the emphasis for continuing segregation on discrimination and White prejudice and those who place greater emphasis on income, wealth, and residential preferences. This debate is further illuminated with a detailed analysis of African American suburbanization using a combination of data from the 2000 Census and the Current Population Survey. The analysis confirms other research that shows substantial suburban growth of African American populations. It adds to that research by showing that those African American populations who move to the suburbs have substantially more income and wealth and higher levels of education than African American populations who move within the metropolitan cores. In addition, suburban African Americans live in more integrated settings than those who live in the central city. The implications of this finding bolster the view that income does matter in residential choices for African Americans.

**Keywords:** *residential mobility; segregation; suburbanization*

Over the past forty years, since the establishment of the Civil Rights Acts of the 1960s, there has been continuing progress toward a more integrated society. While we may wish for more rapid progress, the dissimilarity measures confirm that separation is decreasing, and conversely integration is increasing over time. While indices that were close to total separation were common in 1960, now many cities have dissimilarity indices that hover in the middle of the range between separation and integration. It is still true that some large cities have high levels of separation of Blacks and Whites, but in many metropolitan areas the levels of segregation continue to decline.

There are sharp differences in both the interpretations of why there is continuing separation and in the amount of separation of African Americans from Whites and other minorities.<sup>1</sup> On one hand, several authors argue that

race and racism are the primary mechanisms that explain separation in the residential fabric (Massey and Denton 1988; Denton 1996; J. Farley 2005; National Research Council 2001). Alternative explanations draw attention to declining Black segregation (albeit slow declines) and an increased presence of African Americans in the suburbs (R. Farley and Frey 1994; Frey 2000). Thus, as Black education levels have increased, incomes risen and racial tensions diminished, Black households have increased access to suburban housing (Clark and Blue 2004). Others have pointed out that as Black households have accessed jobs in the suburbs, these minority households who work in the suburbs have an incentive to move to the suburbs (Bajari and Kahn 2001). Often those who emphasize continuing segregation focus on the inner-city concentrations of African Americans and miss the story of racial and ethnic integration that is taking place in the suburbs of U.S. metropolitan areas.

In the context of this introduction and the wider issues raised in note 1, the article examines two questions—does socioeconomic status matter in suburban access of African American households, and are those households living in more integrated settings in suburban locations? To look ahead, the article confirms other papers that have shown substantial suburbanization, but it extends that work by showing that the suburbanization of the African American population is related to socioeconomic status. It also shows that African Americans in the suburbs are more integrated than those in the central city. At the same time, we know that there are higher rates of separation for African Americans in contrast with other minority groups, and although there has been progress, the journey to equality is not yet complete. American metropolitan areas are increasingly integrated and, with an increasingly diverse ethnic population, will likely continue the slow path to an integrated society. In summary, segregation still exists but is decreasing, and Blacks who do live in suburbs are less segregated from Whites than Blacks who live in central cities. Even this finding must be tempered with the increasing flow of data that shows that at least some higher-income Black households are choosing to live in middle- and upper-middle-income majority Black areas—I would argue an outcome of the exercise of preferences.

## **The Context and Previous Research on Suburban Growth**

Residential mobility is a highly structured process. It is the process whereby households improve their housing and neighborhoods. Over time,

the sum of the myriad individual decisions by individual households leads to basic changes in the urban structure. Neighborhoods and communities change as people move in and out of them. Over time, these individual moves and the changes that they bring eventually establish the population composition of neighborhoods and the patterns of land use and the associated patterns of commuting and traffic flows. This process has been a central part of the suburban expansion of American cities. It is now well established that in the past three decades most large urban areas have been losing population and the suburbs have been increasing in population. As has been common in this process, the losses are a function both of households leaving the city and of households who arrive in the metropolitan areas but do not choose housing in the city. The growing minority populations in central cities were directly related to increasing White flight as White households abandoned the inner city for the suburbs. Now that process is more general, as Blacks are leaving central cities as well.

### **Previous Research**

Two bodies of previous research are relevant to the present article—one about the role and extent of socioeconomic status in the patterns of separation and the other about the extent and outcomes of suburbanization for Black households.

The debates about the causes of racial separation have been especially divided on the role of socioeconomic status. As I noted in note 1 the view overall has tended to downplay the impact of socioeconomic status, and income in particular, as an explanation for residential separation. The research in the 1970s tended to emphasize discriminatory practices as the fundamental explanation and even recent research concludes that the bulk of the evidence suggests that class (socioeconomic status) does not play a large role (Massey and Denton 1988; Denton 1996; Galster 1988; Charles 2000). Even though Alba and Logan (1993) allow that income plays a role in the levels of segregation, they conclude that “for members of both groups, residential proximity to Whites is determined substantially by race and little affected by individual characteristics” (p. 1422). For most of these writers, homeownership occurs within the confines of a dual housing market that tends to channel home purchases by Blacks into largely minority neighborhoods, and this speaks against the claim that wealth differences explain racial segregation (Alba, Logan, and Stults 2000). Even R. Farley (1996, 418) argues that “there is no reason to think that Blacks’ geographic isolation from Whites will decline sharply in the near future.”

Those who acknowledge that both Blacks and Whites attempt to convert socioeconomic resources into residence in whiter and, ostensibly, higher-status neighborhoods still conclude that those factors cannot tell the whole story. South and Crowder (1998) argue that dramatic improvements in social capital will still fall short of equalizing Black and White mobility patterns. And in another study, Fischer (2003), even while recognizing that economic status plays a role, emphasizes the continuing role of race and discrimination. Fischer showed that about a quarter of the entropy (the level of separation of races and ethnic groups) in Midwestern cities was related to income and a higher proportion in the West. Logan and Alba and their coauthors (Alba et al. 1999; Alba and Logan 1993) also attempt to distinguish the effects of race/ethnicity from characteristics of socioeconomic status and life cycle and conclude that income and education matters (for living with Whites in the suburbs) for Asians and Hispanics but this is less true for Blacks.

In contrast, there is an emerging literature that suggests that we are seeing the beginning of change and that increasingly egalitarian attitudes and the growth of a Black middle class will continue to change residential patterns. The argument in essence is that socioeconomic status *is* a central factor in the separation of Blacks and Whites and minorities and Whites in general (Clark and Ware 1997). Moreover, studies have shown that discrimination plays a much smaller role that it did previously (Armor and Clark 1995). The data show that Black college graduates (and by extension those with higher incomes) have considerably more exposure to Whites in their neighborhoods than do Blacks with low levels of education (St John and Clymer 2000). Recent work by Clark and Blue (2004) shows that both income and education matter in terms of how separated Blacks and Whites are from one another. For the largest multiethnic metropolitan areas the levels of separation, measured by dissimilarity and exposure indices, decline with increases in educational level and with income. At the same time, those studies showed that the outcomes are variable by geography and race/ethnicity, there is much greater integration in Western metropolitan areas where diversity is greater.

Clearly, homeownership is a socioeconomic factor in the process of neighborhood change. It is certainly a surrogate for socioeconomic status. Quillian (1999, 2002) finds that the "staying power" after entering a neighborhood is associated with homeownership as homeowners are much less likely to move. He also shows that low-income African American families are more likely to move back into Black neighborhoods than high-income African American families, which suggests that financial pressure is one factor explaining some of the return migration. It is a finding that is consistent

with wealth and income effects. Increases in income are associated with substantially higher staying probabilities of Blacks in White neighborhoods.

It is important to reiterate that it is not just socioeconomic status that plays a role in residential outcomes; from other research, we know that preferences and White behavior do enter the matrix of why separation continues to exist and why there is a slow process of change (Clark 1992). African Americans still prefer tracts that are 50-50 Black and other races, and despite the debate about the role of preferences (Clark 2002; Charles 2000), it does appear that there continues to be a gulf between White and Black preferences. Now whether Whites are avoiding racially mixed neighborhoods because they do not want to live with non-Whites or whether this is a reaction to other factors that may be associated with race (crime and housing values to note two important neighborhood characteristics) is still debated (Emerson, Yancey, and Chai 2001). Clearly, race is still a factor in residential choices but as Emerson, Yancey, and Chai (2001) point out about 25 percent of Whites say they would buy a house when the racial composition was 15 percent Black or less, about the national average if Blacks were distributed across neighborhoods according to their percentage of the national population. At the other extreme, when the neighborhood was above 65 percent Black, almost no Whites would move in. This finding is consistent with the preferences for residential composition and the repeated finding that Whites and Blacks have quite strong preferences for own race selection (Clark 1992; R. Farley, Fielding, and Krysan 1997). Of course, preferences no more than socioeconomic status can solely explain continuing residential separation as Ihlanfeldt and Scafidi (2002) point out in their study of housing segregation in the Multi-city Study of Urban Inequality.

The review of previous work suggests that there is evidence to support the relevance of socioeconomic status in decreasing the patterns of separation, but the evidence is still contested. By extending the analysis of the role of socioeconomic status to African American residential moves to the suburbs, the article provides additional support for a finding of the significance and relevance of economic forces in residential patterns. The article also examines the extent to which those African Americans who move to the suburbs are living in more integrated settings than those in central cities.

## Questions and Analysis

Two formal questions guide the analysis: (1) Is socioeconomic status evident in suburban access—does income matter in residential choice? and

(2) Are African Americans in the suburbs living in more integrated settings than those in the city? Now these questions raise the thorny issue of the city/suburban structure. Increasingly, the old city/suburban dichotomy is being blurred as inner suburbs begin to resemble central cities and in some cities, parts of cities are more like classic single-family low-density suburbs. But it is still an extremely useful gross measure of the differences between inner cities and the new communities that grew up around the old political units. It is not a perfect measure of class differences, but it is still the best spatial measure we have of this dichotomy. Age of housing, value of housing, and density are still well correlated with the central city/suburban split, and at least for the foreseeable future it serves as a testing ground for differences between inner cities and the higher-status communities outside the core. It also reflects a perception that there is a difference between the old inner core and the more advantaged communities outside. Certainly, the classification is consistent with Garreau's (1992) commentary on edge cities. To examine the questions, I analyze two different data sets—the combined Current Population Surveys 1998 to 2000 and the 2000 Census. The individual city-level analysis uses the twenty-eight metropolitan regions with populations of at least 1 million and with substantial African American populations.

## Analysis

The past four decades have witnessed a sea change in the distribution of the African American population. In the three decades between 1960 and 1990, the number of African Americans in the suburbs tripled. In 1960, in the twenty-four metropolitan areas with populations greater than 1 million, there were only 1.5 million African Americans in the suburbs. Eighty-five percent of African Americans in these metropolitan areas lived in the central cities. In 2000, 40 percent of African Americans live outside central cities. In many metropolitan areas, the Black population doubled in the 1990s. Clearly, African Americans are no longer restricted or confined to central cities.

### *Movers and Socioeconomic Status*

If socioeconomic resources are important in residential access, we should see that played out in the selection of suburban (and ostensibly higher-status) residential areas. If we can also show that these African Americans are living in more integrated settings, then we can argue that socioeconomic status does matter in residential integration. In short, does

**Table 1**  
**Characteristics of Households With and**  
**Without Residential Change**

	Within Central City		Central City to Suburbs	Within Suburbs	
	Moved	Stayed		Moved	Stayed
African American households					
Median annual income	\$23,398	\$25,820	\$32,221	\$33,600	\$34,196
Percentage homeowner	16.1	20.3	29.0	32.2	28.7
Percentage college degree	5.6	7.4	12.8	13.9	12.7
Percentage professional	7.5	8.6	13.2	13.0	12.7
Hispanic households					
Median annual income	\$27,000	\$28,000	\$34,840	\$37,026	35,800
Percentage homeowner	21.4	24.9	33.9	36.4	36.0
Percentage college degree	5.4	6.7	9.1	6.1	6.6
Percentage professional	4.1	5.5	9.0	6.3	7.7
White households					
Median annual income	\$43,912	\$48,000	\$50,500	\$51,005	\$50,983
Percentage homeowner	31.1	40.2	46.8	52.1	51.7
Percentage college degree	31.6	30.3	27.3	21.8	22.8
Percentage professional	26.8	25.3	23.4	21.6	21.9

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, *Current Population Survey*, Combined Samples, 1998-2000.

income matter; is socioeconomic status a factor in suburban selection? I take up the levels of integration later in the article.

Clearly, income matters. African American households with more money, who are homeowners, who have college degrees, and who are professionals are two to three times more likely to move to the suburbs, and those moving within the suburbs often have even higher levels of income, ownership and college education (see Table 1). Many responses will be in the nature of, "Well, of course." But the demonstration that money matters seems often to be lost in the debates about access and separation, and indeed note 1 documents the continuing tendency to down play the role of socioeconomic resources.

African American households who move from central cities to the suburbs have half as much again in earnings. Median income for those who move within the central city is about \$24,000, while those who move to the suburbs have \$32,221 in median income. Similarly, ownership is 11 percent higher for central city to suburban movers, and education and professional status are nearly twice as high for suburban-ward movers. The argument

here is that households who have more income and higher socioeconomic status are more able to make the transition from central city to suburbs. Those with lower incomes and status levels move within the central city. Indeed, by providing the data on stayers as well as movers, we can see that those households who do move to the suburbs are similar in status to the stayers in the suburbs; that is, they are matching the Black population in the suburbs, and the new suburban movers are only slightly lower in status than within suburbs movers.<sup>2</sup>

In response to previous critiques, Table 1 now includes comparable data on Hispanics and Whites. The power of this presentation is that it provides confirmatory evidence that income matters for all ethnic groups. With higher socioeconomic status and higher incomes, all groups can access suburban and, as I suggested earlier, higher-status residential areas.<sup>3</sup> The table includes the obvious finding that incomes for Blacks and Hispanics are significantly lower than those for Whites. However, the interesting finding is that not only does income matter for all groups, but the ratio is about the same in nominal dollars.

#### *Integration Outcomes*

Perhaps the most critical issue in addressing the outcomes for African American households is whether those households who move to the suburbs live in more integrated settings after the move. After all, if they change one segregated setting for another, there has been no overall societal gain in the context of an increasingly integrated society.<sup>4</sup> Two analyses provide additional positive detail on the gains from a growing suburban Black population. The analysis uses both standard dissimilarity and exposure indices<sup>5</sup> and computations of concentration to assess the tendency to integration.

Using standard measures of segregation, dissimilarity, and exposure, I ask, Are African Americans who move to and live in the suburbs of these large metropolitan areas more integrated than those in the central city? The subtext of this question is essentially whether Blacks who move to the suburbs are re-creating the patterns of separation that exist in the central city. Given Black preferences for 50-50 Black and White neighborhoods, it would not be unusual to find a nontrivial number of majority Black neighborhoods. However, what is the overall level of segregation, and how frequent are majority Black neighborhoods in these metropolitan suburbs?

Overall, dissimilarity indices are lower in the suburbs and higher in the cities and Black exposure to Whites is higher in the suburbs and lower in the cities (see Table 2). The average dissimilarity index is 10 points lower in the suburbs than the city. The index averages 65.9 in central

**Table 2**  
**Dissimilarity and Absolute Exposure Indices by City and Suburbs**

Metro Area	City		Suburbs	
	Dbtw	Abtw	Dbtw	Abtw
East				
Baltimore	71.2	14.1	64.4	43.8
New York	67.1	26.5	71.6	23.3
Philadelphia	76.7	16.8	61.4	58.0
Washington, D.C.	79.0	10.1	69.3	27.3
Midwest				
Cincinnati	59.7	29.8	65.7	56.1
Chicago	85.2	10.3	75.1	36.7
Cleveland	78.0	14.6	74.5	36.9
Columbus	57.6	43.2	46.8	83.6
Detroit	60.1	7.5	65.9	48.9
Indianapolis	62.1	40.2	47.8	72.8
Kansas City	60.6	33.6	38.7	85.0
Milwaukee	69.0	23.7	43.8	91.6
St. Louis	68.5	20.0	68.8	40.2
South				
Atlanta	81.6	10.2	70.9	28.5
Charlotte	56.9	36.2	36.3	80.3
Dallas	66.1	27.0	38.8	66.2
Ft. Worth	57.9	39.7	51.0	72.1
Houston	70.8	23.4	53.6	59.8
Jacksonville	50.4	42.4	41.4	84.2
Memphis	65.1	17.1	51.9	61.6
Miami	75.1	12.8	66.5	31.3
Nashville	54.0	42.5	49.5	86.5
New Orleans	65.9	54.3	57.5	46.6
West				
Los Angeles	70.1	30.6	65.2	38.5
Phoenix	49.4	71.3	33.4	92.9
San Diego	60.7	53.7	45.9	83.4
San Francisco	68.0	32.3	64.9	45.9
Seattle	57.7	64.1	32.6	86.3
Mean values	65.9	30.3	55.5	59.6

Source: Calculations based on census tract data from the U.S. Census Bureau, *Census of Population, 2000*.

Note: Dbtw = dissimilarity Black total/White; Abtw = absolute exposure Black total/White.

cities and 55.5 in suburbs. The exposure index, which is sometimes interpreted as a measure of contact, is twice as high in the suburbs as central cities.

There is considerable variation across cities. Older cities and Eastern and Midwestern cities have higher dissimilarity indices in general, but this is by no means universal. With the exception of New York and Cleveland, dissimilarity indices are lower in the suburbs, and Black exposure to Whites higher than in the central cities (Table 2). In the central cities, dissimilarity indices are in the 60 to 75 range with Washington, Atlanta, and Baltimore with higher scores. The levels of exposure measured by the absolute exposure of Blacks to Whites is quite low. In contrast, many dissimilarity indices in the suburbs are in the 40s and 50s. Still, twelve cities, older classical cities that grew up in the process of industrialization, have dissimilarity indices above 60. It is worth reemphasizing that the Black exposure to Whites, measured by the absolute exposure indices, are on average at least twice as large as, and often three to four times greater than, in the central city. This is true in older cities like Chicago and Detroit even though they are often viewed as very segregated cities. The suburbs are different. African Americans in the suburbs are more likely to live with Whites (or in cases like Los Angeles with other races) than they are in the central city. Still, as a reviewer noted, *D* values in the 60s and 70s are hardly measures of integration. Indeed, there are striking regional differences in the extent to which the suburbs are "integrated." At the same time, as I note later, to some extent the fact that the levels of separation are not lower may be attributed to middle- and upper-middle-income Black choices to live in Black suburban neighborhoods, often gated communities, as in the suburbs of Atlanta.

While the dissimilarity and exposure indices tell us a great deal about the levels of integration, it is useful to extend those results by considering the distributional aspects of the patterns of Blacks and other races. Clearly, tracts with more than 60 percent African American are majority minority tracts, while tracts in the range of 40 to 60 percent can be considered mixed or integrated, at least in the sense that Blacks have expressed preferences of 50-50 combinations of Whites and Blacks. I also examine two groups of tracts which have significantly lower proportions of Blacks, 0 to 20 percent and 20 to 40 percent Black, as indications of increasing levels of integration. I do this analysis both for the proportion of the Black population in these combinations and proportions of tracts with these combinations. In the first case, I am examining where the Black population lives; and in the second, I am examining the neighborhood structures in which Blacks live, that is, how many tracts or neighborhoods are in each distributional range of percentage Black (see Tables 3 and 4).

The basic finding from the analysis of dissimilarity and exposure indices is replicated with the data from the measures of concentration. Blacks in the

**Table 3**  
**Proportion of the City or Suburban Black Population in Tracts**  
**That Are <20, 20-40, 40-60, 60+ Percent Black**

Metro Area	City				Suburb			
	<20%	20-40%	40-60%	>60%	<20%	20-40%	40-60%	>60%
<b>East</b>								
Baltimore	2.5	5.8	5.3	86.4	28.5	31.0	11.1	0.0
New York	15.0	25.6	25.9	33.6	24.9	19.6	30.2	25.3
Philadelphia	6.9	7.1	10.8	75.2	38.0	22.2	6.7	33.1
Washington, D.C.	3.1	4.4	6.5	86.0	12.4	8.4	13.9	65.3
<b>Midwest</b>								
Cincinnati	6.3	10.3	19.7	73.7	27.0	20.6	18.6	33.8
Chicago	5.8	6.5	3.8	83.9	14.9	16.2	14.0	45.1
Cleveland	7.9	2.3	6.2	83.6	19.0	10.4	13.4	57.2
Columbus	18.0	19.8	1.2	61.0	82.1	7.4	10.1	.3
Detroit	0.9	0.7	2.3	96.1	28.8	12.5	17.7	41.0
Indianapolis	14.0	18.2	20.7	47.1	61.6	32.2	6.2	0.0
Kansas City	10.7	12.0	20.2	57.1	78.9	9.6	11.5	0.0
Milwaukee	6.3	4.7	19.5	69.5	68.6	15.5	15.9	0.0
St. Louis	3.4	10.1	9.0	77.5	15.2	18.2	9.0	57.6
<b>South</b>								
Atlanta	4.0	1.9	4.4	89.7	10.7	13.6	15.4	60.3
Charlotte	8.8	22.8	26.7	41.7	40.3	37.1	11.3	11.2
Dallas	13.5	20.1	19.0	47.4	50.6	25.2	15.0	9.3
Ft. Worth	19.1	30.1	11.8	39.0	60.0	30.7	4.7	4.7
Houston	16.7	19.1	12.9	48.7	46.3	33.6	7.6	2.5
Jacksonville	16.6	29.8	8.1	45.5	69.3	25.9	4.8	0.0
Memphis	2.7	3.5	11.7	82.1	46.6	19.8	27.1	6.5
Miami	7.6	6.7	15.8	70.1	19.7	15.2	12.1	53.7
Nashville	17.5	23.8	10.4	48.3	95.4	4.6	0.0	0.0
New Orleans	1.5	3.1	8.1	87.3	19.1	24.3	21.4	35.2
<b>West</b>								
Los Angeles	36.8	24.2	23.2	15.8	43.4	20.1	14.7	21.8
Phoenix	84.1	12.0	3.9	0.0	100.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
San Diego	64.2	27.1	6.5	2.2	93.5	6.5	0.0	0.0
San Francisco	22.0	22.7	27.6	27.6	38.7	24.4	18.1	18.7
Seattle	45.2	44.8	10.0	0.0	91.5	8.5	0.0	0.0

city are much more likely to be in majority Black neighborhoods, while those in the suburbs are dramatically more likely to be living in integrated settings. On average, 56.3 percent of African Americans live in majority Black tracts in central cities, while only 20 percent do in the suburbs (Table 3).

**Table 4**  
**Percentage Distribution of the African American Population**  
**by Central City and Suburbs in 2000**

Metro Area	Percentage of Black Population		Percentage of Total Population	
	City	Suburbs	City	Suburbs
East				
Baltimore	59.4	40.6	65.2	20.8
New York	61.3	38.7	29.8	23.7
Philadelphia	80.3	19.7	44.3	8.7
Washington, D.C.	31.9	68.1	61.3	28.3
Midwest				
Cincinnati	71.4	28.6	43.7	11.3
Chicago	69.0	31.0	37.4	14.2
Cleveland	62.5	37.5	82.8	8.9
Columbus	83.2	16.8	52.1	15.7
Detroit	77.8	22.2	26.0	5.4
Indianapolis	93.0	7.0	26.4	11.6
Kansas City	82.5	17.5	31.6	4.2
Milwaukee	86.9	13.1	38.6	2.8
St Louis	39.9	60.1	51.8	19.4
South				
Atlanta	21.4	78.6	62.1	30.0
Charlotte	59.0	41.0	33.4	11.3
Dallas	64.5	36.5	26.5	14.4
Ft. Worth	57.9	42.1	20.5	8.7
Houston	66.2	33.8	24.8	11.4
Jacksonville	89.3	10.7	29.7	7.9
Memphis	89.0	11.0	61.9	15.1
Miami	9.7	90.3	21.3	20.5
Nashville	98.9	1.1	27.3	6.2
New Orleans	71.7	28.3	67.9	21.7
West				
Los Angeles	43.3	56.7	12.5	9.0
Phoenix	57.5	42.5	5.3	3.0
San Diego	59.3	40.7	8.5	4.5
San Francisco	37.2	62.8	17.9	10.6
Seattle	49.3	49.7	9.6	4.7

Source: U.S. Census of Population, 2000.

In terms of tracts (or neighborhoods), on average 31 percent of tracts have 60 percent African Americans in central cities, while the percentage is only 6 percent in the suburbs.

Again, there is considerable variation across the twenty-eight cities in the analysis. However, the same distinction between Western and Southwestern cities in the dissimilarity analysis also emerges here. If the five “West” cities are removed, the average percentage Black population in majority Black tracts in central cities rises to 66 percent. Nearly half the central cities of the metropolitan areas in the study have more than 70 percent of their Black populations in tracts that are greater than 60 percent Black. In contrast, in the suburbs, most metropolitan areas have the majority of their Black populations in tracts that are less than 40 percent Black or are integrated (40 to 60 percent Black). However, five cities, Washington, D.C., Atlanta, Cleveland, St Louis, and Miami, do have more than half of their Black populations in 60 percent or more tracts. Again, the suburbs of the large East Coast metropolitan areas are likely to have higher proportions of both the Black population and Black tracts of more than 60 percent minority.

Clearly, the amount of integration is influenced by the size of the African American populations. Small numbers in the suburbs are likely to be less separated by definition. Table 4 shows the percentages of the Black population across cities and suburbs both for the proportion of the total population and as a percentage of the Black population. With a few exceptions (Nashville and Indianapolis), most suburbs now have sizeable African American populations, and the percentage of the total suburban population is also nontrivial. Even in metropolitan areas like San Diego and Seattle where the percentages are low, the actual numbers are more than seventy thousand and fifty thousand African Americans in their suburbs.

It is striking that few suburbs have large proportions of majority Black neighborhoods—using the interpretation of the number of tracts with more than 60 percent Black population (see Table 5). Only Atlanta and Washington, D.C., have more than a fifth of their tracts with more than 60 percent Black population. Washington, D.C., is notable for the 30 percent of the suburban tracts that are more than 60 percent African American. These are the suburban middle-class and upper-middle-class neighborhoods of Prince Georges County, and similar patterns are emerging in Atlanta’s suburbs in Gwinett and DeKalb counties. Such concentrations raise the fundamental issue of whether the emergence of such concentrations, which are middle or higher income and are the results of preferences and choices by the Black community, are “critical issues.” They are the outcome of market forces and preferences and as such reflect the emergence of changing residential patterns in U.S. cities.

While Washington, D.C., and Atlanta are at one end of the continuum, Los Angeles, San Diego, and Phoenix may be at the other end. They all

**Table 5**  
**Percentage of Tracts That Have <20, 20-40, 40-6, 60+**  
**Percent Black Population**

Metro Area	City				Suburb			
	<20%	20-40%	40-60%	>60%	<20%	20-40%	40-60%	>60%
<b>East</b>								
Baltimore	20.0	11.5	7.5	61.0	74.7	14.5	3.6	7.2
New York	52.9	23.2	11.0	12.8	63.9	10.5	9.4	16.3
Philadelphia	41.9	12.1	9.7	36.3	86.8	6.7	1.6	4.9
Washington, D.C.	22.5	7.5	7.5	62.6	50.0	9.4	10.5	30.1
<b>Midwest</b>								
Cincinnati	33.9	13.4	19.7	33.1	79.1	8.2	5.1	7.5
Chicago	51.1	6.3	3.6	39.0	81.9	8.1	2.9	7.1
Cleveland	39.5	5.5	6.8	48.2	77.7	5.9	4.4	12.0
Columbus	57.3	15.9	7.7	19.1	93.3	2.6	2.2	2.2
Detroit	6.7	2.2	3.8	87.2	86.6	4.4	3.3	5.7
Indianapolis	54.4	16.2	10.3	19.1	92.4	5.9	1.7	0.0
Kansas City	47.7	16.7	13.8	21.8	97.7	1.4	0.9	0.0
Milwaukee	47.6	7.0	10.5	35.0	96.3	2.3	1.4	0.0
St. Louis	25.0	14.3	8.9	51.8	71.0	12.5	3.4	13.1
<b>South</b>								
Atlanta	25.0	4.8	6.5	63.7	51.9	18.8	8.6	20.8
Charlotte	39.4	23.6	15.7	21.3	70.2	21.5	4.4	3.9
Dallas	59.8	13.6	8.7	17.8	84.7	10.1	3.7	1.5
Ft. Worth	62.4	19.5	5.4	12.8	89.8	9.2	0.5	0.5
Houston	62.1	13.8	6.7	17.4	80.9	12.0	4.6	2.5
Jacksonville	43.1	31.3	4.9	20.8	87.3	10.9	1.8	0.0
Memphis	22.8	8.9	11.7	56.7	75.9	12.0	9.6	12.0
Miami	59.2	6.6	6.6	27.6	69.7	9.6	4.9	15.9
Nashville	54.2	20.4	6.3	19.0	91.7	8.3	0.0	0.0
New Orleans	17.7	7.7	12.7	61.9	64.0	16.8	8.7	10.6
<b>West</b>								
Los Angeles	82.3	9.7	5.5	2.5	93.0	4.4	1.3	1.3
Phoenix	96.7	3.0	0.3	0.0	100.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
San Diego	91.9	6.7	1.1	0.3	98.8	1.2	0.0	0.0
San Francisco	65.7	13.8	11.0	9.5	81.4	9.8	4.6	4.2
Seattle	20.0	13.6	2.4	0.0	98.8	1.2	0.0	0.0

have very high proportions of tracts with 0 to 20 percent Black in the central city of any metropolitan area and effectively no concentrated Black minority residential areas at all. This is, as is well known, the outcome of

the changing demographics of the Los Angeles, San Diego, and Phoenix metropolitan areas. At least in the case of Los Angeles County, it is more Hispanic than White, and African Americans make up only about 12 percent of the county population. But whereas once (in the 1960s and 1970s and even in the 1980s) they were concentrated in majority Black neighborhoods, those neighborhoods have changed dramatically to much more mixed. This is likely the future of many neighborhoods both in central cities and suburbs as the number of the foreign-born entering the United States continues to grow (Clark and Blue 2004). Demography will fundamentally influence the patterns and levels of integration and separation in U.S. cities. It is true that in some cities—Washington, D.C., Cleveland, Detroit, and Atlanta—a significant proportion of the Black population in the suburbs is living in areas that are more than 60 percent Black; but at the same time, the contrast between the proportion of Blacks who live in tracts less than 20 percent Black in the city and suburbs is striking, albeit with some exceptions.

## Conclusions and Interpretations

The evidence from the overall examination of African American suburbanization suggests a growing role for socioeconomic status, and it is even possible to suggest that the power of socioeconomic status may be increasing as the role of race per se declines. There are fewer barriers to Black suburbanization than at any time in the past. This is not to argue that discrimination does not occur—that would be an unsustainable argument—but its extent and power are certainly much diminished. African American households with the wealth and the human capital are doing just what previous White households undertook when they moved from central cities to suburbs.

The analysis has shown that Blacks are an increasing presence in the metropolitan suburbs of large U.S. cities and that the numerical growth in the past ten years has been substantial. Now, 40 percent of all African Americans are in the suburbs of these large metropolitan areas. Those who move to the suburbs have higher incomes, are more likely to be owners, and have more education. Thus, higher socioeconomic status Blacks are more likely to move to suburban areas, and there is evidence that they live in modestly less segregated settings. Levels of integration measured either with standardized measures of segregation or distributional analyses of tract composition show that levels of association with Whites and other races are higher in the suburban communities.

While it is somewhat straightforward to provide the descriptive analysis of what has been happening in the residential patterns for African Americans and the link to socioeconomic status effects, the interpretation is necessarily more nuanced. The data provided in the body of this article suggest that income and education matter in the likelihood of Black households living in White neighborhoods. Class matters in this interpretation. It is consistent with surveys that suggest that Whites are “comfortable” in neighborhoods with households from similar socioeconomic backgrounds. For African American households with human capital, the civil rights laws that removed racial barriers allowed them to join the mainstream of the American economy. Those who did not have the preparation, education, and by extension income have found it more difficult to make the transition to desirable neighborhoods in the suburbs.

Changing segregation patterns in U.S. metropolitan areas suggest that policies must go beyond combating discriminatory practices, important as that is, to change the human capital of minority populations as a whole. Further changes in the economic status of the minority populations will provide the opportunities to lessen separation in the residential fabric by race. Class will always create separation in the spatial patterns of the city, but the difficult issue is to remove race from this matrix of causation.

## Notes

1. I am providing this extended note in response to editorial suggestions and in the spirit of setting the current article in the larger debates about the causes of residential segregation. I am also responding to several serious reviewers who argued that I “mischaracterized” researchers with whom I disagree. The footnote reexamines those papers and new papers cited by the reviewers, identifies their major findings, and highlights the differences in our interpretations of the research literature. A reviewer who took umbrage at my “straw man” approach to those I disagree with suggested that in fact they did not deny the role of socioeconomic effects, but rather said that socioeconomic differences between Blacks and Whites play a small role as a cause of the segregation found in American cities. I must demur that they have been so careful. Denton (1996) writes that “the ultimate responsibility of the persistence of racial segregation, rests with White America” and that “high levels of racial segregation in the contemporary United States . . . cannot be explained away by Black and White income differences or . . . by a resort to notions of personal choice. Residential segregation is the direct and continuing *result* of racism” (pp. 811, 905). This view is hardly nuanced and leaves very little room for *any* explanation based on socioeconomic differences. In addition, in a recent research review on patterns of residential segregation in a National Academy of Sciences (NAS) report on racial trends, the editors summarize their findings by writing “he [Massey] finds that extreme geographic segregation is largely unrelated to economic status [and] is not explained by residential preferences” (National Research Council 2001, 17). Thus, I would

argue that the view I have countered is not one of nuance, but rather of outright rejection of any role for economics or preferences.

Studies I did not initially examine continue the theme of discrimination and racism for the explanation of residential separation. A study of segregation in St. Louis failed to show any decline in levels of segregation with rising socioeconomic status and the author interpreted those findings to suggest that race explains 80 to 85 percent of the levels of racial housing segregation between Whites and African Americans (J. Farley 2005, 147). In fact, the study does not consider "socio" differences for separation, only economic differences. It would have been useful to know about the changes by level of education. In fact a study of five "gateway" cities confirms that segregation does decline by education as well as income, though more for the former than the latter (Clark and Blue 2004). Indeed, in the inner cities of Miami and New York, there is no decline in segregation by income, so the findings in St. Louis are consistent with some large Eastern cities. The suburbs, however, show considerable decline in levels of segregation with increases in income and education. Clearly, there are geographic effects and whatever the outcomes in St Louis, they are insufficient to use as the sole basis to reject the role of Black White socioeconomic differences.

Another study emphasizes "the continued importance of racial prejudice, the existence of housing market discrimination . . . and the persistence of residential segregation among Black and White households with similar observable households characteristics" (Dawkins 2004, 391). While the appeal to discrimination as the explanation for separation is certainly the accepted orthodoxy, there are studies that have measured the extent to which discrimination explains segregation. At least one study, still not countered to my knowledge (and not discussed by Dawkins 2004), showed that discrimination accounted for somewhere between 5 and 12 percent of the variation in segregation (Clark 1993). Even the HUD audits do not argue that discrimination is the total explanation for residential segregation. With respect to preferences and choice, a specific study of the role of prejudice and preference showed how preferences can play a powerful role in the choices that households make and so help create the patterning in the residential fabric (Clark 2002). New work on agent-based modeling also documents the likely outcomes from small differences in residential preferences (Fossett and Warren 2005; Zhang 2004). Those studies show how separation (segregation) can develop without discriminatory processes.

Iceland, Sharpe, and Steinmetz (2005) also come down on the side of race though they concede that class deserves increasing attention (p. 264). They amongst many recent commentators are indeed more nuanced in their interpretations and agree that higher-status African Americans generally live in more integrated neighborhoods. Still, at the end they write, "Race continues to play the most critical role in explaining prevailing residential patterns" (p. 264).

This review will not resolve the differences between the groups that favor one or other of the explanations for continuing residential separation. However, this note should at the very least provide a basis for continuing work on the relative power of the forces that may influence residential separation and that the rejection of a socioeconomic explanation for segregation is far from a straw man. This leads me to a final point: Separation in the residential fabric is not the outcome, alone, of income, affordability, social status, or preferences; it is the outcome of the mixture of these factors tempered by the myriad daily decisions in the rental and owner markets of American cities (Clark 2002). To assert that income does not explain the separation is only to assert the obvious: No one factor explains the complex residential patterns that we see. We now have considerable understanding of how individuals make decisions within the residential fabric and about who gets to live where. The research presented in the

body of this article provides additional evidence for the power of economic explanations for African American residential selections.

2. A reviewer suggested comparisons with other ethnic groups, but the point here is that we are examining within-ethnic-group difference. Of course, African Americans who move to the suburbs have lower incomes than Whites who move to the suburbs as, overall, they have lower incomes than Whites. I have, however, included the data on Hispanics and Whites in Table 1.

3. I recognize that minorities may be accessing inner-city and less desirable suburban environments than Whites, but the important point is that they are able to “move up” by moving out.

4. I put aside the issue of whether there is some maximum level of likely integration, as Black households that prefer neighborhoods with 50-50 combinations will likely choose such neighborhoods when the Black population becomes sufficiently numerous in suburban settings, as in Atlanta.

5. I provide the exposure as well as the dissimilarity index even though we know that exposure indices are influenced by the size of the relevant populations. It is true that Black to White exposure indices will be higher in the suburbs simply because there are many more Whites in the suburbs. However, the number of Blacks in the suburbs is now substantial, and the index is a meaningful measure of “exposure.”

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