

Racial Residential Preferences: Do They Explain Persistent Segregation?

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The Issue: Causes of Continued Racial Residential Segregation

Census 2000 reported that black-white residential segregation declined throughout the nation but changes were modest in most metropolises. A continuation of the trend of the 1990s implies high levels of black-white segregation into the fifth and sixth decades of this century. The declines in segregation were smallest in the large metropolitan areas where the majority of African Americans reside. In most metropolises, blacks in 2000 were much more segregated from non-Hispanic whites than were the rapidly growing Asian and Hispanic populations.

In the 1990s, a lively debate raged about the causes of persistent black-white residential segregation. Douglas Massey, John Yinger, John Goering and others emphasized continued racial discrimination in the housing market, albeit much more subtle discrimination than in the past. The Thernstroms, Orland Patterson and others challenged that view. The cited numerous national studies of racial attitudes showing that, over time, whites shifted their racial views such that now an overwhelming majority of whites report a willingness to live with African Americans on their block or move into a neighborhood where blacks reside. . Those same encompassing national studies report that a high proportion of blacks prefer neighborhoods where African-Americans make up about one-half or more of the residents. In their view, segregation endures, not because of discriminatory brokers or lenders or because whites flee when blacks move in, but rather because blacks prefer to live with other blacks. Maria Krysan argued that the preferences of African Americans play a role in persistent segregation but their desires are rooted, not in a strong preference to live with other blacks, but rather because they fear hostility were they to move into an overwhelmingly white neighborhoods.

Measuring the Residential Preferences of Whites and Blacks

Since the early 1960s, numerous national studies asked whites about their willingness to live with blacks. In the 1970s a new approach emerged. White respondents were presented with a series of cards depicting neighborhoods with varying racial compositions from all-white to majority black. They were asked if they would feel comfortable should their neighborhood come to resemble the racial composition shown on the card. If they said they would be uncomfortable living with so many black

neighbors, they were asked whether they would try to move away. Later, they were asked whether they would consider moving into any of the neighborhoods shown on the cards should they find an attractive, affordable home in each. Previous studies found that white's comfort with a neighborhood steadily decreased as the representation of African Americans increased.

Blacks respondents were given a different set of cards depicting neighborhoods ranging from all-African American to all-white. They were asked to array these cards in their preference order. Then they were asked to select all the neighborhoods that they would be willing to enter assuming that an attractive affordable homes was available in each neighborhood. Previous investigations reported that almost all blacks were willing to move into an integrated neighborhood but were somewhat reluctant to enter to all-black neighborhood and very reluctant to move into an exclusively white area.

The 2004 Studies of Metropolitan Detroit and Chicago

Neighborhood cards were used to study the preferences of residents in metropolitan Detroit in 1976 and in metropolitan Atlanta, Boston, Detroit and Los Angeles in 1992. In 2004, a Detroit Area Study sample was drawn of approximately 725 adults. Simultaneous 800 residents were selected in metropolitan Chicago for a simultaneous parallel investigation using the identical instrument.. African Americans were oversampled in both locations while Spanish neighborhoods were also oversampled in Chicago.

This is a major new study of the causes of continued racial residential segregation with an emphasis upon testing the hypothesis that residential preferences drive and sustain persistent black-white residential segregation. In addition to replicating the previously used neighborhood cards, this study used laptops for the interviewing so that new procedures could be incorporated to facilitate testing hypotheses about residential segregation:

- Respondents were shown four film clips of neighborhoods with a systematic variation in the quality of the housing and the race of the residents: all-white residents; all-black residents or a mixture of blacks and whites. Respondents were then asked how comfortable they would feel living in the neighborhood shown in the video, how safe they would feel living there, whether they expected property values to increase or decline in the near future and whether they thought the schools in the neighborhood were excellent or poor.
- Respondents were presented with five colorful maps of the metropolis showing 35 specific and well-known central city neighborhoods and suburban locations. They were then asked to mark where they had searched for a job or searched for a home or apartment in the last decade. This was followed by questions asking respondents to mark the geographic areas in which they would search were they looking for a home or apartment as well as locations where they would most

certainly not search. The housing questions were followed by open-ended probes asking them why they would or certainly would not consider living in a specific place.

- Answers to open-ended questions were recorded by a microphone attached in the lap.
- Sensitive racial attitude questions including the modern racial stereotype questions were self-administered using the laptop. This was intended to reduce the “political correctness” of a respondent’s answers.
- To minimize the cost of studies, most investigations of racial attitudes oversample minority neighborhoods. This means that minorities who live in racially mixed neighborhoods are underrepresented. For the 2004 samples neighborhoods were classified as:
 - More than 80 percent non-Hispanic white
 - More than 80 percent non-Hispanic black
 - At least 20 percent non-Hispanic white **and** 20 percent non-Hispanic blackIn both Detroit and Chicago, racially mixed neighborhoods were oversampled. In Chicago, there was also a stratum of neighborhoods with high densities of Hispanics.
- Respondents were presented with a blank neighborhood card and were asked to draw the racial composition that they most preferred using W for White, B for Black; H for Hispanic and A for Asian. In Chicago, respondents were also asked to code a blank neighborhood card to indicate the racial composition that they would least prefer.

As of late September, 2004; 652 respondents in Detroit and 300 in Chicago had been interviewed. The Detroit survey will be completed in October; the Chicago one in early December, 2004.

Aims of the Paper to be Presented at the Population Association Meetings

There are four aims:

- We will summarize the racial residential preferences of blacks and whites in both sites and then compare them to preferences reported by blacks and whites in metropolitan Detroit in both 1976 and 1992 and to those of residents of metropolitan Atlanta, Boston and Los Angeles in 1992.. The responses of residents of Spanish neighborhoods in metropolitan Chicago will also be reported.
- We will examine the determinants of the reported residential preferences as reported in 2004 and compare them to previous similar investigations based on information from earlier Detroit Area Studies and the Multi-City Study of Urban Inequality.

- We will provide a preliminary assessment of the consequences of residential preferences using information from the map questions about where a respondent would or certainly would not search for housing. We can determine whether whites who report on willingness to live with blacks when shown the neighborhood cards are consistent and report a willingness to search for new housing in racially mixed communities. Similarly, we can test the hypothesis that African-Americans who claim to be willing to move into largely white neighborhoods also say they would search for a new home in some or all of the largely white communities shown on our maps.
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