PART TWO

PRIVATE LIVES AND PUBLIC POLICIES

Residential Segregation Trends

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ETHNIC AND RACIAL SEGREGATION has declined substantially from the 1960s when the Kerner Commission Report suggested that the United States was "moving toward two societies, one black, one white—separate and unequal." Decade by decade, residential integration has increased, and it will probably continue to do so. Of course, this does not mean that segregation has vanished or that housing discrimination has been eliminated, but it does indicate that there has been impressive racial progress in the past three decades.

Seventy years ago, the Chicago school of urban sociology studied the changing residential map of European newcomers who had flooded into cities on the East Coast and in the Middle West. Later, with the influx of African Americans from the South into northern cities, the focus of research shifted to blacks and whites. Today, scholars look beyond black and white, as urban America has become multiethnic and, once again, residential patterns have changed. In fact, two dozen cities now have no majority ethnic or racial group, and the number will grow with continuing immigration.

The changing economic status of members of racial and ethnic groups alters residential patterns, and the evidence from national and selective regional studies indicates that segregation is declining, especially for the more affluent. Yet the residential choices people make inevitably will result in a certain degree of continuing racial and ethnic clustering—a phenomenon that should not be confused with discrimination. For instance, Koreans have gravitated toward certain high-status California suburbs; newly wealthy Asian Indians have chosen to live in certain neighborhoods in Silicon Valley; and Armenians are concentrated in the Glendale region of Los Angeles. Do such patterns suggest unequal residential access? In reality, the residential mosaic is shaped in part by a combination of economic forces and group preferences, and it is simplistic to assume the driving force to be clearly racial animus.

Changing Patterns of Residential Segregation

Residential integration has increased in the past forty years. The changes were slow at first, but the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and subsequent fair housing laws accelerated the process. A standard way of measuring the level of residential segregation is to use what is called the index of dissimilarity, which ranges from a high of 100 (total segregation) to a low of zero (members of racial and ethnic groups randomly distributed). Thus, each census tract (a largish neighborhood of about 4,000 to 6,000 people) in a city with an index of zero would perfectly mirror the racial and ethnic makeup of the larger community.

Table 1 looks at selected cities in the period 1960–1990. In cities in which the minority population is predominantly African American, the index of dissimilarity has dropped from the high 80s to the high 70s; where other minorities are also present, the decline has been considerably greater. Other data from the 1980s confirm this general picture of increased integration, especially in southern and western metropolitan areas with significant new housing construction.[1]

Table 1 Housing Segregation in the Twenty-one Largest Cities with Over 50,000 Blacks

	INDEX OF DISSIMILARITY [a]			
City	*1960*	*1970*	*1980*	*1990*
Mostly Black Minority				
Chicago	93	93	90	86
Philadelphia	87	84	85	84
Detroit	84	82	84	86
Washington, D.C.	80	79	77	76
Boston	84	84	79	73
Atlanta	89	88	80	81
St. Louis	90	90	76	74
Baltimore	90	89	82	80
Pittsburgh	85	86	79	77
Cleveland	91	90	88	85
Newark	72	76	79	79
Kansas City, Mo.	91	90	83	76
Cincinnati	89	84	79	75
Milwaukee	88	88	81	79
AVERAGES	87	86	82	79
Black and Hispanic				
Los Angeles	82	90	78	66
Houston	94	93	79	66
Dallas	95	96	81	63
Oakland	73	70	71	63
Tampa	94	92	76	65
Miami	98	92	81	74
San Francisco	69	75	65	61
AVERAGES	86	87	76	65

SOURCE: David Armor and William A. V. Clark, "Housing Segregation and School Desegregation," in David Armor, *Forced Justice: School Desegregation and the Law* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 128.

[a] For 1960 and 1970 the index is for cities and for whites versus blacks. For 1980 and 1990 the index is for counties and for nonblacks versus blacks.

In Southern California, for example, in many suburban counties outside Los Angeles, indexes of dissimilarity are in the mid-30s. The number of Hispanics, African Americans, and Asians is increasing steadily.[2] Thus, though Orange County may still be viewed as a conservative Republican bastion, by 1990 only a little more than 30 percent of the neighborhoods (census tracts) were over 80 percent non-Hispanic white. Diversity in general had increased dramatically—a picture that squares with the work of scholars who stress the gains brought in recent decades by the drive to reduce discrimination.

The change in the status of blacks is particularly striking. As late as 1970, rich and poor blacks were equally likely to be segregated from white households, but today in Southern California, high-income black households live in highly integrated neighborhoods. Families with incomes less than $10,000 remain in areas with an index of dissimilarity close to 90, but the figure for those with earnings above $60,000 is 40. The civil rights movement is now more than forty years old, and the sustained attack on American racism has paid off.

In 1960 few African Americans lived in suburbia. By 1999 the number of African Americans in the suburbs was about 10.9 million, more than 30 percent of the total black population. Blacks are now about 8 percent of the total population residing in suburbia, and the proportion will continue to increase with rising black incomes. Moreover, increasingly, suburban middle-class blacks are almost indistinguishable from whites with the same education and income.[3]

As the racial gap in family income is further reduced, the level of residential integration will rise. At the same time, it is important to note that the index of dissimilarity is not likely to drop much below 30. Differences in wealth, in neighborhood preferences, and in the structure of urban housing all work to separate members of different racial and ethnic groups.

Residential Patterns

Just why racial and ethnic groups tend to cluster in separate residential areas is a matter of ongoing and contentious debate.[4] Some scholars stress the role of discrimination and argue that income and housing costs play only a minor role in the segregated residential patterns so evident in large metropolitan areas.[5] But there is also a substantial literature that emphasizes not only economic factors but also the choices minorities make—that is, their preference for living with members of their own group (and avoiding others).[6]

The debate over the causes of residential separation is one aspect of the attempt to understand the creation and modification of urban patterns over time. A large literature has documented the role of socioeconomic and family status, as well as ethnic characteristics in defining the ecology of the city.[7] It is certainly possible to identify and classify residential areas within cities on the basis of such variables, and to some degree communities change as the income, ethnicity, and composition of families within them shift. But the intersection between class and race is also important. For instance, white movement out of an inner-city neighborhood that has become heavily African American and often overwhelmingly poor is central to understanding the emergence of black urban concentrations and more affluent, predominantly white suburbs.[8] That classic pattern, however, will continue to change as blacks and Hispanics move up the economic ladder.

Indeed, some new evidence from Southern California suggests that income and education may be more important than previously believed.[9] Well-educated and higher-income black households live in relatively integrated settings—a harbinger of the future in other regions, it would seem (see Fig. 1). Survey data indicate that changing social status, especially that generated by education, has an important effect on the acceptance of "other race" residents in a neighborhood.[10] At the same time, however, low-income households may be experiencing increased segregation, a phenomenon consistent with the pessimism of scholars like Massey and Denton, who write of hypersegregation in many cities.[11]

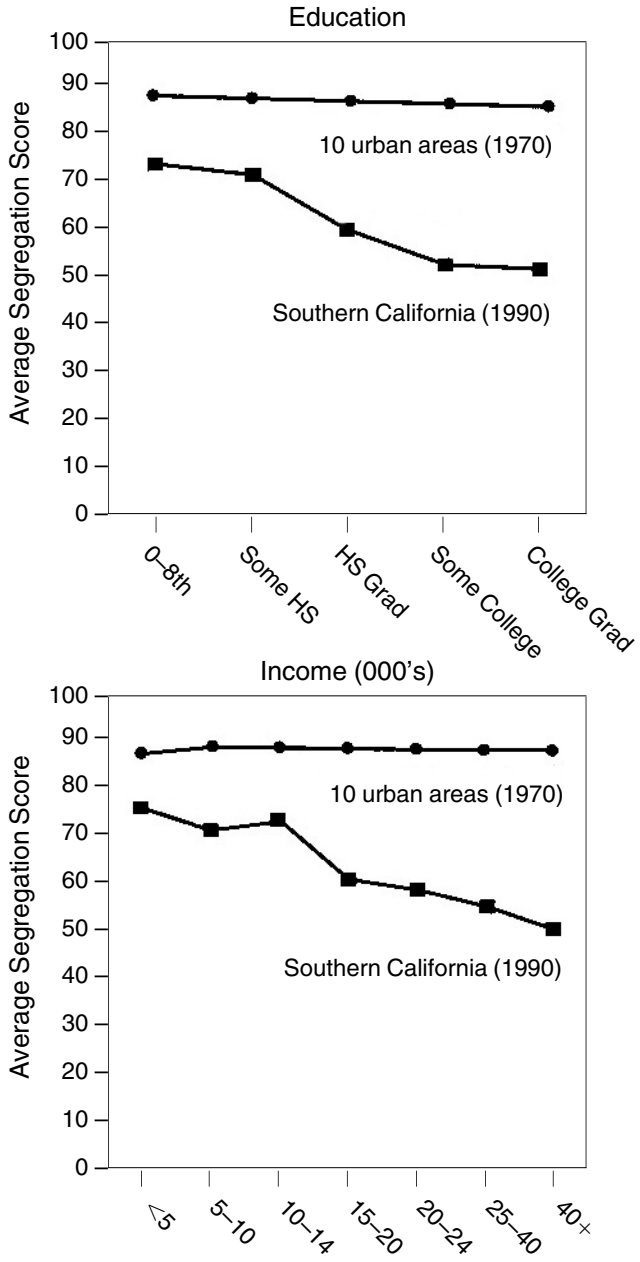

Fig. 1. Average segregation levels by education and income in 1970 and 1990; William A. V. Clark and Julian Wave, "Trends in Residential Integration by Socio-Economic Status in Southern California," *Urban Affairs Quarterly* 32 (1997).

Self-selection and group avoidance have also shaped the residential patterns of European immigrant groups, and that process continues today. Preferences for particular combinations of ethnic neighbors play an important role in the choices families make. But the African American experience has been different from the European. Whites and Asians have a stronger desire than do blacks and Hispanics for neighborhoods of their own race; the ideal mix thus differs for the two groups, and their separate preferences are not so easily reconciled (see Fig. 2). That fact, too, is likely to perpetuate a certain degree of urban residential separation for some time to come.[12]

Diverse preferences, along with group differences in education and income, thus shape the residential landscape, yet some scholars see prejudice as the basic explanation for racial and ethnic clustering.[13] If housing discrimination is indeed still a major force, then changes in the socioeconomic status of blacks—and even in racial attitudes—will not suffice to alter the basic picture. Several studies that have used testers to determine the receptivity of landlords and real estate agents to black families provide evidence that doors are still closed.[14] But surveys that ask households whether they have actually experienced discrimination find relatively few respondents who answer yes. The survey results suggest that the patterns of separation that we see in our cities are more the result of economic differences among groups, and of preferences for living in a neighborhood with people who are similar, than they are of discrimination.[15]

Prospects for Stable Integrated Neighborhoods

The future of residential integration is bound up with the fundamental demographic changes that are sweeping the nation. The new demography is particularly apparent in California, New York, Florida, Arizona, and Texas—all entry-point states for Hispanic and Asian immigrants. And even though the country is still 75 percent Anglo, several states, including California, as well as some metropolitan areas, already have

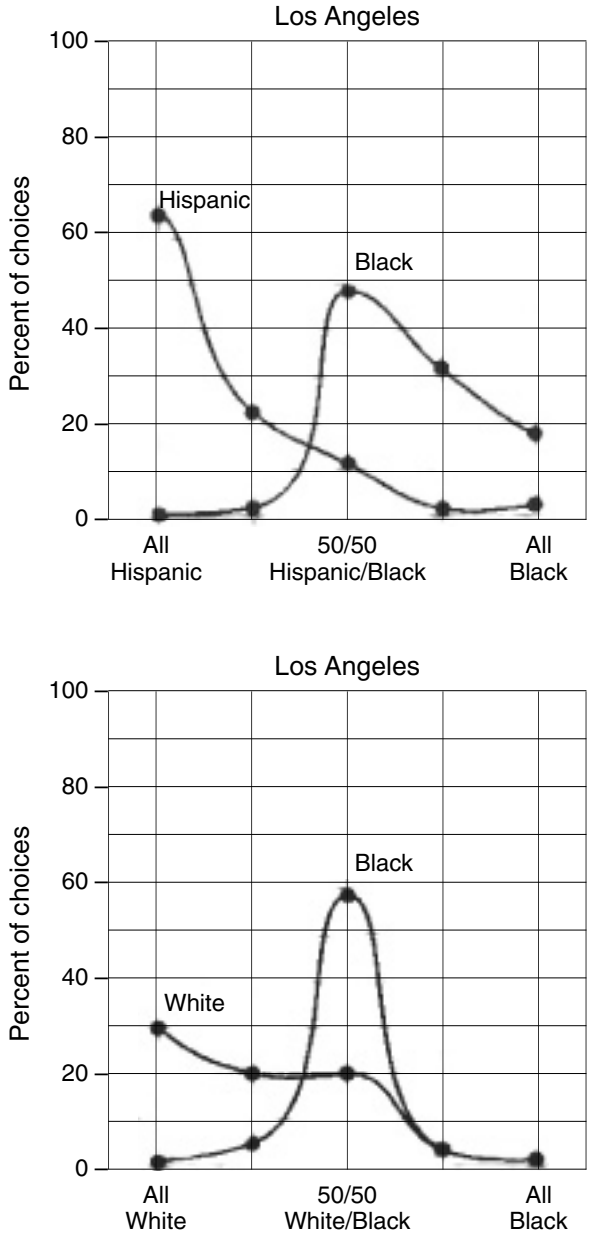

Fig. 2. Multiethnic racial preferences (choices of preferred combinations of neighbors) for Los Angeles and Boston; Multi-City Study of Urban Inequality 1993–1994 (MCSUI).

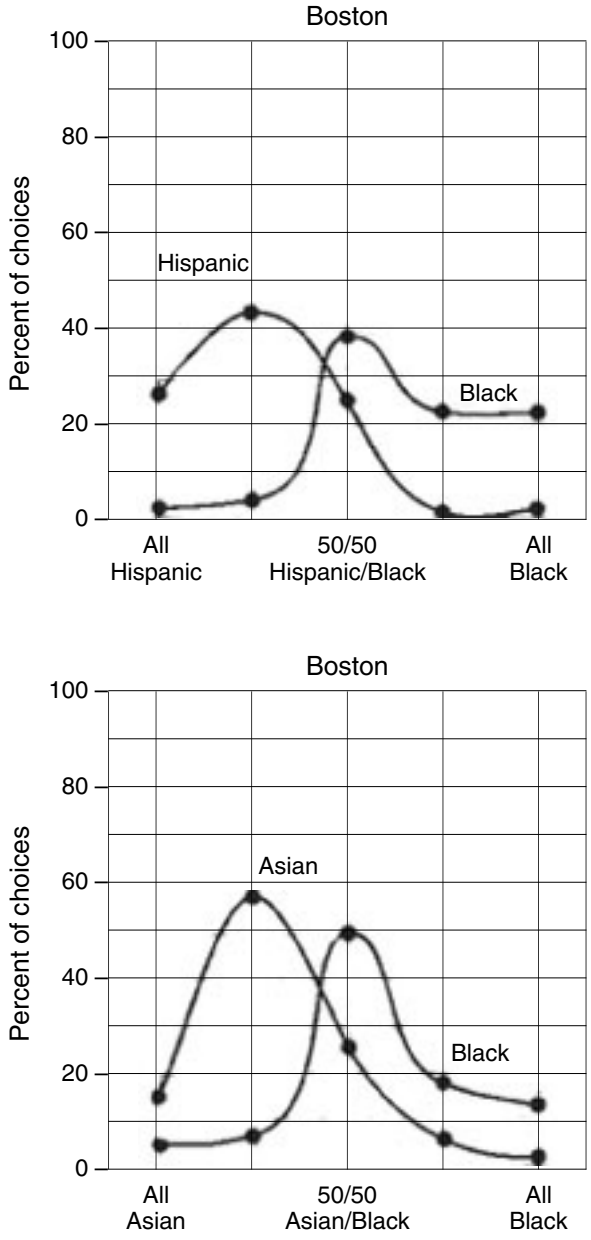

Fig. 2. (*continued*)

populations that are majority minority. Some of the new immigrant groups stick together by choice, and in such a context notions of segregation and separations become increasingly antiquated. In Los Angeles, for example, the index of dissimilarity for Armenians is roughly 90, which means almost total segregation. Several Asian groups (Cambodians, Koreans, Vietnamese, for example) are also residentially concentrated.[16]

There is thus intense clustering for some groups. But, at the same time, old patterns of white flight from incoming African Americans appear to be changing. Overall levels of separation may therefore be declining.[17] On the other hand, stable racially integrated communities are still unusual, and greater integration may simply be the consequence of an influx of white Hispanics rather than of Anglos. Whites and blacks may be living apart, but the arrival of Hispanics has integrated neighborhoods that were formerly overwhelmingly one race—that is, black. The change in the demographic makeup of the nation as a whole, in other words, inevitably has an impact on living patterns.

The two processes—increasing segregation and greater integration—are thus occurring at the same time, although the latter is the stronger (if slower) trend. The future remains unpredictable. As more blacks acquire middle-class status, urban neighborhoods are more and more likely to become a mix of new immigrants and African Americans. But it is also possible that very large scale immigration could undermine the progress made over the past three decades. Moreover, income separates people. The Kerner Report warned against two nations, one black and one white; the real worry may be two societies, one poor and the other affluent—living apart.

Observations and Summary

Pessimists argue that declines in segregation occur only where there are small numbers of African American households, not in the places where most blacks live. And on that basis they conclude that whites want only limited interracial contact. But more affluent and more highly edu-

cated black families are clearly welcome in suburban communities, and that fact suggests real change. Will that change be sustained? It will take another decade before we know for certain. Already, however, it is legitimate to ask whether urban concentrations of low-income black households are the result primarily of prejudice or of income constraints.

Notes

1. Reynolds Farley and William Frey, "Changes in the Segregation of Whites from Blacks During the 1980s: Small Steps Toward a More Integrated Society," *American Sociological Review* 59 (1994): 23–45.

2. William A. V. Clark, "Residential Patterns, Avoidance, Assimilation, and Succession," in R. Waldinger and M. Bozorgmehr, eds., *Ethnic Los Angeles* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1996), pp. 109–38.

3. Joel Garreau, *Edge City: Life on the New Frontier* (New York: Anchor Books, 1992); Richard Morrill, "Racial Segregation and Class in a Liberal Metropolis," *Geographical Analysis* 27 (1995): 22–41.

4. William A. V. Clark, "Residential Segregation in American Cities: A Review and Interpretation," *Population Research and Policy Review* 5 (1986): 95–127; William A. V. Clark, "Residential Segregation in American Cities: Common Ground and Differences in Interpretation," *Population Research and Policy Review* 8 (1989): 193–97; George Galster, "Residential Segregation in American Cities: A Contrary Review," *Population Research and Policy Review* 7 (1988): 113–21.

5. Nancy Denton, "The Persistence of Segregation Links Between Residential Segregation and School Segregation," *Minnesota Law Review* 80 (1996): 795–824; John Farley, "Race Still Matters: The Minimal Role of Income and Housing Cost as Causes of Housing Segregation in St. Louis, 1900," *Urban Affairs Review* 3 (1995): 244–54.

6. David Armor and William A. V. Clark, "Housing Segregation and School Desegregation," in David Armor, *Forced Justice: School Desegregation and the Law* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 117–53.

7. Brian Berry and John Kasarda, *Contemporary Urban Ecology* (New York: Macmillan, 1979), provide a review of the ecological background of the urban mosaic.

8. William Frey, "Mover Destination Selectivity and the Changing Suburbanization of Metropolitan Whites and Blacks," *Demography* 22 (1985): 223–43; William J. Wilson, *The Declining Significance of Race: Blacks and Changing American Institutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986).

9. William A. V. Clark and Julian Ware, "Trends in Residential Integration by Socio-Economic Status in Southern California," *Urban Affairs Quarterly* 32 (1997): 825–43.

10. Howard Schuman, Charlotte Steeh, and Lawrence Bobo, *Racial Attitudes in America: Trends and Interpretations* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1985).

11. Douglas Massey and Nancy Denton, *American Apartheid* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993).

12. William A. V. Clark, "Residential Preferences and Neighborhood Racial Segregation: A Test of the Schelling Model," *Demography* 28 (1991): 1–19; William A. V. Clark, "Residential Preferences and Residential Choices in a Multi-Ethnic Context," *Demography* 30 (1992): 451–66; Schuman, Steeh, and Bobo, *Racial Attitudes in America: Trends and Interpretations*.

13. George Galster and William Keeney, "Race, Residence, Discrimination and Economic Opportunities," *Urban Affairs Quarterly* 24 (1988): 87–117.

14. See, e.g., John Yinger, *Closed Doors, Opportunities Lost: The Continuing Costs of Housing Discrimination* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1995).

15. Armor and Clark, "Housing Segregation and School Segregation," p. 145.

16. James Allen and Eugene Turner, *The Ethnic Quilt: Population Diversity in Southern California* (California State University, Northridge: Center for Geographical Studies, 1997).

17. Barrett Lee and Peter Wood, "Is Neighborhood Social Succession, Place Specific?" *Demography* 28 (1991): 21–40.