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# The Building Blocks of Atlanta: Racial Residential Segregation and Neighborhood Inequity

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THE BUILDING BLOCKS OF ATLANTA: RACIAL RESIDENTIAL SEGREGATION  
AND NEIGHBORHOOD INEQUITY

by

MELISSA M. HAYES

Under the Direction of Robert Adelman

ABSTRACT

I conduct a case study of Atlanta's metropolitan core in order to provide a rich, detailed analysis of urban neighborhoods, and to document the persistence of racial inequalities. Using Census 2000 block group data, I examine racial residential segregation in the five core counties of Atlanta between whites and minority groups, as well as among minority groups. I find high levels of residential segregation between whites and blacks, as well as between blacks and Asians, and blacks and Hispanics; segregation is lower between whites and Asians, and whites and Hispanics. I also investigate neighborhood characteristics like percentage poverty and educational attainment in neighborhoods with different racial compositions. These results highlight the advantages found in predominately white neighborhoods compared to racially concentrated minority neighborhoods, particularly African American and Latino neighborhoods. Overall, this thesis shows that residential stratification remains a hallmark indicator of racial inequality through the opening of the twenty-first century in Atlanta.

INDEX WORDS: Residential segregation, Neighborhoods, Atlanta, Block groups, Racial inequality

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AND NEIGHBORHOOD INEQUITY

by

MELISSA M. HAYES

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

in the College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

2006

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by

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August 2006

## DEDICATION PAGE

This thesis is dedicated to my grandparents, Ralph and Florence Gates, and parents, Timothy and Judy Hayes, who have supported me unconditionally throughout my life and academic endeavors. I am forever indebted to each one of you.

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

As recently as the 2000 Census, the level of black-white segregation in metropolitan Atlanta was characterized as “hypersegregated” (Wilkes and Iceland 2004). Race impacts all spheres of social life; discrimination based on race has strongly influenced politics, education, community, and job opportunities across the U.S. Residential opportunity is also one of these areas. Because the Atlanta metropolitan area consists of a substantial African American population, residential inequality in Atlanta, as a form of general racial inequality, is the focal point of this case study. By exploring the persistence of racial disparity in the neighborhoods of Atlanta, I shed light on the racial stratification of American society. In this thesis, I analyze not only segregation in Atlanta, but also the detailed characteristics of neighborhoods in Atlanta.

Early in the twentieth century, W.E.B. DuBois (1903) argued that neighborhoods are key locations of social interaction. DuBois understood the inequality that black Americans endured. He called attention to the treatment of African Americans as second-class citizens in conjunction with inequality and injustice of hardship from poverty combined with socially perceived racial inferiority. DuBois (1903:120) discusses neighborhoods’ “physical proximity of home and dwelling places, the way in which neighborhoods group themselves and [their] contiguity.” Thus, spatial patterns of racial and ethnic groups reflect persistent racial inequality.

The contribution of this case study of Atlanta is a rich, detailed analysis of urban neighborhoods that documents the inequalities that minorities continue to endure in the twenty-first century. Although many white Americans believe that racial problems were solved in the 1960s (Oakley 2002), American society remains separate and unequal with the existence of isolated and racially segregated communities. For example, the characteristics of the neighborhoods in which many minority groups, especially African Americans, reside are dissimilar to white neighborhoods. Frazier, Margai, and Tettey-Fio (2003:9) explain that “One of the continuing outcomes of racism is the segregation of African Americans, and more recently, poor Hispanics and Asian Americans, into inner-city ghettos and barrios with little hope of escape.” Residential segregation has severe consequences for those individuals that remain isolated and impoverished in American cities.

This research focuses on residential segregation and neighborhood characteristics, especially poverty, in five of Atlanta’s core counties. These counties include Clayton, Cobb, Dekalb, Fulton, and Gwinnett, and together, they make-up seventy-one percent of the metropolitan area’s population (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2000a). Levels of residential segregation are calculated for the five county area as a whole and for each county separately. Using Census 2000 data, these levels are calculated between whites and blacks, whites and Hispanics, whites and Asians, as well as among the minority groups. In addition, an examination of various neighborhood characteristics is conducted to provide an in-depth analysis of neighborhoods.

This research extends earlier segregation research by using block group level data as opposed to the more commonly used census tract. The population size of census tracts

varies from fifteen hundred to eight thousand individuals, with an average population of four thousand individuals (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2000b). For example, Adelman (2004:47) utilizes census tracts as “proxies for neighborhoods,” but this level of inquiry can fail to capture more close representations of neighborhoods. Block group data will provide more detailed descriptions of neighborhoods, with a smaller population varying between six hundred and three thousand people (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2000b). Measuring segregation at the block group level allows me to more closely analyze the detailed characteristics of neighborhood communities. Overall, this research contains descriptive elements, as well as segregation measurements, with the overarching intention to provide information about the characteristics of neighborhoods and information on residential segregation within these five core counties in Atlanta.

Racial residential segregation and neighborhood poverty are important topics to study in order to understand urban inequality in the United States. The nature of this investigation provides empirical information on the racial compositions of neighborhoods and the characteristics of those neighborhoods. The findings offer new information about racial residential segregation by studying both the levels of segregation with block group data, and the characteristics that gauge the inequality of those neighborhoods.

## **CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW**

Researchers have grappled with the persistence of residential inequality for some time. The process of residential segregation organizes racial and ethnic groups into neighborhoods that are unequal. Continued investigations into racial residential segregation draw attention to an American racial ideology of inequity and discrimination that with time conforms, bends, and persists.

### **The Process of Residential Segregation**

The social isolation of racial and ethnic minorities from whites, especially African Americans, is not a haphazard process. Rather, institutionalized discriminatory practices by white Americans have functioned to cultivate residential segregation. According to Massey and Denton (1993), issues of race and racial segregation are fundamental to understanding the status of African Americans and the urban underclass. Residential segregation is a phenomenon that fosters persistent inequality; large-scale inequities prevent racial and ethnic minorities from the same social and economic opportunities as whites, on average.

During the first half of the twentieth century, white Americans, through the denial of access to housing markets in metropolitan areas, created the black urban ghetto (Massey and Denton 1993). The creation of a residential structure that limited African Americans to specified areas purposively functioned to underline the residential color line. The African American population increased especially in northern cities, during this time, and as access to white residential areas remained limited racial segregation grew. Racial violence was utilized to ensure compliance with the spatial isolation of African

Americans in metropolitan areas in both the North and South. Deed restrictions transformed into restrictive covenants, created in neighborhood associations, which functioned to prevent substantial black access to white residential areas. Galster (1988) explains that many factors contribute to racial residential segregation including private acts of discrimination in the housing market.

Individuals are, therefore, sorted into neighborhoods based on race. This understanding is emphasized by the place stratification perspective, which focuses on obstacles that prevent racial minorities from gaining access to quality neighborhoods. The place stratification model focuses on the ranking of racial and ethnic groups as well as places; whereby the dominant white group distances itself spatially from other minorities. For instance, South and Crowder (1997) examine patterns of residential mobility between central cities and suburbs using longitudinal data. The researchers find that residential mobility patterns differ by race; blacks are significantly less likely than whites to move from cities to suburbs, and significantly more likely than whites to move from suburbs to cities. South and Crowder (1997) highlight how many factors have the potential to impact residential mobility, which include individual-level characteristics to broaden social contexts.

It is also important to recognize that racial minorities experience social isolation in areas that are disadvantaged, while the dominant white group enjoys a great deal more amenities and opportunities in higher quality neighborhoods even taking into account social class (Massey and Denton 1993; Adelman 2005; Pattillo- McCoy 1999). Spatial mobility may be examined in the context of the spatial assimilation model. This model indicates a process in which racial and ethnic minority groups attain proximity to the

dominant white group. Typically this process for African Americans in the United States includes the movement out of racially concentrated minority neighborhoods into neighborhood areas that are predominantly white (Massey and Mullan 1984). The spatial assimilation perspective takes into account how work, educational, and income opportunities are operative in neighborhoods (Adelman 2005). Neighborhoods categorically maintain different levels of socioeconomic opportunities and resources; therefore, individuals with the capability for social mobility seek out better opportunities. Inhabitants that are socioeconomically advantaged, with capital resources, have the potential to positively impact neighborhood quality. Yet, not everyone has an equal chance of achieving membership in a quality neighborhood.

Empirical research on residential segregation seeks to assess these unequal processes. Racially segregated neighborhoods are measured in order to provide information on the status of race relations and inequity in many areas throughout the U.S. Through research, sociologists are able to investigate and analyze residential trends in neighborhoods that are directly and indirectly related to race and class.

### **Residential Segregation**

Research about racial residential segregation, especially black-white segregation, describes an urban America that is racially isolated and segregated. The racial residential segregation of blacks, Hispanics, and Asians from whites is the focus of this study. According to the Lewis Mumford Center (2002a), in the 1990s the levels of black-white segregation declined slowly, while Asian-white segregation remained relatively unchanged and Hispanic-white segregation increased. Patterns and trends of segregation

and hypersegregation accentuate the degree of social separation between racial and ethnic groups in the U.S.

***Black/White Residential Segregation.*** Black-white residential segregation, at the metropolitan or city level, is a focal point of many studies about racial residential segregation. Taeuber and Taeuber (1963) examined black-white segregation for large cities in the U.S. This study laid the foundation for subsequent studies of segregation; high levels of racial residential segregation from 1940 to 1960 were reported. An ecological framework was employed to explain patterns of segregation. The ecological perspective gives attention to the influences of a metropolitan area's history, migration, and economic status on the development of racial patterns.

A few years later, Spear (1967) focused, again from an ecological standpoint, more specifically on one major city, Chicago. Spear conducted an investigation into the racial history of the city and the black ghetto prior to World War I. Understanding the context of historic race relations in the metropolitan area gave insights into how the black ghetto was formulated and encouraged. In response to this study, Hirsch (1983) examined post World War II strategies in Chicago that functioned to maintain residential segregation. A major strength of Hirsch's study was its focus on the roles of housing policies and suburbanization trends that cultivate black-white segregation.

Massey and Denton (1993) document levels of black-white segregation within urban environments between the 1970s and 1980s. In their book, *American Apartheid*, Massey and Denton (1993) argue that the racial and class segregation of blacks from whites into ghettos created disadvantaged underclass neighborhoods. By isolating African Americans into these neighborhoods, with concentrated poverty, leads to crime,

deviant behavior, family breakdown, and an oppositional culture. Adelman et al. (2001) explain that a persistent disadvantage for African Americans has been inclusion in neighborhoods that are racially isolated and composed of impoverished households.

Over the past few decades reported levels of black-white segregation have decreased. Farley and Frey (1994) report declines in black-white segregation from the 1980s through the 1990s, utilizing the index of dissimilarity to measure segregation in 232 U.S. metropolitan areas with substantial black populations. Farley and Frey (1994:30) report that, "In 1980, fourteen metropolitan areas had indexes exceeding eighty-five, whereas ten years later only four metropolitan areas had indexes that high." According to this study, the mean segregation of blacks from non-blacks in 1980 was 68.8; in 1990, the mean dropped to 64.3. More recently, Logan, Stults, and Farley (2004) analyze data from Census 2000. This study examined changes in black-white segregation for 255 metropolises, in which the index of dissimilarity scores ranged from eighty-five to twenty. Logan et al. (2004) report the mean segregation of blacks from whites decreased from 68.9 in 1990 to 65.2 in 2000.

The examination of black-white segregation is important to understand the state of racial inequality in the U.S. Meyer (2000:6) explains that "Although the racial conflict over living space has long been a subject of investigation, most observers have tended to misjudge the extent, character, and significance of the resistance perpetrated against African American in-migrants." Even though more recent reports suggest decreasing levels of black-white segregation (Farley and Frey 1994), these declines are incremental.

*Asian and Hispanic Residential Segregation.* Investigations of Asian and Hispanic residential segregation have not received equal attention in comparison to

black-white segregation. As Asian and Hispanic populations in the U.S. increase, it is correspondingly important to explore the residential segregation faced by these minority groups. According to the Lewis Mumford Center (2002b), the population of Asian and Hispanic groups in the metropolitan areas between 1990 and 2000 increased by five and four and a half percent, respectively. Logan, Stults, and Farley (2004) examine segregation for minorities that include Asians and Hispanics. Compared to other minority groups, the Asian and Hispanic populations consist of a large proportion of first and second-generation Americans. The experiences of segregation for Asians and Hispanics, therefore, are not the same as those of African Americans. These varied understandings must take into account issues of migration and adaptation. Therefore, the literature available on Asian and Hispanic segregation is often addressed via the application of the spatial-assimilation model (Logan et al. 2004). My thesis focuses on the segregation of blacks, Asians, and Hispanics from whites in the core counties of Atlanta, in an effort to more thoroughly understand residential segregation for multiple minority groups.

Logan et al. (2004:7), utilizing census data from 1980 to 2000, report that, “In 124 metropolises, the segregation of Hispanics increased over the 20-year span, and went up for Asians in 69 metropolises.” However, the reported levels of Asian and Hispanic segregation from whites are not as high as black-white segregation. For instance, Frey and Farley (1996) report that in an examination of metropolitan areas in 1990 blacks were more segregated with a score of 64 compared to Hispanics and Asians, the score for latter two groups is 43. Frey and Myers (2005) examine racial segregation in metropolitan areas from 1990 to 2000; the score for black-white segregation in 2000 is reportedly 58.7,

while the scores for Hispanic-white and Asian-white segregation are 44.2 and 42.9, respectively. As the Asian and Hispanic populations continue to grow, though, it is necessary to examine segregation for both of these populations.

In sum, the racial isolation of minority groups is the result of a long history of racial discrimination. In Atlanta, the existence of racially segregated neighborhoods is the product of overt and covert racist practices that pervade the urban area. Many initiatives, policies, and practices have functioned to produce racial inequalities and separation within this urban area.

Massey and Denton, in fact, argue that residential segregation has been instrumental in creating a “culture of segregation” (see Chapter 6, 1993). The ghetto consists of an environment that is limited in opportunity and that has much crime, decay, and social disorder. These factors provide an environment that makes it increasingly difficult for inhabitants to succeed by conventional standards. In response to the harsh circumstances of the urban ghetto an oppositional culture develops that rejects mainstream sentiments toward work and education. These negative responses to societal expectations often function as coping mechanisms within an oppressive environment. At the same time, segregation continues to function as an apparatus that supports racially discriminatory practices. However, as will be discussed below, not all African Americans reside in the urban ghetto, with increasing numbers of suburban dwellers.

***Black Suburbanization and Segregation.*** Like members of all groups, middle and upper class blacks also seek higher quality surroundings. However, efforts of relocation from the ghetto have been combated on many fronts. Racially discriminatory

practices by lenders and the real estate industry have made it difficult for African Americans to leave the ghetto.

Historically, white banks did not participate in business ventures that included African American loan applicants. In the absence of adequate services, real estate agents often took part in business enterprises with African Americans (Massey and Denton 1993). The real estate agents utilized the discrimination exercised by the banking industry as an opportunity for monetary gain. By demanding unreasonably inflated interests rates and requiring large down payments, these entrepreneurs made sizeable profits through forced defaults by middle-class African Americans that sought to leave the ghetto.

Palen (1994) explains that limited black suburbanization took place between the 1920s and the end of the Second World War. The first of two forms of early suburbanization included poor, unincorporated, all-black suburbs. These areas were deemed suburban due only to proximity, as they were located on the periphery of the city. Homeowners in working-class black suburbs, during World War II, received loan assistance because of the homogenous racial compositions of those neighborhoods. During this period racially integrated neighborhoods were strongly discouraged.

The second form of early black suburbanization existed in elite sections of white suburbs. Black suburbs in such areas consisted of inhabitants that were employed as servants to elite whites. These individuals purchased or built homes in less desirable portions of the suburban area.

Black suburbs varied in comparison to white suburbs; in particular they lacked the attributes found in high quality residential areas. Massey and Denton (1993) state that

black suburbs maintained low socioeconomic standings and remained unattractive to white homebuyers and renters. The 1950s and 1960s continued to mark a departure of whites from the city to suburban areas. Access to areas within the central city that had once been designated white was finally permitted to African Americans. However, as the white residents fled, the socioeconomic status of those neighborhoods changed. African Americans that integrated into new areas saw expansion in the boundaries of the urban ghetto.

Black suburbanization prior to 1970 included movement to areas that were predominately occupied by African Americans. In 1968 overt racial discrimination in the housing market was barred. This legislation indirectly allowed socioeconomically successful African Americans to leave the city. The number of African Americans that relocated to suburban areas rapidly grew nationwide. In turn, the already disadvantaged, socially isolated, central city neighborhoods endured further corrosion. Therefore, large-scale resource losses propelled increases in economic and social marginalization of urban ghetto residents (Palen 1994).

Today, African American suburbanization is considerable. Palen (1994:117) explicitly states that “black suburbanization is a major contemporary population trend.” O’Hare and Frey (1992:30) explain rapid growth in African American suburbs during the 1980s was typical in most American metropolitan areas. The authors claim that Atlanta has the second largest suburban black population, with 462,832 black suburbanites. The results of O’Hare and Frey’s (1992) study show that the proportion of African Americans living in suburbs is lower than whites, but the rate of African American suburbanization is higher than white suburbanization.

As black suburbanization continues to increase, in combination with increasing levels of education and income, Palen (1994) notes that suburbs are becoming more racially diverse and have the potential to provide racially integrated communities. Frey's (2001) study utilizing census data from 2000 reports 39% of African Americans reside in the suburbs. In particular, Atlanta ranked third highest of metropolitan areas with populations over 500,000, with an African American suburban population of twenty-five percent.

### **Race Relations in Atlanta**

Sjoquist (2000) describes the Atlanta metropolitan area as a paradox. Atlanta has a positive reputation in terms of race relations and, within recent decades, Atlanta has experienced considerable economic growth. However, there exists limited employment growth in the inner city, which is also accompanied by high poverty rates (Sjoquist 2000). In the United States there has been a significant loss of stable well-paying manufacturing employment in part because of deindustrialization. The number of service sector employment opportunities has increased and this type of employment is characterized as instable, low paying, with high turn over rates. This economic change causes a great deal of strain in central city neighborhoods. Another important issue includes inequalities pertinent to socioeconomic status. Jargowsky (1996) presents an exploratory causal model explaining changes in economic segregation for U.S. metropolitan areas. Pertaining to economic segregation, Jargowsky (1996:991) conveys that,

In particular, economic segregation is the outcome of a cyclical interaction between the labor market and the housing market. The labor market largely shapes the income distribution and the overall extent of income inequality, both across and within racial and ethnic groups. While the labor market generates income inequality, the housing market is the arena in which the spatial distribution of that inequality is determined.

Inequality in the housing market also must take into consideration perceptions held by the general public. Issues related to drugs, perceptions of increased crime, and the abandonment of the neighborhood by the middle class are factors related to the perception of danger in public spaces. While the Atlanta area appears to have economic prosperity, this metropolitan area remains racially segregated (Farley and Frey 1994; Wilkes and Iceland 2004) which disadvantages minority populations.

*History of Race Relations in Atlanta.* Early in the twentieth century a four-day race riot that targeted black businesses and neighborhoods occurred in Atlanta. White reactions to challenges of power and racial segregation resulted in incidents of murder. During this post-civil war period, racial tensions in the South were high as slavery as a way of life ceased. Overt racism rooted itself in other practices, so that black Americans were still perceived as unequal to white Americans. Segregation was useful to whites as it functioned to cultivate “better” race relations and prevent racial violence (Bayor 1996). Discriminatory practices of segregation continued to be a key element of the development of Atlanta.

For much of the twentieth century, continued racial discrimination is evident in the actions of influential white political and business leaders in Atlanta. These figures controlled politics for many decades without challenge, maintaining the ability to set policies for Atlanta’s growth. This growth did not actively engage African Americans, as African Americans continued to be valued as second-class citizens. Therefore, blacks worked to create their own community and self-help institutions, in light of their alienation by whites (Bayor 1996).

In 1955, Atlanta Mayor William Hartsfield tried to refine the image of Atlanta as a “city too busy to hate.” Hartsfield sought to avoid racial violence that was taking place in other cities across the U.S. (Bayor 1996). With a growing black constituency in Atlanta, Hartsfield worked to appeal to both white and black voters. This approach that embraced calm racial relations in Atlanta proved successful in Mayor Hartsfield’s reelection. However, this did not mean that black issues received serious political considerations, as Atlanta remained severely segregated at the end of Hartsfield’s term. Bayor (1996:32) suggests that “Atlanta at the end of Hartsfield’s last term in 1961 was still a tightly segregated city with little power-sharing and significant race-related problems in regards to schools, city services, housing and jobs.”

Significant problems of poverty and racism were evident in the experiences of blacks in the Atlanta metropolitan area throughout the 1970s. Without the power or resources to make effective political changes this oppression persisted for decades. It was not until 1974 that the first African American mayor, Maynard Jackson, was elected. Even though blacks gained political power, control of economic growth remained with white community leaders (Bayor 1996). Therefore, resolution to issues of poverty and racism was not achieved.

In the 1970s, Sunbelt cities experienced large-scale growth. This population growth directly applied to Atlanta, and continued into the 1980s. Black political control in Atlanta during this time faced serious problems. Race and class issues that for decades had gone without resolution, proved to be difficult challenges. Residential segregation, employment, schools, transportation, city services and neighborhoods, and city priorities remained problematic (Bayor 2000).

Even today, resolutions to these inequalities are evasive. Sjoquist (2000:3) argues, “The roots of inequality lie in the legal segregation long practiced in Atlanta. But the end of legal segregation and the dynamic growth in Atlanta in recent decades have not eliminated or even substantially reduced inequality.” Race relations in Atlanta have progressed since the civil rights movement, as anti-segregation legislation prohibits overt racism. Yet, covert racism takes place in many aspects of social life in Atlanta today, especially with regard to residential segregation.

*Segregation in Atlanta.* Massey and Denton (1993) explain that the urban ghetto was constructed in the early years of the twentieth century and subsequently enforced, strategically. In Atlanta, residential patterns between whites and blacks have been disconnected from as early as the 1890s (Bayor 1996). Legislative actions taken between 1913 and 1931 sought to keep blacks out of white neighborhoods. The legal segregation of blacks in Atlanta continued for more than fifty years.

By centralizing the black population in Atlanta, the city as a public entity, and corresponding private companies and organizations planned separate public sections for blacks and whites. Private and public spaces were identified to restrict blacks in Atlanta from access to desirable ‘white’ spaces. There were additional players besides city planners, who took part in fostering racial discrimination in Atlanta. For example, Logan and Molotch (1987) describe three types of contemporary place entrepreneurs that certainly existed in Atlanta. Serendipitous entrepreneurs are involved in the commodification of place due to inheritance of property. These individuals limit minority access to property due to personal prejudices. Active entrepreneurs anticipate changing “use values,” seeking profitable places for their investments. Therefore, active

entrepreneurs seek to collect rents in areas of high profit, from individuals with the ability to pay top dollar, which generally exclude disadvantaged minorities. Structural speculators not only anticipate areas with high use values, they also strategically work to influence favorable decisions pertaining to their investments. The federal government's and banks' discriminatory mortgage insurance and loan policies also performed important roles in the cultivation of the residential segregation of minorities and concentration of poverty in Atlanta.

Moreover, the discriminative practice of "redlining" disadvantaged blacks in Atlanta. Redlining includes the refusal to serve particular geographical areas because of the race or income of the area's residents. Historically, lenders literally drew red lines on maps to indicate minority neighborhoods; in turn these neighborhoods were denied loans. Squires (2003) argues that through the practice of racial profiling minority populations are disadvantaged by the redlining of banking institutions, mortgage lenders, and the property insurance industry. Regulations prohibiting this behavior are imperative, because discrimination has not been eradicated. Noteworthy, Dedman (1988) exposed racial residential discrimination in mortgage lending practices in Atlanta.

Even in the urban renewal movement in Atlanta during the 1960s, economic and urban segregation was continually pursued. By the 1960s, the defined areas for black neighborhoods were overcrowded. Bayor (1996:83) contends that "By 1959 the black community, which represented 35.7 percent of Atlanta's population, was confined to 16.4 percent of the land; and by 1965, blacks accounted for 43.5 percent of the city's population but occupied only 22 percent of the land, although the city contained much vacant land that was incorrectly zoned commercial or industrial." Blacks, in Atlanta,

were unable to enjoy the same resources available to whites, and their limited conditions of overcrowding presented serious disadvantages in opportunity. The availability of public housing isolated minorities inconveniently from limited employment opportunities. Massey and Kanaiaupuni (1993) investigated public housing as a cause of poverty concentration in U.S. cities. Focusing on the Chicago standard metropolitan statistical area (SMSA), Massey and Kanaiaupuni (1993:120) state that “Our calculations show that eighteen percent of poor black families lived in tracts that were more than fifty percent poor, compared to less than one percent of poor white families.”

In Atlanta, the concentration of poverty was high, as all blacks were forced into strictly defined areas within the metropolitan area. It is important to highlight the fact that African Americans in Atlanta, as well as other minority groups, still maintained the status of second-class citizens. Therefore, the opportunities of economic success, equal to the opportunities whites benefit from, remained intangible. But even after anti-segregation legislation, the decentralization of blacks in Atlanta has not occurred to a great extent. The construction of new housing in predominately white northern Atlanta suburbs during the 1990s exceeded growth within the city of Atlanta that consists primarily of African American residents (Torres, Bullard, and Johnson 2000). The concentration of race and poverty within Atlanta persists. More recently, Ihlanfeldt (1998) reports that 84.1% of the City of Atlanta’s poor reside in the city’s poorest neighborhoods.

On the other hand, black suburbanization in Atlanta is the second largest in the nation, in the years between 1980 and 1990 a quarter of a million of African Americans moved to suburban areas in the Atlanta metropolitan area (Palen 1994). White

suburbanization is equally substantial in the Atlanta metropolitan area; however, these two groups are not residing in the same suburban areas (Jaret 2000). In the 1980s, black suburbanization increased in Cobb, Clayton, DeKalb, and Gwinnett counties, but white suburbanization was favored in Cobb and Gwinnett counties. In the following decade, black suburbanization patterns continued at slower rates, these were increases in movement to Cobb and Gwinnett counties. In the 1990s, white suburbanization continued in Gwinnett and Cobb Counties, and counties outside of the core.

Based on the index of dissimilarity, segregation in the city of Atlanta remained stable, increasing from a score of eighty in 1980 to eighty-two in 2000 (Lewis Mumford Center 2002b). In the suburbs of Atlanta, black-white segregation was much lower and also remained steady. It declined from a score of sixty-six in 1980 to sixty-one in 2000, using the index of dissimilarity.

Atlanta is a thriving metropolis today. This twenty county metropolitan statistical area (MSA) incorporates more counties than any other MSA in the nation (Hartshorn and Ihlanfeldt 2000). Its size is attributed to high population growth, urban sprawl, and outward development that are not stifled by legal or geographical barriers. Jaret (2002) points out Atlanta's uneven growth over four dimensions. First, growth in the north quadrants of the area received much more development compared to the south side. Additionally, development in the suburbs far surpasses the new development within the city. Third, economically advantaged, white neighborhoods received more investments and developments than less advantaged minority neighborhoods. The fourth dimension explains that within the City of Atlanta new developments took place in more affluent areas than any other areas, especially poverty-stricken, within the city limits. Throughout

all of its development, though, Atlanta cannot escape the near-sightedness of its previous strategies to deal with race relations and poverty. Atlanta's past favored white residents over blacks, and the repercussions of those racist practices resonate in the residentially segregated neighborhoods that still exist today.

### **Measuring Segregation**

The social separation of races is not simply an issue of the past. Even through the civil rights struggles, race relations and racism remain critical issues (Jones 1997). Segregation remains a pertinent current social phenomenon in American metropolises. Many investigations are conducted to assess the status of racial residential segregation in urban areas across the U.S. For example, Massey and Denton (1988) claim that the early systematic segregation of African Americans into the "ghetto" continues to isolate African Americans in urban areas. This segregation at times occurs along multiple dimensions simultaneously, indicating hypersegregation. These studies attempt to measure the degree of social separation of minority groups from whites.

*Dimensions of Segregation.* Massey and Denton (1988) explain that there are five measurable dimensions of segregation. These dimensions include: evenness, exposure, concentration, clustering, and centralization. Massey and Denton (1993) argue that U.S. metropolitan areas that are highly segregated on at least four of the five dimensions are hypersegregated. In this study I employ the most commonly used index in the literature for measuring racial residential segregation: evenness via the index of dissimilarity.

Massey and Denton (1988:284) note that, "Evenness is maximized and segregation is minimized when all units have the same relative number of minority and

majority members as the city as a whole” (see also Duncan and Dudley 1955; Jakubs 1979). An example of a measure that assesses evenness is the index of dissimilarity; values for this index vary from 0, indicating complete integration, to 100, indicating complete segregation. The index of dissimilarity is frequently incorporated into studies of racial residential segregation. With this quantitative tool of measurement, this research assesses the extent of racial residential segregation of the urban neighborhoods found in the central part of the Atlanta metropolis.

***Hypersegregation.*** Segregated communities are not haphazardly created. Racial segregation is intentional and socially constructed. Hypersegregation is important as it relates to the concentration of poverty, a key neighborhood characteristic of interest to this research. Massey and Denton (1993) reveal that in 1980 one-third of blacks lived in one of sixteen urban areas experiencing hypersegregation. These areas are racially segregated with little chance of interracial contacts. Ten years later, in 1990, the number of metropolitan areas that were hypersegregated for blacks increased to twenty-nine (Denton 1994). In 2000, Wilkes and Iceland (2004) show that African Americans were still hypersegregated in twenty-nine metropolitan areas, while Hispanics were hypersegregated in two metropolitan areas. Residential segregation constantly impacts the opportunities of minority groups not only in terms of mobility, but also education, social and political networks, and neighborhood institutions. Massey and Denton (1993:77) explain that, “Ironically, within a large, diverse, and highly mobile post-industrial society such as the United States, blacks living in the heart of the ghetto are among the most isolated people on the earth.”

Continued racial inequalities severely limit mobility opportunities. These disadvantages are related to urban poverty. Poor living conditions and lack of opportunity prevent hypersegregated minorities from attaining the resources needed to leave the ghetto. Minorities do not enjoy the same freedom of choice in residence in comparison to the dominant white group. Abrams (1965:64) states that, “The test is not whether a group is segregated but whether there are elements of compulsion which keep its members in place when they are ready, willing, and able to live elsewhere.” Hypersegregation continues to underscore the disadvantages that inner-city minorities experience. Analysis of neighborhood characteristics with variables like household type, educational attainment, employment status, occupational, income, and poverty status highlight the neighborhood conditions of inner city minorities. For example, Adelman (2004:56) examines fifty U.S. metropolitan areas from 1970 to 1990 and shows that middle-class blacks reside in neighborhoods “with ‘worse’ or more problematic and deleterious characteristics than middle-class whites.”

More recently, Wilkes and Iceland (2004) examine hypersegregation for blacks, Asians, Hispanics, and Native Americans. Census 2000 tract level data were utilized to perform an analysis of segregation that incorporated an index for each of the five dimensions of segregation. The authors found that twenty-nine metropolitan areas maintained black-white hypersegregation, including Atlanta. Two metropolitan areas were found to be hypersegregated for Hispanics in the study by Wilkes and Iceland. At the same time, no instances of hypersegregation were reported for Asians and Native Americans. Atlanta was not reported to be hypersegregated for Hispanics or Asians;

therefore, levels of segregation in this study are not expected to be as high for them as for black-white segregation.

### **Summary**

A vast literature exists that describes residential segregation by race in the U.S. The residential segregation of minority groups from whites remains prevalent. Further investigations and understandings are necessary to combat institutionalized discrimination and prejudices that cultivate segregation and disadvantages for urban minority populations. Assessment of segregation and documentation of neighborhood characteristics in Atlanta provides insights into the social stratification of American society.

### **CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN**

The racial compositions and qualities of American neighborhoods are indicators of racial and socioeconomic inequality. This research continues the examination of inequality in the U.S. by focusing on racial residential segregation and neighborhood quality at the block group level in Atlanta. The study aims: (1) to measure racial residential segregation from census data at the block group level in the five core counties of Atlanta, and (2) to describe neighborhood characteristics, including poverty, at the block group level.

The study employs a cross-sectional, secondary data analysis using Census 2000 data. This source provides data that can be used to compute information on racial segregation and neighborhood characteristics. While this study continues the focus on black and white segregation, I also investigate the segregation of Asians and Hispanics within these counties. Noteworthy, Gwinnett County has a relatively large Hispanic population, which has the potential to be insightful with regard to the residential experience of immigrants.

#### **Data and Sample**

In this research, I use block groups as my proxy for neighborhoods because (1) they are more fine grained than census tracts the more common unit of analysis in these types of studies; and (2) they measure local spatial areas that are closest to neighborhood residents and most immediately impact their lives. A block group is the second smallest geographical unit publicly available from the U.S. Census Bureau (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2000b). The total number of block groups that will be used in this analysis is

1,337 from the five core counties of Atlanta: Clayton, Cobb, Dekalb, Fulton, and Gwinnett. Data from the Census 2000 Summary File Three are utilized to calculate segregation measures and assess neighborhood characteristics. The variables of interest in the analysis of neighborhood characteristics include: median household income, individuals living below poverty level, educational attainment, female-headed households, and the labor force status of males.

The unit of analysis for this research is the block group level. Based on my interest in specific socioeconomic variables, I examine data at the block group level via Census 2000's Summary File 3 (SF3). Specifically, SF3 contains data from the population and housing long form. Each county has a designated number of census tracts, block groups, and blocks. Examination of block level data is not available because of small sampling and anonymity issues. The number of block groups for each county are: Clayton County, 95, Cobb County, 263, Dekalb County, 323, Fulton County, 448, and Gwinnett County, 208. In this research, each of these block groups is used as a measure to examine the patterns of racial residential segregation within neighborhoods. Therefore, this study analyzes the characteristics of 1,337 Atlanta neighborhoods.

The availability of pertinent data sets that focus on racial residential segregation and neighborhood poverty in five of the core counties of Atlanta is limited. The Census 2000 provides the greatest amount of data pertaining to my two main research questions: (1) how segregated is each racial and ethnic group from one another? (2) how do neighborhoods with varying racial and ethnic compositions compare across the core? Therefore, data are available for all block groups in the five core counties of Atlanta. The

percent of the total Atlanta urbanized area population that the five core counties make up is approximately seventy-one percent (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2000a). In 2000, the population totals for each county are as follows: Clayton County, 236,517, Cobb County, 607,751, Dekalb County, 665,865, Fulton County, 816,006, and Gwinnett County, 588,448.

The residential trends in Atlanta's northern and outer southern suburbs consist of white residents. Cobb County, located north of the center of the city, maintains the largest white population at 439,705. In contrast, the center and southern areas of the metropolitan area are majority non-whites. Fulton County, the centermost county, has the largest African American population at 361,951, while Gwinnett County houses the largest Asian population at 41,021, as well as Hispanic population with 63,574.

By limiting my analysis to these five counties, I have chosen to more thoroughly investigate neighborhoods in the inner most metropolitan area, which also provides the study with substantial minority populations. The approximate minority percentages of the total populations for each county are: Clayton, 62%, Cobb, 28%, Dekalb, 64%, Fulton, 52%, and Gwinnett, 27% (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2000c; see also Population Studies Center 2000). Utilizing block group level data, the index of dissimilarity is computed for each county and for the total core area for black-white, Hispanic-white, and Asian-white segregation. Further computations utilizing these data analyze the index of dissimilarity between each pair of minority groups so that segregation is not only compared to non-Hispanic whites.

## Areas of Exploration

*Segregation Measure.* Focusing on the most common dimension of segregation (D), this study identifies scores that indicate racial residential segregation from non-Hispanic whites for non-Hispanic African Americans, non-Hispanic Asians, and Hispanics for the five core counties separately and together. Additionally, a comparison of segregation scores among minority groups is presented. These comparisons highlight patterns of segregation among minority groups that are frequently overshadowed by comparisons to whites. With the computation of the segregation indices that indicate residential segregation from non-Hispanic whites, non-Hispanic African Americans, non-Hispanic Asians, and Hispanics, I compare, rank, and examine patterns in the five county area.

The dimension of segregation that I calculate is evenness, via the index of dissimilarity. This is not the only measure of evenness available; however, it is the most frequently utilized. The results based on the index of dissimilarity measured with block group data will be compared to results from a project that also employed block group level data (Frey and Myer 2005a). My findings are placed into context with the voluminous literature on residential segregation and residential stratification.

The Asian and Hispanic populations in Atlanta are growing. 1990 Census data show that from 1980 to 1990 the region's Asian and Hispanic minority populations tripled (*American Demographics* 2001). According to Census 2000 data, the Asian alone and the Hispanic or Latino of any race populations account for approximately four and seven percent, respectively, of the total Atlanta metropolitan population (Lewis Mumford Center 2000b). However, in comparison to the African American population these two

minority populations are still small. The description of the minority group populations for these neighborhoods is insightful. However, because of the small raw counts or numbers of these groups close attention must be paid to the reliability of the measures used.

*Neighborhood Characteristics.* This investigation provides detailed information on various characteristics of neighborhoods. Data collected by the Census 2000 include a variety of variables such as income, poverty status, household type, education, and employment, which are utilized to provide a rich analysis of neighborhoods in the five Atlanta core counties. These variables are employed to measure the characteristics and more specifically, the quality of each neighborhood. These data allow me to measure neighborhood inequities based on race. By examining only the core counties of the Atlanta metropolitan statistical area (MSA), my study provides rich descriptive data on highly minority-populated block groups in the urban area. I compare neighborhood quality across neighborhoods with different levels of racial and ethnic composition.

Census 2000 also offers information relating to poverty. This research project identifies the average percentage of individuals living below the poverty level for the block groups throughout each of the five counties. The poverty characteristics for each neighborhood are important indicators of the advantages and disadvantages that residents in these communities possess. Data from Census 2000 show decreases in concentrated poverty for all racial and ethnic groups in metropolitan areas in the South (Jargowsky 2003). Yet, while the number of high poverty neighborhoods declined in central cities, inner-ring suburbs experienced increases in poverty over the decade. This study focuses on the status of poverty in neighborhoods throughout the five core counties.

Neighborhood poverty is a key component to understand the inequities across Atlanta neighborhoods, especially those dominated by different racial and ethnic groups. The opportunities available to individuals with high levels of income and wealth are vast in comparison to those living in poverty. Over time, minority groups persistently living in poverty, and experiencing income inequalities, maintain higher levels of segregation (Fischer 2003).

This racial divide is also consistent in terms of income disparities. In 1990, eighty-eight percent of the residents of the city of Atlanta that were in extreme-poverty neighborhoods were African Americans (McMullen and Smith 2000). The average income, at this time, for white families was four times as much as for African Americans (McMullen and Smith 2000). Racial residential segregation and poverty are related, but they are not identical. In examination of the city of Atlanta it is apparent that being poor often means being African American. However, the region also maintains a substantial African American middle class. For example, Dekalb County is racially segregated with a large number of African Americans, yet in 1999 approximately 34% of household incomes in this area earned between \$60,000 and \$99,999 (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2000d). Characteristics of neighborhood quality are key focal points in this study of Atlanta.

### **Data Issues**

*Strengths and Limitations.* Schelling (1969:488) states that “Counting blacks and whites in a residential block or on a baseball team will not tell how they get along, but it tells something, especially in its numbers and ratios that matter to the people who are moving in or out of the block or being recruited for the team.” Thus, my thesis

contributes to a better understanding of the continuity of racial residential segregation in Atlanta. My analysis includes the computation of segregation scores and a descriptive examination of neighborhood characteristics. However, this type of analysis lacks information about the individual experiences of residential segregation. My examination of neighborhood characteristics helps to highlight information on the various experiences of individuals residing in different neighborhood compositions.

A major criticism of secondary analysis pertains to validity; data collected for one particular purpose gives no assurance that future analyses of that data are appropriate to varied interests. The analysis of the descriptive features of neighborhoods important to this research coincides with the original purpose of the data collection of the Census 2000. Yet, it is important to emphasize that by using this data set I am limited by the initial survey questionnaires. In turn, my analyses of variables that describe neighborhood characteristics in Atlanta's core are dependent upon the initiative of the Census 2000.

Census 2000 block group level data have been previously neglected because residential segregation literature typically utilizes census tracts as proxies for description of neighborhoods. Downey (2003), in a study of Detroit, briefly addresses the fact that census tracts have variable sizes. As census tract population sizes vary, it is difficult to concretely assess the extent to which the measure adequately reflects a neighborhood. The optimum population size of a census tract is four thousand individuals, yet the population size varies from fifteen hundred to eight thousand individuals (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2000b). Therefore, census tracts as proxies for neighborhoods can be problematic. Block group data will provide a more detailed description of

neighborhoods, with a smaller population varying between six hundred and three thousand people (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2000b). By using block group level data, this study seeks sensitivity to residential segregation patterns. However, using block group level data may limit this study in terms of reliability and replication.

## CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

In this research I investigate residential segregation in the core counties of Atlanta and describe the characteristics of the 1,335 block groups that comprise the core area.<sup>1</sup> Using Census 2000 SF3 data, this case study provides a rich account of racial residential segregation in core Atlanta. In this chapter I describe the racial and ethnic compositions of the block groups, calculate segregation scores for the index of dissimilarity, and compare neighborhood indicators among neighborhoods with different racial and ethnic compositions.<sup>2</sup>

### **Racial and Ethnic Composition**

Map 1 visually presents the large twenty-county Atlanta MSA, highlighting the five counties that make-up “Core Atlanta”: Clayton, Cobb, Dekalb, Fulton, and Gwinnett. This visual aid expresses how the core area is drawn from the larger metropolitan statistical area. Core Atlanta accounts for seventy-one percent of the total Atlanta MSA’s population (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2000a).

Table 1 shows the total population located within the area, as well as the total populations for each of the core five counties. Within the core area the total population is 2,914,587. From this table, it is apparent that the county with the largest population is Fulton County at 816,006 individuals. Dekalb County, Cobb County, and Gwinnett County have the second, third, and fourth highest population counts, respectively.

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<sup>1</sup> The total number of block groups in the core Atlanta area is 1,337; however, data are not available for two block groups located in Clayton County. These block groups are close in proximity to the Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport.

<sup>2</sup> I utilize the terms “block group” and “neighborhood” interchangeably.

Clayton County maintains the smallest total population at 236,517 individuals.

Correspondingly, as seen in Map 1, Clayton County also visually maintains the smallest area.

Table 1 also presents the racial and ethnic composition of the five counties and core. Non-Hispanic whites maintain the largest percentage of the core at approximately 51%. Non-Hispanic blacks make-up the second largest racial and ethnic group within the core area at approximately 35%. Hispanics and Non-Hispanic Asians account for approximately eight and four percent, respectively, of the core Atlanta area.<sup>3</sup>

Within the counties the distributions of the racial and ethnic groups varies. The largest relative population of whites (68.77%) is maintained in Cobb County, followed by Gwinnett County (67.11%). Noteworthy, whites are overrepresented in both of these counties, with population totals exceeding the total percentage of whites residing in the core area. At the same time, Cobb and Gwinnett counties house the two smallest black populations, 18.38% and 13.03% respectively. African Americans are in turn underrepresented in these counties.

The three counties with the largest number and percentage of blacks are Dekalb (53.75%), Clayton (50.88%), and Fulton (44.09%). Dekalb and Clayton counties also maintain the smallest percentages of whites at 32.34 % and 35.02% of the counties' total populations, respectively. The size of the white population (45.35%) and the black population (44.09%) in Fulton County are extremely close in number. Overall, blacks and whites dominate different counties, with the exception of Fulton County.

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<sup>3</sup> From this point on, I will refer to "whites," "blacks," and "Asians" without referencing the fact that each of these groups are non-hispanic.

The Hispanic and Asian populations are distributed somewhat evenly across the five counties, except for Gwinnett County. Gwinnett County has the highest percentage of Hispanics in the core making-up approximately 11% of the county's total population. In Clayton, Cobb, and DeKalb counties the percentage of the Hispanic population is 7.45%, 7.72%, and 7.75%, respectively. Fulton County has the smallest relative populations of Hispanics and Asians. In comparison, Gwinnett County has the largest Hispanic and Asian populations, 10.80% and 6.92%, respectively.

Map 2 provides a visual presentation of the block groups within the core Atlanta area. It is obvious that the spatial divisions of block groups are not symmetrical. Also, it is apparent that less dense counties, like Clayton County, have much larger, in terms of spatial boundaries, block groups compared to more densely populated areas of Fulton County; again, block groups are defined by population sizes. According to the U.S. Census, the population sizes for block groups can vary from six hundred to three thousand people (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2000b). The total populations within each of the 1,335 block groups in the core Atlanta area range from 10 to 13,620 individuals. There is only one block group with a population under 100, which is located in Clayton County that has only 10 individuals. At the same time, there are three block groups with total populations over 13,000, which are located in Gwinnett and Fulton counties. The total population mean is approximately 2,183 individuals and the median is 1,765 individuals.

Table 2 highlights the average racial and ethnic composition of the block groups across the core Atlanta area by county. Table 2 shows, for example, that on average whites comprise about 49% of the resident population of the area's 1,335 block groups.

Blacks, on average, make up approximately 39% of the residential population of the 1,335 block groups, at the same time Hispanics and Asians average seven and three and a half percent, respectively. The largest differences between Tables 1 and 2 are located in the following cells: whites in Dekalb County, whites in Fulton County, and blacks in Fulton County. Again, table 1 presents the racial and ethnic composition of the five counties and core, while Table 2 reports the average racial and ethnic composition of the block groups across the core area by county.

The average proportions of each racial and ethnic group across the block groups for each county are also presented in Table 2. The average white percentage of the 93 block groups in Clayton County is 37%; at the same time the average black percentage is higher at about 49%. The 263 block groups in Cobb County have average white and black percentages of approximately 69% and 18%, respectively. The average white and black percentages of the 323 block groups of Dekalb County are about 36% and 53%, respectively. Similarly, in Fulton County the average white and black percentages are about 40% and 51%, respectively. The average white percentage across the 208 block groups of Gwinnett County exceeds the average black percentage at approximately 67% and 13%, respectively. Finally, Table 2 shows that the average percentage of Hispanics and Asians are highest in Gwinnett, and lowest in Fulton County. The average Hispanic proportion of the 208 block groups in Gwinnett County is about 11%, and the average Asian proportion of this same area is about 7%.

Table 3 presents the racial and ethnic composition of the 1,335 block groups by showing them by percentage breakdown; this is also how the neighborhood characteristics are provided. For each block group the population composition is

determined for the four racial and ethnic groups. For instance, the results show that of the 1,335 block groups, 303 of them (23%) have a white population between 0-10%. Also, approximately 12% of the 1,335 block groups are predominately white at 91-100%. Approximately 30% of the 1,335 block groups have a population between 0-20% white. At the same time, approximately 28% of the 1,335 block groups have a population between 81-100% white. The remaining 42% of the 1,335 block groups have white populations ranging from 21-80%. Results also show that of the 1,335 block groups about 46% has a population that is 0-20% black. Of the 1,335 block groups about 23% have a population that is 81-100% black. The remaining 40% of the 1,335 block groups have a black population ranging from 21-80%. Of the 1,335 block groups 17% have a population that is predominately black ranging from 91-100%. Not surprisingly, most block groups have small proportions of Hispanics and Asians, but there are fourteen neighborhoods that are over 50% Hispanic. Approximately 90% of the 1,335 block groups have a population ranging from 0-20% Hispanic. On the other hand, about .5% of the 1,335 block groups have a Hispanic population that is 61-80%. The percentage of 1,335 block groups that have an Asian population ranging from 0-20% is approximately 98%. Only 1.6% of the total 1,335 block groups have an Asian population that ranges from 21-40%.

Table 2 shows that the average racial and ethnic composition of the 1,335 block groups is approximately 49% white, 39% black, 7% Hispanic, and 3.5% Asian. However, Table 3 shows that these means are deceptive for whites and blacks. According to Table 3, a majority of the 1,335 block groups are less than 10% or greater than 80% white. Also, a substantial proportion of block groups are less than 20% or

greater than 90% black. On the other hand, a vast majority of block groups are 0-10% Hispanic and Asian, which is similar to the reported means in Table 2.

Map 3 visually presents the top five same-race concentrated block groups for each racial and ethnic group. For reference, this map is linked to Table 4. Table 4 makes reference to the location and degree of same-race concentration for each of these twenty block groups. This map shows that highly concentrated white block groups at 100% are located in four block groups of Fulton County, with one existing in Clayton County. However, these block groups are not clustered near one another. In contrast, all the highly concentrated black block groups are located in Fulton County and are relatively close to one another in an area referred to as the “Bluffs”; the black population is 100% for these block groups. The area in which these block groups are located is severely limited in terms of advantage, as it is a low-income area with a great deal of individuals living below the poverty level.

The five most concentrated Hispanic block groups are spread out in Fulton, Dekalb, and Gwinnett counties. Yet, three of the five most concentrated Hispanic block groups are clustered near one another in Dekalb County. The highest concentrated Hispanic block group is located in Fulton County, which is 78% Hispanic. The range of same-race concentration percentages for these five block groups is 78 to 61%. Due to the fact that the total population counts for Hispanics and Asians are much lower to whites and blacks, comparatively, Hispanic and Asian block group concentrations at one hundred percent are not present. The five most concentrated Asian block groups are located in Fulton, Gwinnett, and Cobb counties, ranging from 39% to 26%. Two of the most concentrated Asian block groups are clustered near each other in Gwinnett County.

Descriptive statistics on the racial and ethnic composition of the core Atlanta area point to interesting residential patterns. These patterns show concentrated same-race block groups and counties with varying population make-ups that are predominately white or black in most cases. Yet, Fulton County maintains both a substantial white and black population. The Hispanic and Asian populations are less concentrated across the five counties. In order to better assess the segregation of these racial and ethnic groups from one another, segregation scores are computed.

### **Segregation Scores**

Segregation scores are calculated for the index of dissimilarity. The potential scores associated with this index range from zero to one hundred. A score of one hundred indicates complete segregation across an area, while zero represents a racial residential distribution in block groups that is identical to the proportions of the racial ethnic populations in the core as a whole. Scores are calculated to determine segregation from whites for blacks, Asians, and Hispanics in each of the five counties separately and as a whole. Scores are also calculated between minority groups. Segregation scores equal to sixty or above indicate high levels of segregation (Massey and Denton 1993).

Table 5 presents the scores for racial and ethnic groups in the core Atlanta area. A total of thirty-six segregation scores were calculated to measure segregation in the core and in each of the five counties for every combination of the four racial and ethnic groups. Twelve scores achieve the level of high segregation, while the remaining scores range from 56 to 29. In the core, high levels are calculated between whites and blacks, blacks and Hispanics, and between blacks and Asians. The score of 69 indicating high segregation is the same between blacks and whites as it is between blacks and Asians,

while the score between blacks and Hispanics is only four points less. The interpretation of this score is 69% percent of blacks (or whites), in the first case, would need to relocate to another block group in order for the core area to be totally integrated for blacks and whites, in which case the index of dissimilarity would equal zero. These results suggest that blacks are consistently and thoroughly segregated from the other racial and ethnic groups in the Atlanta core area. I highlight a pattern of segregation among racial and ethnic groups that otherwise may have been overshadowed by a singular comparison to whites.

In comparing the scores for each of the five counties, the pattern of high segregation is limited to two counties, Dekalb and Fulton. Dekalb and Fulton counties are the most populated counties in the core of Atlanta and maintain the highest segregation scores. These two counties also contain the central city areas of Atlanta, while the other three counties consist of suburbs. Approximately 70% of all of the blacks in the core reside in Dekalb and Fulton counties. Therefore, the black segregation in these counties reflects the experience of most blacks in the core Atlanta area. Within these two counties, there are eight scores that indicate high segregation. The two largest scores are found in Fulton County between blacks and Asians, as well as between whites and blacks. The substantial number of whites and blacks living in Fulton County could have provided an opportunity for integration. However, this score suggests that these two groups remain separated and live in different block groups across the county.

In Fulton County, a high level of segregation is maintained between whites and Hispanics. According to Table 1 and Table 2, the percentage of Hispanics residing in Fulton County was the lowest compared to the four other counties, only accounting for

approximately six percent. Not only are Hispanics a small percentage of Fulton's population, they are also highly segregated from whites. In contrast, whites and Asians, also a small group, in Fulton County are not as highly segregated; rather there is moderate segregation at a score of 43. The number of Hispanics and Asians in Fulton County are comparable, yet it appears that whites are less segregated from Asians than Hispanics.

The remaining cases of high segregation in Fulton County are among minority groups. High segregation occurs between blacks and Hispanics, as well as between blacks and Asians. In turn, Asians and Hispanics are highly segregated from one another. Asians are the closest in terms of proximity to whites, and most segregated from blacks.

Dekalb County reflects many of the patterns highlighted in Fulton County. High levels of segregation from whites are maintained for blacks and Hispanics, while Asians are more moderately segregated from whites. Blacks are highly segregated from both Hispanics and Asians. Therefore, the trend continues where racial and ethnic groups are not integrated, especially when it comes to blacks. It appears that blacks are the least desirable group in terms of spatial proximity. In contrast to Fulton County, however, Hispanics and Asians are not as highly segregated from one another, with a score of 53.

In the other three more suburban counties high levels of segregation are not present. Yet, this does not mean that groups in these counties are not segregated. Instead, moderate scores of segregation are apparent for racial and ethnic groups from whites and among minority groups. Qualitatively, due to the size of the black population and its spatial distribution relative to whites, Clayton, Cobb, and Gwinnett counties are different from Dekalb and Fulton counties.

The Atlanta metro area has been highly segregated for a long time; yet, the segregation score between whites and blacks in the suburban county of Clayton is 35. Clayton County maintains the lowest, comparatively, score of segregation between whites and blacks, while the largest segregation score is between Asians and Hispanics at 48. Between 1990 and 2000 Clayton's white population decreased from approximately 132,000 to about 90,000 (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2000e; U.S. Bureau of the Census 2000f). Clayton's low segregation score is important to examine as white flight occurs, which may potentially lead to future higher segregation. In comparison, Dekalb County has also experienced non-Hispanic white population decreases from 292,310 individuals in 1990 to 238,521 individuals in 2000, yet a high segregation score of 74 is reported (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2000e; U.S. Bureau of the Census 2000f).

In Cobb County, a lower level of segregation exists between blacks and Hispanics, as well as between whites and Asians, both showing a score of 38 compared to a segregation score of 50 between whites and blacks. These groups are not as highly segregated comparatively. Gwinnett County has the lowest segregation score of 29, between blacks and Hispanics. This county houses the largest populations of Hispanics and Asians. The scores among minority groups are relatively low ranging from 39 to 29, however, segregation between racial and ethnic minorities and whites have more moderate scores ranging from 53 to 43.

Core Atlanta remains residentially segregated. However, African Americans experience the sharpest segregation in the core and as well as within the counties. In three suburban counties, Clayton, Cobb, and Gwinnett, segregation remains relatively

moderate. However, Dekalb and Fulton counties tell a very different story of segregation, as a majority of blacks residing in the core live in these two counties.

One unique finding is segregation between blacks and Asians is as high as or higher than black-white segregation in the core in four of the five counties, with the exception of Gwinnett County. Therefore, the areas that blacks and Asians are residing within remain segregated. Advantages that are available to Asians are not equally present for blacks. Asians have access to neighborhoods that are more socioeconomically advantaged, while blacks lack equal access. Neighborhood quality and its ramifications for whites, blacks, Hispanics, and Asians will be more thoroughly discussed in the next section.

### **Neighborhood Indicators**

By examining detailed characteristics of the block groups I assess the neighborhoods in the five Atlanta core counties. Examination of the following neighborhood characteristics is conducted: individuals living below the poverty level, families below the poverty level, median income, males not in the labor force, female households, and educational attainment. These neighborhood characteristics are utilized to assess the quality of neighborhoods based on racial and ethnic composition.

*Poverty.* Tables 6 and 7 present results about poverty in the 1,335 block groups that make-up the core Atlanta area. Table 6 assesses the average percentage of all individuals below the poverty level in 1999 by racial and ethnic composition of block groups. Large numbers of individuals below the poverty level is a serious disadvantage for neighborhoods. On the other hand, individuals residing in neighborhoods with few individuals living in poverty experience more access to opportunities and resources.

Among the range of white neighborhoods, block groups that are 0-10% white maintain the highest percentage of individuals below the poverty level. Neighborhoods that are 91 to 100% white have the smallest average percentage of individuals below the poverty level (2.62%). Thus, white neighborhoods that are predominately white enjoy a higher level of neighborhood quality than any other block group composition.

Essentially, whites in these neighborhoods have access to resources and advantages that no other group experiences at this level of segregation. In block groups that are dominated by African Americans, that is over 91% black on average, the neighborhoods encompass almost 25% impoverished individuals. On the other hand, block groups that are 0-10% black have an average of 4.05% impoverished inhabitants. It appears that, in terms of the average percentage of individuals below the poverty level, blacks reside in the highest quality of neighborhoods in block groups where they have relatively few black neighbors. Hispanics experience a trend similar to blacks, in that, as neighborhoods become more same-race concentrated the average percent of individuals below the poverty level increases. The highest average percentage of individuals below the poverty level occurs in block groups that are 71 to 80% Hispanic, about 27%. Similarly, in neighborhoods that have the highest percentage of Asians show the highest average percentage of individuals below the poverty level about 18%.

Table 7 also presents information on the status of poverty across the 1,335 block groups that make-up the core Atlanta area. In contrast to Table 6 in which percent poverty is expressed as a percentage of the total population, Table 7 is a supplemental table that provides race-specific averages in block groups. More specifically, this table presents the average percentage of race-specific families below the poverty level in 1999

by racial and ethnic composition of block groups. The data set that was compiled for this thesis does not include individual level poverty statistics for each race. Because it is useful to think about race-specific poverty, the analysis includes an examination of family poverty across the 1,335 block groups.

The pattern is very similar to Table 6; that is, as neighborhoods become more white, the white families are less poor, but as neighborhoods become more black there are higher percentages of black families that are poor. The results show that there are 202 block groups that contain 0-10% white inhabitants. Across these block groups, the average percentage of family poverty for white families stands at approximately 13%. In block groups that are dominated by whites, 91% or more, there is an average of 1.4% of white families below the poverty level. In comparison, in block groups that are dominated by blacks about 22% of black families are below the poverty level. The smallest average of black families below the poverty level (4.82%) exists in block groups that are 0-10% black. Neighborhoods that are 41-50% Hispanic have the highest average percentage of Hispanic families below the poverty level at 21.27%. Block groups that are 31-40% Asian have an average of 13.45% of families below the poverty level. Among minority groups, block groups that are increasingly same-race concentrated have higher average percentages of same-race families below the poverty level. Neighborhoods that are predominately white are more advantaged in terms of poverty levels. These results match the findings from Table 6 quite closely; that is, segregation bears more opportunity for whites and less for minority groups, especially African Americans.

***Income.*** Table 8 depicts the average median incomes for each racial and ethnic composition of block groups. By examining the average median income, this study seeks

to better understand neighborhood characteristics to assess advantage and disadvantage. Neighborhoods with higher incomes are better equipped for access to resources and power that enable more opportunities and advantages. As the median income values decrease, neighborhood quality also decreases.

Similar to the poverty variables, in terms of median income the neighborhood quality that whites experience increases, as neighborhoods become “whiter.” The lowest earning level of block groups includes the block groups that are 0-10% white, at \$33,693. Average median income consistently increases to its highest value in block groups that are 91-100% white at \$94,237. Blacks again experience lower levels of neighborhood quality as block groups become more concentrated with blacks. In block groups that are 0-10% black the average median income is highest at \$81,619; while the most concentrated black neighborhoods, 91% and higher, have an average median income of \$32,425. The largest average median income for Hispanics, similar to blacks, occurs in block groups that are 0-10% Hispanic at \$58,092. The best quality Hispanic neighborhoods in terms of income are block groups that are 0-10% Hispanic. Similarly, the block groups that have the highest concentration of Asians, 31-40%, have the lowest levels of median income, at \$30,060.

***Males Not in the Labor Force.*** Table 9 examines the average percentage of males that are sixteen years old and older that are not in the labor force for each block group composition. I investigate the lack of male participation in the labor force because women can be out of the labor force for a variety of reasons such as childbirth and childcare (Eckstein and Wolpin 1989; Connelly 1992); thus it is more simple to study male labor force non-participation. Examining males provides this study with an

examination of a segment of the population that when working has advantages to offer their neighborhoods. Therefore, larger numbers of males not in the labor force indicate neighborhood disadvantage.

This neighborhood quality indicator, similar to previous variables, shows a large advantage for whites that reside in white concentrated neighborhoods compared to blacks. For example, the average for 91-100% black neighborhoods is about 16%, while the average in 91-100% white neighborhoods is approximately 9%. Neighborhoods that are predominately black experience more disadvantages. Block groups that are 41-50% Hispanic have the highest average percentage of males not in the labor force at about 13%. In contrast, neighborhoods that are 0-10% Asian experience the highest average percentage of males not in the labor force, at approximately 12%. There is little variation in the Hispanic column, as well as the Asian column. Therefore, the concentration of Hispanics and Asians does not appear to greatly affect the percentage of males not in the labor force. For blacks and Hispanics, neighborhoods that are the least same-race concentrated have the most advantage in terms of relatively smaller average percentages of males not in the labor force. In comparison, whites experience more advantage in terms of males not in the labor force in block groups that are same-race concentrated.

***Female-Headed Households.*** Table 10 shows the average percentage of female-headed households by racial and ethnic composition of block groups. Female-headed households are assessed as a neighborhood characteristic because, in most cases, this household type is more disadvantaged than two-parent households (McLanahan 1983; McLaughlin, Gardner, and Lichter 1999). Single females, on average, earn less and are

faced with more challenges for providing for their households. Increasing numbers of this type of household indicate disadvantage in a neighborhood.

The predominate pattern, similar to the variables of poverty, income, and males not in the labor force, is that as neighborhoods become increasingly more concentrated for whites the average percentage of female-headed households decreases. On the other hand, for blacks the average percentage of female-headed households increases. In comparison, the most concentrated neighborhoods for whites and blacks maintain the following averages of female-headed households: approximately 5% and 33% respectively. Therefore, concentrated black neighborhoods have six times as many female-headed households than whites. The pattern for Hispanics and Asians are similar to whites. Block groups that have the least same-race concentration have the highest percentage of female-headed households. As block groups become more concentrated, the average percentage of female-headed households decreases. Whites, Hispanics, and Asians have access to advantage in neighborhoods that are increasingly same-race concentrated, in terms of decreased percentages of female-headed households, while blacks experience relatively more disadvantage in neighborhoods that are predominately black.

***Educational Attainment.*** Table 11 presents data on the mean percentage of individuals twenty-five years and older with some college education across the racial and ethnic composition of 1,335 block groups. College educational attainment is assessed to determine the percentage of individuals within a block group that have had access to higher learning. With this type of higher learning come increased advantages and more

opportunities. Neighborhoods with high numbers of this educational attainment indicate higher quality than neighborhoods with few individuals with this educational attainment.

The trend for whites is linear, similar to all previous variables, in that as block groups become more concentrated, educational attainment increases. Within block groups that are 91-100% white, the average percentage of individuals with at least some college education is approximately 82%. In contrast, the educational attainment trend for blacks declines as block groups become more concentrated. Block groups that are 0-10% black have the highest average percentage of individuals with at least some college education at 77.77%. Block groups that are 91-100% black have an average percentage of about 41%. Thus, compared to predominately white neighborhoods, neighborhoods that are “less” black have higher percentages of individuals with college educational attainments. Therefore, the quality of neighborhoods that are predominately black are lower compared to whites due to persistent segregation and the concentration of poverty. Similar to blacks, block groups that increase in Hispanic concentration experience lower percentages of individuals with some college educational attainment. Block groups that are 71-80% Hispanic have an average of about 19% of individuals with at least some college educational attainment. In contrast, block groups that are 31-40% Asian have an average percent of approximately 89% of individuals with at least some college educational attainment.

These five neighborhood characteristics consistently show that neighborhoods that are predominately white are the most advantaged. On the other hand, neighborhoods that have the smallest percentage of black inhabitants enjoy the most advantage for those blacks living in them. Predominately black neighborhoods are the most disadvantaged

compared to all other neighborhoods. Block groups that are 0-10% Hispanic have the greatest advantages in terms of educational attainment, median income, and individuals below the poverty level for Hispanics. But, block groups that are 71-80% Hispanic have more advantage in terms decreased percentages of female-headed households and males not in the labor force. Block groups that are 11-20% Asian enjoy advantages in terms of educational attainment and median income. However, block groups that are 21-30% Asian have the smallest percentages of males not in the labor force and individuals below the poverty level. Block groups that are 31-40% Asian experience the least amount of female-headed households.

### **Summary**

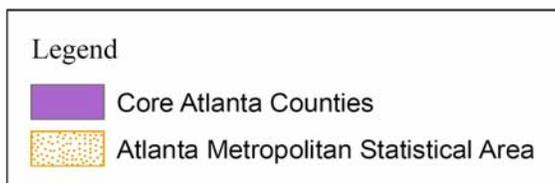
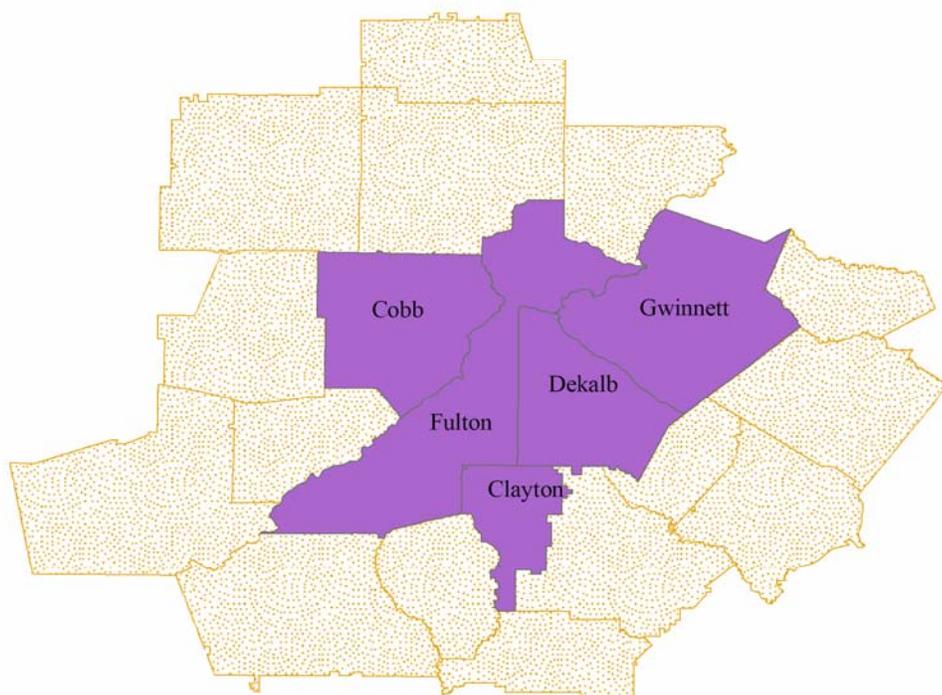
The racial and ethnic composition of the core Atlanta area includes a diverse population of whites, blacks, Hispanics, and Asians. Whites remain the largest racial and ethnic group in the core followed by blacks, Hispanics, and Asians. Each of these groups is physically located in each of the five core counties, while the distribution of their total population varies. Cobb and Gwinnett Counties maintain predominately white inhabitants, while Clayton and Dekalb Counties are largely black areas. Both Hispanics and Asians have highest concentrations of their populations in Gwinnett County.

Segregation in the core Atlanta area is persistent; African Americans remain consistently and thoroughly segregated from all other racial and ethnic groups. Blacks experience high levels of racial residential segregation from whites, Asians, and Hispanics, which proves to be detrimental in cementing neighborhood disadvantages. Fulton and Dekalb counties are the most segregated counties within the core Atlanta area, in comparison to Clayton, Cobb and Gwinnett counties. Fulton and Dekalb are the most

highly black populated counties in the core. The lowest segregation score in these two counties for blacks is between blacks and Hispanics at 71, while the highest segregation score is 82 between blacks and Asians. At the same time, in the more suburban counties the lowest score, 35, for black segregation is between whites and blacks in Clayton County.

Racial and ethnic composition of block groups is important in the examination of neighborhood advantage and disadvantage. Whites have more opportunity and advantage as their neighborhoods become increasingly “whiter.” In comparison, blacks are severely disadvantaged as neighborhoods become more concentrated. Neighborhood quality for Hispanics and Asians is less linear than for whites and blacks, yet it appears that these groups do not experience the high level of disadvantage that blacks endure or the advantage of predominately white neighborhoods. These findings provide important information about residential stratification in Atlanta.

Map 1. Core Atlanta Counties within the Atlanta Metropolitan Statistical Area, 2000.



**Table 1. Racial and Ethnic Composition of Core Atlanta Counties, 2000.**

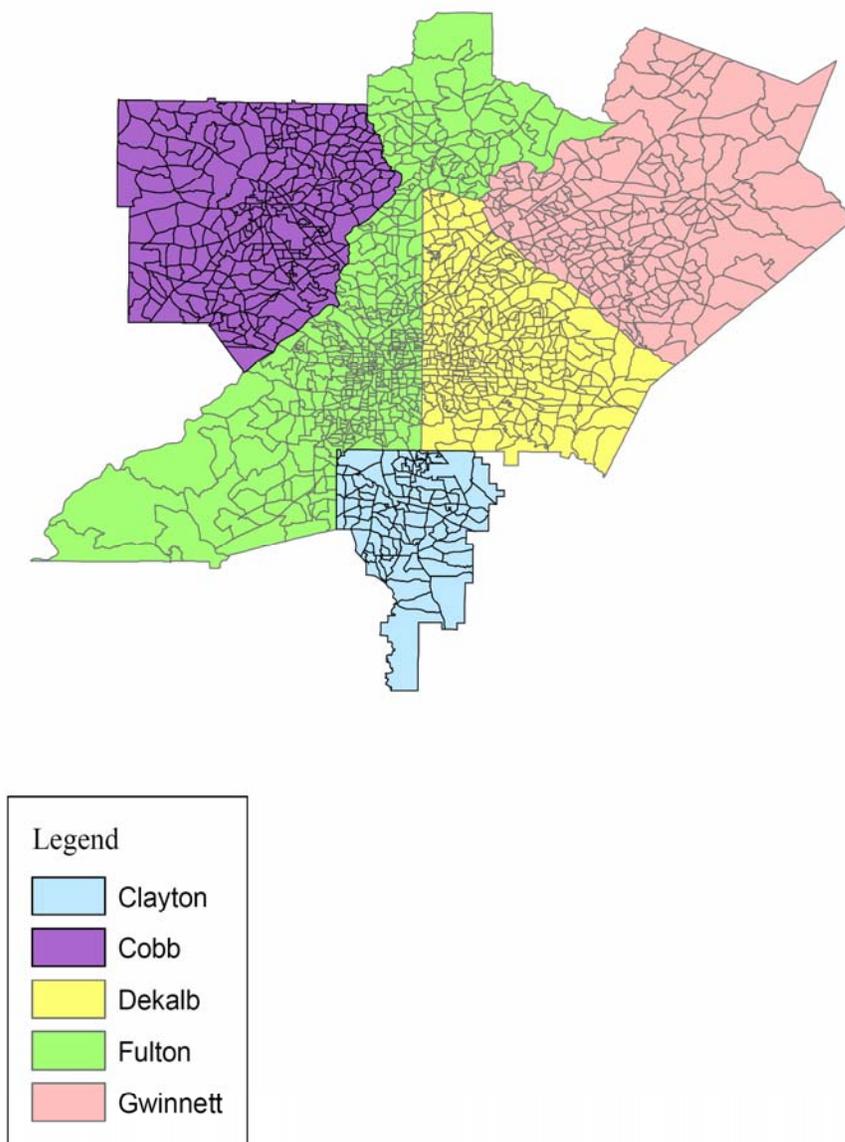

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	<b>Clayton</b>	<b>Cobb</b>	<b>Dekalb</b>	<b>Fulton</b>	<b>Gwinnett</b>	<b>Core</b>
<b>Total Population</b>	236,517	607,751	665,865	816,006	588,448	2,914,587
<b>Non-Hispanic White</b>	82,842 35.02%	417,925 68.77%	215,308 32.34%	370,049 45.35%	394,889 67.11%	1,481,013 50.81%
<b>Non-Hispanic Black</b>	120,332 50.88%	111,709 18.38%	357,878 53.75%	359,788 44.09%	76,675 13.03%	1,026,832 35.22%
<b>Hispanic</b>	17,625 7.45%	46,944 7.72%	51,587 7.75%	47,735 5.85%	63,574 10.80%	227,465 7.80%
<b>Non-Hispanic Asian</b>	10,308 4.36%	18,287 3.01%	26,205 3.94%	23,763 2.91%	40,749 6.92%	119,232 4.09%

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Source: Summary File 3, Census 2000. Author's calculations.

Map 2. Block Groups within Core Atlanta Counties, 2000.



**Table 2. Average Racial and Ethnic Composition Across Block Groups in the Core Atlanta Area by County, 2000.**

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	<b>Clayton</b>	<b>Cobb</b>	<b>Dekalb</b>	<b>Fulton</b>	<b>Gwinnett</b>	<b>Total Core Atlanta</b>
<b>Number of Block Groups</b>	93	263	323	448	208	1,335
<b>Non-Hispanic White</b>	36.69%	68.97%	36.03%	39.95%	66.85%	48.69%
<b>Non-Hispanic Black</b>	48.62%	18.35%	52.66%	51.24%	13.41%	39.03%
<b>Hispanic</b>	7.89%	7.87%	5.67%	5.06%	10.79%	6.85%
<b>Non-Hispanic Asian</b>	4.61%	2.78%	3.55%	2.09%	6.97%	3.52%

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Note: The total number of block groups in the core Atlanta area is 1,337, however, data are not Available for two block groups.

Source: Summary File 3, Census 2000. Author's calculations.

**Table 3. Racial and Ethnic Composition of Block Groups (N=1,335) of Core Atlanta, 2000.**

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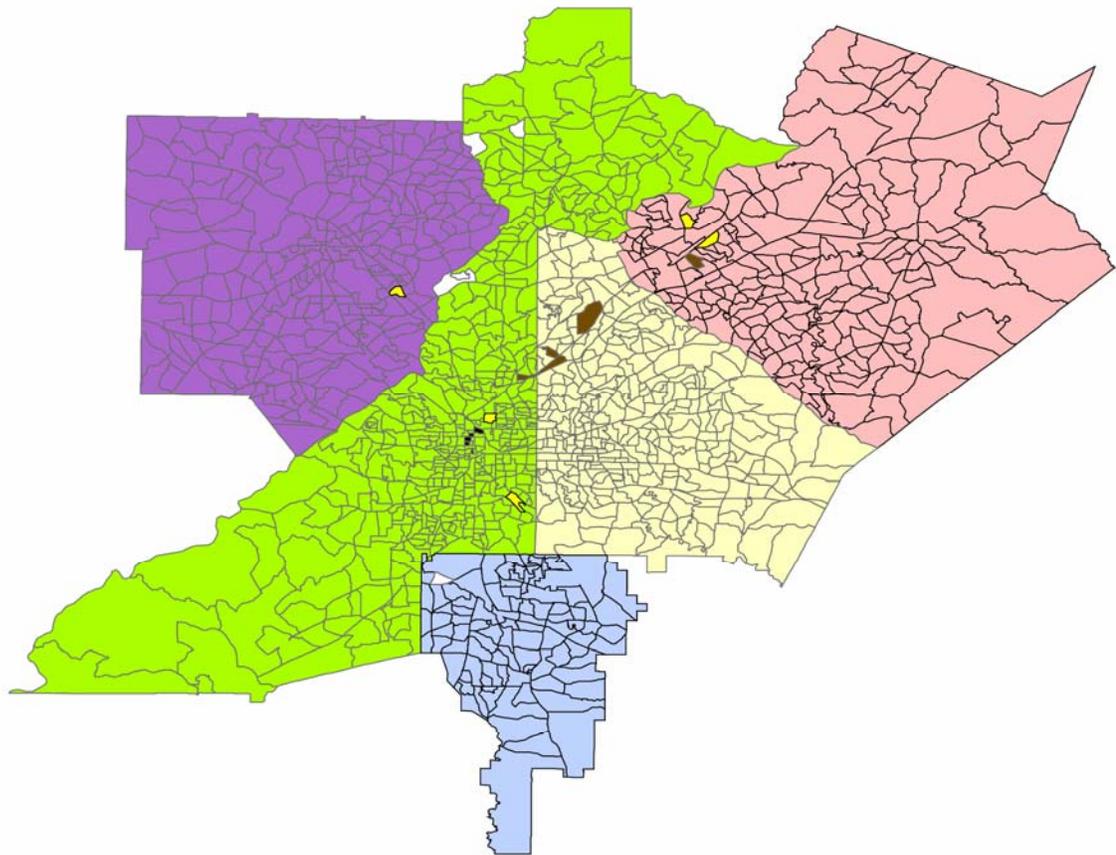
	<b>White</b>	<b>Black</b>	<b>Hispanic</b>	<b>Asian</b>
<b>0-10%</b>	22.70% (303)	32.10% (428)	80.80% (1078)	90.60% (1210)
<b>11-20%</b>	7.70% (103)	14.30% (191)	9.60% (128)	7.80% (104)
<b>21-30%</b>	6.10% (81)	8.00% (107)	4.60% (61)	1.50% (20)
<b>31-40%</b>	6.10% (82)	5.70% (76)	3.10% (41)	0.10% (1)
<b>41-50%</b>	6.70% (89)	4.30% (57)	1.00% (14)	--
<b>51-60%</b>	6.10% (82)	3.80% (51)	0.40% (6)	--
<b>61-70%</b>	6.30% (84)	4.00% (53)	0.30% (4)	--
<b>71-80%</b>	10.60% (141)	4.50% (60)	0.20% (3)	--
<b>81-90%</b>	15.50% (207)	6.40% (85)	--	--
<b>91-100%</b>	12.20% (163)	17.00% (227)	--	--

---

Note: Number in parenthesis equals the number of block groups in each category. All groups are non-hispanic with the exception of Hispanics.

Source: Summary File 3, Census 2000. Author's calculations.

Map 3. Top Five Block Groups with Highest Percent of Same-Race Composition for Each Racial and Ethnic Group within Core Atlanta Counties, 2000.



**Legend**

	Non-Hispanic White		Clayton
	Non-Hispanic Black		Cobb
	Hispanic		DeKalb
	Non-Hispanic Asian		Fulton
			Gwinnett

**Table 4. Top Five Most Segregated Block Groups for Each of the Racial and Ethnic Groups of Core Atlanta, 2000.**

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	<b>County</b>	<b>Tract</b>	<b>Block Group</b>	<b>Concentration</b>
<b>White</b>	Clayton	400.00	4	100.00%
	Fulton	102.04	3	100.00%
	Fulton	102.04	8	100.00%
	Fulton	114.03	6	100.00%
	Fulton	114.07	7	100.00%
<b>Black</b>	Fulton	22.00	1	100.00%
	Fulton	23.00	1	100.00%
	Fulton	25.00	4	100.00%
	Fulton	25.00	6	100.00%
	Fulton	37.00	1	100.00%
<b>Hispanic</b>	Fulton	94.02	5	78.00%
	Dekalb	214.01	4	78.00%
	Dekalb	212.04	1	71.00%
	Dekalb	214.01	1	64.00%
	Gwinnett	503.12	3	61.00%
<b>Asian</b>	Fulton	10.00	2	39.00%
	Gwinnett	503.09	2	28.00%
	Gwinnett	503.13	2	28.00%
	Fulton	70.02	1	26.00%
	Cobb	303.38	3	26.00%

---

Note: All groups are non-hispanic with the exception of Hispanics.  
Source: Summary File 3, Census 2000. Author's calculations.

**Table 5. Index of Dissimilarity Scores for Racial and Ethnic Groups in Core Atlanta and Counties, 2000.**

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	Core	Clayton	Cobb	Dekalb	Fulton	Gwinnett
<b>White/Black</b>	<b>69</b>	35	50	<b>74</b>	<b>81</b>	43
<b>White/Hispanic</b>	56	44	52	<b>62</b>	59	53
<b>White/Asian</b>	44	40	38	45	43	43
<b>Black/Hispanic</b>	<b>64</b>	42	38	<b>75</b>	<b>71</b>	29
<b>Black/Asian</b>	<b>69</b>	41	54	<b>74</b>	<b>82</b>	35
<b>Hispanic/Asian</b>	50	48	48	53	<b>62</b>	39

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Note: All groups are non-hispanic with the exception of Hispanics. Bolded scores indicate high levels of segregation ( $\geq 60$ ).

Source: Summary File 3, Census 2000. Author's calculations.

**Table 6. Average Percentage of Individuals Below the Poverty Level in 1999 by Racial and Ethnic Composition of Block Groups for Core Atlanta, 2000.**

---

	<b>White</b>	<b>Black</b>	<b>Hispanic</b>	<b>Asian</b>
<b>0-10%</b>	23.40% (303)	4.05% (428)	10.86% (1078)	11.79% (1210)
<b>11-20%</b>	16.14% (103)	7.88% (191)	12.20% (128)	9.29% (104)
<b>21-30%</b>	14.08% (81)	10.51% (107)	14.76% (61)	8.59% (20)
<b>31-40%</b>	13.94% (82)	12.26% (76)	17.70% (41)	17.54% (1)
<b>41-50%</b>	11.25% (89)	11.42% (57)	18.00% (14)	--
<b>51-60%</b>	8.69% (82)	15.19% (51)	19.19% (6)	--
<b>61-70%</b>	7.67% (84)	13.72% (53)	18.29% (4)	--
<b>71-80%</b>	5.65% (141)	17.91% (60)	26.80% (3)	--
<b>81-90%</b>	3.88% (207)	15.10% (85)	--	--
<b>91-100%</b>	2.62% (163)	24.73% (227)	--	--

---

Note: Number in parenthesis equals the number of block groups in each category.

All groups are non-hispanic with the exception of Hispanics.

Source: Summary File 3, Census 2000. Author's calculations.

**Table 7. Average Percentage of Race Specific Families Below the Poverty Level in 1999  
by Racial and Ethnic Composition of Block Groups for Core Atlanta, 2000.**

---

	<b>White</b>	<b>Black</b>	<b>Hispanic</b>	<b>Asian</b>
<b>0-10%</b>	13.39% <b>(202)</b>	4.82% <b>(331)</b>	10.29% <b>(636)</b>	7.67% <b>(625)</b>
<b>11-20%</b>	8.94% <b>(102)</b>	7.78% (182)	15.08% <b>(126)</b>	9.57% <b>(101)</b>
<b>21-30%</b>	9.81% <b>(79)</b>	9.90% (107)	18.61% (61)	5.60% <b>(19)</b>
<b>31-40%</b>	6.71% (82)	11.23% (76)	21.18% (41)	13.45% (1)
<b>41-50%</b>	7.24% (89)	12.25% (57)	21.27% (14)	--
<b>51-60%</b>	4.61% (82)	15.89% <b>(50)</b>	14.64% (6)	--
<b>61-70%</b>	3.16% <b>(82)</b>	12.47% (53)	15.60% (4)	--
<b>71-80%</b>	2.83% <b>(140)</b>	16.89% (60)	16.69% (3)	--
<b>81-90%</b>	1.69% (207)	13.95% <b>(84)</b>	--	--
<b>91-100%</b>	1.40% (163)	22.14% <b>(226)</b>	--	--

---

Note: Number in parenthesis equals the number of block groups in each category.  
All groups are non-hispanic with the exception of Hispanics. Bolded numbers represent missing data.  
Source: Summary File 3, Census 2000. Author's calculations.

**Table 8. Average Median Income by Racial and Ethnic Composition of Block Groups for Core Atlanta, 2000.**

---

	<b>White</b>	<b>Black</b>	<b>Hispanic</b>	<b>Asian</b>
<b>0-10%</b>	\$33,693 (303)	\$81,619 (428)	\$58,092 (1078)	\$55,001 (1210)
<b>11-20%</b>	40,554 (103)	54,527 (191)	43,975 (128)	56,882 (104)
<b>21-30%</b>	39,553 (81)	47,227 (107)	41,198 (61)	49,110 (20)
<b>31-40%</b>	40,888 (82)	44,024 (76)	39,847 (41)	30,060 (1)
<b>41-50%</b>	43,901 (89)	43,750 (57)	36,466 (14)	--
<b>51-60%</b>	49,111 (82)	39,771 (51)	45,167 (6)	--
<b>61-70%</b>	54,218 (84)	40,035 (53)	43,487 (4)	--
<b>71-80%</b>	60,652 (141)	37,176 (60)	41,764 (3)	--
<b>81-90%</b>	78,084 (207)	41,155 (85)	--	--
<b>91-100%</b>	94,237 (163)	32,425 (227)	--	--

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Note: Number in parenthesis equals the number of block groups in each category.

All groups are non-hispanic with the exception of Hispanics.

Source: Summary File 3, Census 2000. Author's calculations.

**Table 9. Average Percentage of Males, 16 Years and Older, Not in the Labor Force by Racial and Ethnic Composition of Block Groups for Core Atlanta, 2000.**

---

	<b>White</b>	<b>Black</b>	<b>Hispanic</b>	<b>Asian</b>
<b>0-10%</b>	15.68% (303)	9.10% (428)	11.54% (1078)	11.75% (1210)
<b>11-20%</b>	13.58% (103)	9.51% (191)	12.23% (128)	10.45% (104)
<b>21-30%</b>	12.74% (81)	11.20% (107)	11.60% (61)	10.39% (20)
<b>31-40%</b>	12.31% (82)	10.53% (76)	12.10% (41)	10.92% (1)
<b>41-50%</b>	12.05% (89)	11.99% (57)	12.62% (14)	--
<b>51-60%</b>	10.13% (82)	14.21% (51)	11.80% (6)	--
<b>61-70%</b>	9.62% (84)	11.96% (53)	10.64% (4)	--
<b>71-80%</b>	9.54% (141)	14.26% (60)	10.80% (3)	--
<b>81-90%</b>	8.38% (207)	15.02% (85)	--	--
<b>91-100%</b>	9.16% (163)	16.05% (227)	--	--

---

Note: Number in parenthesis equals the number of block groups in each category.

All groups are non-hispanic with the exception of Hispanics.

Source: Summary File 3, Census 2000. Author's calculations.

**Table 10. Average Percentage of Female-Headed Households (No Husband Present) by Racial and Ethnic Composition of Block Groups for Core Atlanta, 2000.**

---

	<b>White</b>	<b>Black</b>	<b>Hispanic</b>	<b>Asian</b>
<b>0-10%</b>	31.69% (303)	6.24% <b>(427)</b>	16.07% <b>(1076)</b>	16.48% (1210)
<b>11-20%</b>	22.10% (103)	8.57% <b>(190)</b>	15.40% (128)	10.12% <b>(103)</b>
<b>21-30%</b>	18.45% (81)	12.50% (107)	16.24% (61)	10.16% <b>(19)</b>
<b>31-40%</b>	17.70% (82)	14.78% (76)	15.03% (41)	4.01% (1)
<b>41-50%</b>	15.13% (89)	17.38% (57)	12.99% (14)	--
<b>51-60%</b>	11.90% (82)	20.78% (51)	11.50% (6)	--
<b>61-70%</b>	9.06% (84)	20.95% (53)	10.92% (4)	--
<b>71-80%</b>	7.71% (141)	24.95% (60)	7.11% (3)	--
<b>81-90%</b>	6.39% (207)	26.96% (85)	--	--
<b>91-100%</b>	5.39% (163)	32.94% (227)	--	--

---

Note: Number in parenthesis equals the number of block groups in each category. All groups are non-hispanic with the exception of Hispanics. Bolded numbers represent missing data.

Source: Summary File 3, Census 2000. Author's calculations.

**Table 11. Average Percentage of Individuals 25 Years and Older with Some College or More by Racial and Ethnic Composition of Block Groups for Core Atlanta, 2000.**

---

	<b>White</b>	<b>Black</b>	<b>Hispanic</b>	<b>Asian</b>
<b>0-10%</b>	42.12% (303)	77.77% (428)	63.13% (1078)	60.07% (1210)
<b>11-20%</b>	50.43% (103)	66.03% (191)	53.25% (128)	62.80% (104)
<b>21-30%</b>	46.36% (81)	54.31% (107)	46.52% (61)	58.54% (20)
<b>31-40%</b>	49.33% (82)	53.75% (76)	44.59% (41)	88.81% (1)
<b>41-50%</b>	52.50% (89)	53.30% (57)	36.79% (14)	--
<b>51-60%</b>	59.48% (82)	48.47% (51)	36.45% (6)	--
<b>61-70%</b>	67.58% (84)	50.52% (53)	36.77% (4)	--
<b>71-80%</b>	69.63% (141)	46.68% (60)	18.76% (3)	--
<b>81-90%</b>	78.56% (207)	51.80% (85)	--	--
<b>91-100%</b>	82.29% (163)	40.94% (227)	--	--

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Note: Number in parenthesis equals the number of block groups in each category.

All groups are non-hispanic with the exception of Hispanics.

Source: Summary File 3, Census 2000. Author's calculations.

## CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In this thesis I examine racial residential patterns in the core part of the Atlanta metropolis. I draw attention to segregation and the comparative characteristics of neighborhoods. Data from the 2000 Census are used to provide descriptions of urban neighborhoods, highlighting the racial and ethnic compositions of block groups throughout the core Atlanta area. Neighborhoods are key to understanding the opportunities and resources for the individuals and families living in this area. My research explicitly shows that individuals from different racial and ethnic groups reside in neighborhoods with different qualities. These inequities were created and are maintained purposively.

And, even though there is nothing inferior about predominately black neighborhoods automatically, within the context of a racialized system that benefits whites often at the expense of African Americans, it is necessary to assess the characteristics of segregated neighborhoods. For example, in Dekalb County, census tract 234.15, block group 4 is a neighborhood that is 91-100% black with a median income for blacks in 1999 of \$78,411. This block group has a percent of individuals below the poverty level of .4%, 4.54% of males are not in the labor force, and approximately 80% of the block group's population has some college or more in terms of educational attainment. But in a system of racial stratification, segregation leads to results that are less optimistic. In no way, should one interpret the results of this thesis as a call for anti-black discrimination. I call for just the opposite, which is increased

implementation of continued anti-discrimination legislation and urban policies that encourage the improvement of predominately black neighborhoods.

Unfortunately, this system of social stratification continues to prevent the social and economic mobility of African Americans for the most part. Segregation functions as an enforcer of inequality in the current system of racial stratification even for middle-class blacks. It is possible for minorities to escape disadvantaged neighborhoods and still choose neighborhoods that are racially segregated, but until the inherent inequalities of segregation are eradicated minorities stand to experience continued disadvantage. For example, Patillo-McCoy (1999) emphasizes that black middle-class families function as social buffers as they still experience strain from living near poverty. Nevertheless, Jargowsky (1997) points out that in high poverty areas all of the residents are not poor, and all blacks do not necessarily live in high-poverty neighborhoods. However, the effects of poverty reach beyond those that are living below the poverty level. As racial and ethnic minorities continue to experience social isolation in disadvantaged neighborhoods, the dominant white group maintains advantage in areas that are racially divided to exclude people of color. Through an examination of the spatial organization of racial and ethnic groups in this case study, it is apparent that current racial ideology supports the persistent cultivation of racial boundaries.

The aims of my thesis are to measure racial residential segregation and describe the neighborhood characteristics of the five core counties in Atlanta. Thus, this study offers important information on the status of residential stratification in Atlanta at the opening of the twenty-first century. Atlanta once was deemed “the city too busy to hate,”

but clearly Atlanta today is a city that is not too busy to uphold racial divisions and color lines that sustain serious neighborhood inequalities.

### **Segregation**

The process of spatial and social isolation of racial and ethnic minority groups from whites remains strong in Atlanta. Massey and Denton (1993) argue that African Americans are purposively segregated into disadvantaged neighborhoods away from whites. Discriminatory actions against minority groups overtime have been institutionalized as they continue to cultivate residential segregation. A past and present that is plagued with overt and covert acts of discrimination, prejudice, and racism continues to influence the future of Atlanta. American society continues to hold steadfast to racial ideologies that promote individual and institutional actions that endorse racial divisions. The core Atlanta area consists of areas that are isolated and impoverished in which African Americans are faced with serious dilemmas.

Segregation in the core Atlanta area exists and is specifically disadvantageous for African Americans. Blacks experience high levels of segregation from whites more often than any other racial and ethnic minority group. But, overall, African Americans are highly segregated from whites, Hispanics, and Asians in the core, as well as in Dekalb and Fulton counties. The segregation score calculated for the index of dissimilarity between blacks and whites and between blacks and Asians is 69 in the core Atlanta area.

Frey and Myers (2005) utilize block group data; therefore, their mean scores are more directly comparable to my results. The authors report that from 1990 through 2000 black-white segregation declined in most metropolitan areas, Hispanic-white segregation increased in half of the metros they analyzed, and Asian-white segregation decreased in

most metropolitan areas. The average index of dissimilarity score for black-white segregation in metropolitan areas in 2000, as reported by Frey and Myers, is 58.7. In the metropolitan Atlanta area, the authors report a black-white segregation score of 68.5; however, at the city level they report a score of 83.1, the fourth highest among all cities in their study. The score for black-white in core Atlanta is over ten points higher at 69. At the same time, the mean scores for Hispanic-white and Asian-white segregation in metropolitan areas, according to Frey and Myers, are 44.2 and 42.9, respectively. My thesis reports that Hispanic-white segregation in the core is again over ten points higher at 56. The score for Asian-white segregation in core Atlanta is 44. Although overall the segregation scores for Asians and Hispanics from whites are lower than black-white segregation scores, the residential patterns for these groups provide new information to the segregation literature. For example, Hispanic-black and Asian-black segregation in the core Atlanta area are high with scores of 64 and 69, respectively. Both Hispanics and Asians appear to maintain moderate levels of segregation from whites and each other in the core. Logan et al. (2004) report that black-white segregation remains high nationally. The authors report a mean of 65.2 for black-white segregation. This score is about four points lower than the score I calculate. The authors report segregation scores in Atlanta from whites for blacks, 65.6, Hispanics, 55.7, and Asians, 45.2. However, Logan et al. (2004) utilize census tract level data and, like Frey and Myers (2005), base their findings on a much more broad geographical area than this research.

In Dekalb and Fulton Counties, Hispanic-white and Hispanic-black segregation levels are high. The black-Asian segregation scores in Fulton and Dekalb counties are high, as well as Asian-Hispanic segregation in Fulton County. Additionally, in Clayton

County the score for black-white segregation is much lower comparatively at 35. These findings reflect persistent black-white segregation, while highlighting segregation among minority groups, which is neglected when such a strong emphasis on black and white segregation dominates the racial residential segregation literature.

The racial and ethnic composition of block groups is an important venue for examining racial residential segregation in the twenty-first century. As race is articulated as an issue of the past it is important to examine the real consequences of persistent racial divisions. The findings highlight the power and privilege associated with the dominant white racial group, and the inherent disadvantage and inequality associated with the experiences of racial and ethnic minority groups.

### **Neighborhood Characteristics**

Another key element of this thesis is an examination of five neighborhood characteristics. The results suggest that whites maintain the most advantage across all neighborhoods, but especially in predominately white neighborhoods. My analysis shows that whites are in a position of power and privilege, as this group is found to be in the most advantaged neighborhoods and higher quality neighborhoods. Concentrated white neighborhoods have large-scale access to resources, power, and privilege because these neighborhoods are economically advantaged via high levels of income and education. And, highly white neighborhoods lack great numbers of individuals and families below the poverty level, in combination with small numbers of males not in the labor force and female-headed households. It appears that neighborhoods with this level of racial concentration have access to social mobility and economic opportunities that

cannot be realized in neighborhoods that consist of high numbers of racial and ethnic minorities, especially predominately black neighborhoods.

The living conditions in isolated and impoverished minority neighborhoods that are black and Hispanic are incredibly unequal to the living conditions in advantaged white neighborhoods. Achieving upward social mobility and the opportunity to escape disadvantaged neighborhoods is extremely difficult for impoverished individuals and groups. According to Wilkes and Iceland (2004), Atlanta is hypersegregated in terms of black-white segregation. Neighborhoods that are racially segregated for African Americans maintain exceedingly high levels of poverty and disadvantage. Five neighborhood characteristics provide detailed information on the advantages and disadvantages found in the racial and ethnic compositions of African American block groups. Unlike whites, the consequences of high segregation in terms of education, household type, income, labor force participation, and poverty level for African Americans are harmful, for the most part.

African Americans who reside in communities that are highly concentrated experience the lowest quality neighborhoods. On the other hand, African Americans residing in neighborhoods that have smaller numbers of African Americans have access to more resources and advantages. But, African Americans, particularly impoverished individuals, are not able to simply leave poor neighborhoods for quality neighborhoods. Instead, due to large-scale inequalities and institutionalized discrimination, African Americans are caught in a socially stratified system that prevents them from attaining equal social mobility and economic success.

The quality of Hispanic neighborhoods varies from the patterns found for whites and African Americans. As neighborhoods become increasingly concentrated by Hispanics, they also become less advantaged in terms of educational attainment, poverty, non-labor participation, and income. In contrast, neighborhoods that are the most concentrated for Hispanics have the least amount of female-headed households. Examination of neighborhood quality for Asians highlights interesting patterns. Asian neighborhoods that are more concentrated have higher educational attainment and lower percentages of female households, yet income decreases. Asians do not experience the same level of disadvantage as blacks and Hispanics; quality neighborhoods, opportunities, and resources are more accessible to Asians in neighborhoods that are more same-race concentrated, comparatively. Overall, Asians experience varied levels of advantage, as neighborhoods are concentrated.

When African Americans live in neighborhoods dominated by whites they tend to have access to resources and opportunities that are not available in neighborhoods that are segregated. Each of these five neighborhood characteristics assesses the quality of neighborhoods based on racial and ethnic composition highlighting a pattern of minority concentration and persistent disadvantages. In sum, it appears that whites stand to benefit greatly to continued racial segregation, while blacks and Hispanics are afforded great costs and disadvantages to residing in neighborhoods that are racially segregated. Again, if this system of residential stratification was one of choice where all racial and ethnic groups were afforded the same opportunities and resources than it would not be as problematic if racial and ethnic minorities sought to live in racially segregated neighborhoods.

Inequality persists and increased implementation of anti-discrimination legislation is necessary. I believe that legislative initiatives are much needed, as well as urban policies that encourage the improvement of predominately black neighborhoods. The federal government must maintain a strong commitment to fair housing enforcement. Public policies are needed to continually regulate private housing markets, lending, and racial steering with the real consequences of judiciary action (Massey and Denton 1993). Until a stronger commitment is made to eradicating racial inequities prevalent in neighborhoods across the nation, racial residential segregation will continue to negatively affect the lives of racial and ethnic minorities.

Through my study of racial and ethnic neighborhood composition, segregation, and neighborhood quality in the core Atlanta area I would carefully give advice to parents on the best place to reside. What are the implications of my findings in terms of the best neighborhoods for families, especially black families, to live? There is no easy answer to such a question. However, I must answer in the context of racial inequality and both historical and contemporary racism and racial discrimination. Together, this inequality and discrimination has led to residential inequalities; there are inbuilt differences between neighborhoods in the core. Yet, there is nothing inherently bad about neighborhoods that are predominately black. But, on average these neighborhoods are more disadvantaged, comparatively. Assuming that the parents had the ability to make a choice, I would attempt to ascertain their desired level of integration and the economic resources available to them. If the parents were black, with resources, and desired a less integrated environment I would direct them to neighborhoods that were middle-class and predominately black, such as those located within Dekalb County. In contrast, if the

family sought a more integrated environment and had access to resources to combat potential white hostilities, I would be more likely to advise them of neighborhoods that are located in the predominately white counties of Cobb and Gwinnett.

Today, residential segregation for racial and ethnic groups has real consequences in terms of social mobility and socioeconomic success. Neighborhoods that are racially segregated are harmful and prevent many racial and ethnic minorities from experiencing the advantages which white Americans access. Historically, the United States is a country that has discouraged racial integration, although Americans claim equal opportunities for all. The institutionalized discriminatory practices that have shaped the racial and ethnic compositions of urban neighborhoods, like core Atlanta, are difficult to combat. It is increasingly important to call attention to racial residential segregation that cultivates large-scale inequities as many white Americans claim that racial inequality is a problem of the past.

## **CONCLUSION**

In this case study of Atlanta, I provide a detailed analysis of urban neighborhoods, emphasizing the inequities experienced by minority groups. By using block group level data I assess the detailed descriptions of neighborhoods. The spatial distribution of racial and ethnic groups reflects persistent racial inequality. Through studies such as this, social scientists may present data that depict how race and class are directly and indirectly related to neighborhood quality.

The significance of this study lies in its ability to utilize a more detailed level of census data to assess segregation and document neighborhood characteristics of a specific case study. Atlanta is flourishing in terms of population and economic changes.

Unfortunately, Atlanta's past and present includes racist, discriminatory social practices that have injured racial and ethnic minority groups and instilled large-scale inequities; thus the fortunes made in Atlanta do not go to all of the residents. And this inequality has consequences that threaten the future status of race relations.

Although my primary research focuses on Atlanta, my overall interest is the social stratification of American society. Minorities residing in unequal, homogenous communities experience disadvantages by way of racial and class segregation. The investigation of residential segregation and poverty at the neighborhood level provides insights into inequalities. Racism and poverty are critical issues today that require examination in order to combat institutionalized inequalities and the persistence of discrimination. Future research must more accurately assess the circumstances of racial residential segregation today.

Investigations are necessary to combat covert and overt racist and prejudicial discrimination that minorities are consistently subjected to in American society. Understanding residential segregation that produces inequalities across racial groups is an important contribution to the field of sociology. The discrimination that minority groups experience due to race, in comparison to the dominant white group, must be continually investigated as inequalities continue to persist.

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