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Pathways to Integration: Examining Changes in the Prevalence of Racially Integrated Neighborhoods

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Abstract

Few researchers have studied integrated neighborhoods, yet these neighborhoods offer an important window into broader patterns of segregation. In this article, we explore changes in racial integration in recent decades using decennial census tract data from 1990, 2000, and 2010. We begin by examining changes in the prevalence of racially integrated neighborhoods and find that the share of metropolitan neighborhoods that are integrated increased significantly during this period, from slightly less than 20 percent to slightly more than 30 percent. We then shed light on the pathways through which these changes have occurred. We find both a small increase in the number of neighborhoods becoming integrated for the first time during this period and a more sizable increase in the share of integrated neighborhoods that remained integrated. Finally, we offer insights about which neighborhoods become integrated in the first place and which remain stably integrated over time.

Introduction

Although many scholars track patterns of racial segregation in metropolitan areas, very few have focused attention on racially integrated communities. This lack of attention might be a consequence of the popular view in the United States that racial integration is extremely rare and, when it occurs, it is only temporary. In the years after World War II, many urban neighborhoods quickly changed from all White to all Black. Schelling (1972) coined the term *tipping* to describe this rapid change and helped explain it using a simple model of racial preferences. His model assumes that

White residents will continue to live in a community only as long as the Black population remains below their individual tolerance thresholds. As the most prejudiced White residents leave, the proportion of Black residents will rise above the tolerance threshold of the next most prejudiced White group, until the neighborhood population becomes all Black.

Equipped with Schelling's simple model and the empirical reality of rapid racial transition in the postwar era, most researchers have, until recently, viewed integration as a rare exception to the norm of racial homogeneity. Even the researchers who have studied integrated neighborhoods have tended to focus their case studies on communities that self-consciously work to maintain their diversity (Keating, 1994; Nyden, Maly, and Lukehart, 1997; Saltman, 1990). The implied message of these studies is that without such robust, ongoing efforts to maintain integration, stably diverse communities would not exist.

Although our metropolitan areas remain highly segregated by race, racially integrated neighborhoods grew considerably more common between 1980 and 2000 (Easterly, 2009; Ellen, 2007, 2000; Farrell and Lee, 2011; Fasenfest, Booza, and Metzger, 2004; Friedman, 2008; Logan and Zhang, 2010; Rawlings, Harris, and Turner, 2004). Moreover, previous research suggests many of these recently integrated neighborhoods were not just temporarily mixed in the process of moving from all White to all minority, but they remained integrated for years (Ellen, 2007, 2000, 1998; Logan and Zhang, 2010; Rawlings, Harris, and Turner, 2004). This literature does not extend past 2000, however. We do not know what has happened to the prevalence or stability of integrated neighborhoods more recently.

Our goal in this article is to fill this gap using decennial census data from 1990, 2000, and 2010. We start by examining recent changes in the number and share of neighborhoods that are racially integrated. We then offer some evidence about the pathways through which these changes have occurred. Finally, we examine the characteristics of the racially homogenous neighborhoods that become integrated in the first place and those of the integrated neighborhoods that remain stably integrated over time.

Background and Literature Review

Although researchers have focused more on racial segregation, a number of papers offer insights into our questions. In this section, we review existing evidence about pathways to integration, the characteristics of homogenous neighborhoods that become integrated, and the attributes of the integrated neighborhoods that remain stably integrated over time.

Pathways to Racial Integration

We can draw from the existing literature on segregation to identify some hypotheses about why racially integrated neighborhoods might increase in number. Note that integration can increase through two basic pathways: (1) more neighborhoods can become integrated, or (2) a greater number of existing integrated neighborhoods can remain integrated over time. At a macro level, three factors might lead to either changes in the number of neighborhoods becoming integrated or shifts in the stability of neighborhoods after they become integrated: (1) demographic trends, (2) shifts in income differences across racial groups, and (3) changes in racial attitudes.

First, in terms of demographic trends, an increase in the share of the population that belongs to a particular minority group will lead to more integration (at least up to the point at which the group is no longer a minority). For example, if the population moves from all White to 80 percent White, the potential for integration surely increases. A larger minority population, however, also provides the potential for minority groups to become more segregated, because their numbers are substantial enough to create concentrated minority neighborhoods (South, Crowder, and Pais, 2011). White households might also begin to feel less comfortable living in integrated neighborhoods as the overall number of non-White residents in their city or region grows.

Other evidence supports the belief that integration will grow as the non-White population diversifies. Surveys have suggested that White residents are more comfortable sharing neighborhoods with Asian and Hispanic residents than they are sharing neighborhoods with Black residents (Bobo and Zubrinsky, 1996), and other research has suggested that the segregation of non-Black minorities is less persistent and easier to explain (Bayer, McMillan, and Rueben, 2004).[1] Overall population growth and the accompanying new housing might also facilitate the emergence of integration, because newer communities do not have the same legacy of racial segregation or history of discriminatory housing practices (Farley and Frey, 1994; Logan, Stults, and Farley, 2004; South, Crowder, and Pais, 2011).[2]

Second, to the extent that income differences among racial groups contribute to racial segregation (Bayer, McMillan, and Rueben, 2004; Harsman and Quigley, 1995), reductions (or increases) in such gaps should lead to increases (or reductions) in the prevalence of integration. Although the difference between the median incomes of non-White and White households has barely changed in the past few decades,[3] the increased number of middle- and high-income minority households has allowed for more integration. In other words, the distributions of income by race, and thus the type of housing and neighborhoods accessible and attractive to different racial groups, might overlap more than they did in the past.[4]

Third, shifts in racial attitudes might lead to shifts in neighborhood preferences (Clark, 1991; Harris, 1999). Considerable evidence suggests that White households have grown more open to living in integrated neighborhoods over time (Bruch and Mare, 2006; Farley, Fielding, and Krysan, 1997). Similarly, as racially integrated neighborhoods grow in number, more White residents might start to view integrated communities as viable options, creating something of a virtuous cycle.

[1] Some researchers have argued that White residents feel more comfortable sharing their neighborhoods with Black residents when the non-White population as a whole is more diverse (Frey and Farley, 1996).

[2] Similarly, greater fragmentation of the metropolitan area might provide more opportunities to segregate (Farley and Frey, 1994; South, Crowder, and Pais, 2011).

[3] The ratio of Black to non-Hispanic White household income was unchanged between 1972 and 2000, and the ratio of Hispanic to non-Hispanic White household income declined only slightly, from 0.74 to 0.69 (DeNavas-Walt, Proctor, and Smith, 2011).

[4] The creation of a larger middle class among minority groups could also provide an opportunity for greater segregation through the development of middle-class minority neighborhoods (Bayer, Fang, and McMillan, 2011).

Which Neighborhoods Become Integrated?

Few researchers have studied the creation or emergence of integrated communities, but some of the same factors that explain shifts in the prevalence of integration over time (demographic trends, shifts in income differences, and changes in racial attitudes) are also helpful in predicting variation across space. We would expect to see a larger number of integrated communities emerge in areas with more rapidly growing populations (minority populations in particular), with more similar incomes across racial groups, and with more racially tolerant populations.

In addition, given the research suggesting that minority households are more open to moving into largely White neighborhoods than White households are to moving into largely minority neighborhoods, we expect largely White neighborhoods to become integrated more commonly than largely minority neighborhoods (Bruch and Mare, 2006).

Finally, the characteristics of the housing market in a metropolitan area might also influence the share of neighborhoods in that area that become integrated. For example, racially homogenous neighborhoods might be more likely to move toward integrated communities when rapid price appreciation pushes White households to look beyond homogenous White neighborhoods, which could encourage the integration of largely minority areas and potentially create opportunities for middle-income minority households to enter previously White neighborhoods.

Which Integrated Neighborhoods Remain Integrated Over Time?

The body of research studying the question of which integrated neighborhoods are likely to stay that way is small. Again, previous research has suggested demographic trends, income differences, and racial attitudes as factors explaining differences across areas in the stability of integration. Empirical evidence has found White-Black integrated tracts in metropolitan areas with fewer Black households (Ellen, 2000) and those in cities where White households have more tolerant racial attitudes (Card, Mas, and Rothstein, 2008) to be more stable. Researchers have also found evidence that the underlying growth of the minority population in a city or metropolitan area affects stability insofar as integrated neighborhoods are likely to tip to largely minority more frequently when the minority population is growing (Denton and Massey, 1991; Ellen, 2007; Ottensmann, Good, and Gleeson, 1990). Interestingly, researchers have found little evidence that the mean income or poverty level of a neighborhood affects stability (Ellen, 2000; Galster and Keeney, 1993; Logan and Schneider, 1984; Logan and Stearns, 1981; Steinnes, 1977; White, 1984).

As for other factors, Ellen (2000) posited a theory of race-based neighborhood stereotyping, suggesting that White households (and also some non-White households) tend to assume integrated neighborhoods will unravel and experience the type of structural decline that White households associate with largely minority areas. Ellen found some empirical support in that the White population loss was less in neighborhoods that White households expected to remain integrated in the future (those farther from the central area of Black residence and those that experienced only modest growth in the minority population in the previous decade).[5] She also found that, despite

[5] Lee and Wood (1991) also found evidence that distance to the nearest tract with minority concentration is positively correlated with racial stability.

the lower mobility rates of homeowners, White population loss in integrated tracts during the 1980s was greater in neighborhoods with higher homeownership rates, perhaps because White homeowners, due to their financial stake in the community, are more sensitive to worries about the trajectory of conditions in a neighborhood than are White renters (Ellen, 2000).

Definitions

No single definition is widely accepted for the term *integrated neighborhood*. Drawing on previous literature and taking into account recent demographic changes, we derive a set of definitions of neighborhood types. To define categories, we use constant thresholds across the United States, rather than relative thresholds that vary depending on the racial composition of the individual metropolitan area. We make this choice because our definitions aim to capture the experience of residents in the neighborhood; that is, whether its composition is such that residents experience meaningful integration in their surrounding community. A neighborhood that is 98 percent White and 2 percent minority might be relatively diverse in an essentially all-White metropolitan area, but it cannot be considered a meaningfully integrated community.

To start, all neighborhoods are categorized as either integrated or not, then further classified by the race and ethnicity of the groups with a significant presence. We define integrated neighborhoods as those shared by a significant number of non-Hispanic White residents (to whom we refer simply as *White* in this article) and a significant number of individuals belonging to at least one minority racial group.[6] We require the presence of White residents because White remains the dominant race in our society, and historically it is White individuals who have excluded or have avoided living near members of minority groups. Thus, although a community with Black, Hispanic, and Asian residents might be highly diverse, we do not consider it to be integrated. Rather, we classify it as mixed minority. For computational ease, we divide the non-White population into three mutually exclusive groups: Black, Hispanic, and Asian/other. Most individuals in the Asian/other category are Asian, but the category also includes non-Hispanic individuals who identify as a member of a racial group other than Black, White, or Asian, such as Native American.[7] We group these individuals into a single racial group to keep the number of neighborhood categories manageable.

Specifically, we identify nine different neighborhood types. Four are integrated: (1) White-Black, (2) White-Hispanic, (3) White-Asian/other, and (4) White-mixed minority. Five are nonintegrated: (1) White, (2) Black, (3) Hispanic, (4) Asian/other, and (5) Mixed minority.

To be counted as *significantly present* in a neighborhood, a group must comprise at least 20 percent of the population. Thus, an integrated White-Black neighborhood is one in which at least 20 percent of the population is White, in which at least 20 percent is Black and in which the Hispanic and Asian/other minority groups each comprise less than 20 percent of the population. A predominantly White neighborhood is one in which none of the three minority racial groups comprises 20 percent

[6] For expositional ease, we refer to race and ethnicity grouping as *race*.

[7] In all three decades, between 84 and 88 percent of the Asian/other population is Asian.

or more of the population. Technically, this definition means that a neighborhood that is 43 percent White, 19 percent Black, 19 percent Hispanic, and 19 percent Asian/other would be identified as *predominantly White*. In fact, however, of the predominantly White neighborhoods, all are majority White and most are overwhelmingly White; in 1990, the median predominantly White neighborhood was 93 percent White, and 90 percent of White neighborhoods were at least 79 percent White. Similarly, the populations of all predominantly minority tracts overwhelmingly comprised that single minority group. The median predominantly Black neighborhood in 1990 was 94 percent Black, and 90 percent of predominantly Black neighborhoods were more than 80 percent Black.

This definition of *integration*, like any definition, is arbitrary to some degree, but, when we experimented with different thresholds and definitions, we found that our key results were highly robust. For example, we experimented with using a lower threshold to capture non-White presence and a higher threshold to capture White presence, given the difference in their overall population shares, and the overall trends remained the same.

Although we are using the term *race* in this article to indicate both race and Hispanic ethnicity, the census asks respondents a separate question about Hispanic origin. We classify individuals who self-identify as Hispanic and Black as Black but code all other self-identified Hispanic individuals as Hispanic. Another complicating factor is that, starting in 2000, the census enabled individuals to self-identify as belonging to multiple racial groups. We use the bridging method, which Jeffrey Passel at the Urban Institute developed, to categorize these multiracial respondents (Tatian, 2003). Specifically, we categorize anyone who selects Black as one of his or her racial groups as Black (essentially applying the one-drop-of-blood rule). We categorize anyone who lists Asian and not Black as Asian. We consider anyone who self-identifies as White and does not also list Black, Asian, or Pacific Islander to be White.

Data

Following the practice of most previous research, we use census tracts to proxy for neighborhoods. Census tracts include, on average, about 4,000 people, and most include between 2,500 and 8,000 people. Some researchers have argued that census tracts are too large to approximate neighborhoods and have advocated studying segregation at the block level instead (Farley and Frey, 1994; Jargowsky, 1997). To be sure, census tracts are not perfect representations of neighborhoods, and presumably fewer neighborhoods would appear integrated if we used a smaller level of geography. Nonetheless, census tracts are probably closer in size to what most people view as a neighborhood than are individual blocks, and far more data are available at the tract level than at the block level.

This study relies on the Neighborhood Change Database (NCDB), developed by GeoLytics and the Urban Institute for data on 1990 and 2000 census tracts, and on decennial census data from 2010. The NCDB draws on census tract data from the 1970, 1980, 1990, and 2000 censuses and covers all census tracts in the United States. In addition to including individual files for each of these four census years, the NCDB also includes a longitudinal file of census tracts with fixed boundaries, which remaps 1970, 1980, and 1990 census tract data to 2000 census tract boundaries. We use this data set because it is particularly useful for examining changes in the composition of census

tracts that are not the result of boundary alterations. We limit our analysis to census tracts in metropolitan areas, and we omit any census tracts with fewer than 200 residents or more than one-half of its population living in group quarters in either 1990 or 2000.

We rely on the weights that the Census Bureau correspondence file provides to link the 2010 census tract data to 2000 tract boundaries. To account for errors in matching data, we omit tracts that experienced extremely large reductions or increases in population between 2000 and 2010. Specifically, we rank neighborhoods according to population change and omit the top and bottom 1 percent. In total, our sample includes 49,074 tracts spread across 331 metropolitan areas.

Prevalence of Racial Integration

Our first questions are simply how many neighborhoods are racially integrated, and how has that number changed in the past two decades? As exhibit 1 shows, 30 percent of metropolitan census tracts (or slightly more than 14,600 census tracts) in the United States were racially integrated in 2010, according to our definitions. Of these tracts, most were White-Black or White-Hispanic; these two types of neighborhoods together accounted for about three-fourths of all integrated neighborhoods. Exhibit 1 also shows that integration has become more common in the past 20 years. In 1990, slightly less than 20 percent of metropolitan census tracts were racially integrated. That share then rose to 25 percent in 2000 and 30 percent in 2010.[8] Not all types of integrated neighborhoods have seen the same rate of growth. The proportion of neighborhoods shared by Black and White residents grew between 1990 and 2000 but remained similar between 2000 and 2010, whereas the proportions of other types of integrated neighborhoods increased steadily in both

Exhibit 1

Racial Composition of Census Tracts, 1990–2010

	Overall Share (%)		
	1990	2000	2010
Integrated			
White-Black	9.1	10.1	10.1
White-Hispanic	7.7	10.0	12.9
White-Asian/other	1.4	2.5	3.4
White-mixed minority	1.5	2.6	3.8
Total integrated	**19.7**	**25.2**	**30.3**
Nonintegrated			
White	69.6	60.5	52.3
Black	6.0	6.9	6.9
Hispanic	2.3	3.7	5.5
Asian/other	0.3	0.5	0.6
Mixed minority	2.2	3.4	4.5
Total nonintegrated	**80.4**	**74.8**	**69.8**

N = 49,074.

Sources: 2010 Decennial Census; Neighborhood Change Database

[8] We obtain nearly identical percentages in each decade when weighting by population.

decades. To some extent, this growth might simply reflect the underlying growth in Hispanic and Asian populations. The proportion of Hispanic residents (defined as *share Hispanic*) in all tracts in our sample nearly doubled between 1990 and 2010, rising from 10.2 to 18.3 percent of the population, and the share of Asian/other residents (*share Asian/other*) rose from 4.0 to 7.5 percent.

When examining who lives in integrated neighborhoods, we find that White households are much less likely than minority households to live in such communities. In 2010, only 24 percent of White households lived in integrated neighborhoods compared with 39 percent of Black households, 42 percent of Hispanic households, and 44 percent of Asian/other households. White households, however, have experienced a larger increase in integration than minority households. The percentage of White residents (*share White*) living in integrated tracts rose from 14 percent in 1990 to 24 percent in 2010, whereas the share of Black residents (*share Black*) living in integrated tracts rose from 34 to 39 percent and the share Hispanic in integrated tracts inched up from 40 to 42 percent.

In terms of regions, exhibit 2 shows that, perhaps not surprisingly, integration was most common in the West; indeed, by 2010, 41.3 percent of census tracts in the West Census Region were racially integrated. The Midwest, with only 20.1 percent of census tracts classified as integrated, was the least integrated region. Notably, despite the great variation in the extent of racial integration, the prevalence of integration increased in all four regions between 1990 and 2010, and the relative ranking remained the same.

Exhibit 2 also shows the shares of integrated neighborhoods for central-city and suburban neighborhoods for 1990, 2000, and 2010. In each year, a greater share of central-city neighborhoods were integrated than suburban neighborhoods. In 2010, for example, 36.5 percent of central-city neighborhoods were racially integrated compared with just 25.7 percent of suburban neighborhoods. Integration became more common in both suburban and central city areas during our study period, however.

Exhibit 2

Share of Tracts Integrated, by Census Region and City/Suburb, 1990–2010

	Share Integrated (%)		
	1990	2000	2010
Census region			
Northeast	12.4	17.2	21.0
Midwest	11.5	15.9	20.1
South	24.8	30.7	36.5
West	28.1	35.0	41.3
City/suburb			
Central city	26.4	32.5	36.5
Suburb	14.8	19.9	25.7

Sources: 2010 Decennial Census; Neighborhood Change Database

Pathways to Integration

As we noted previously, an increase in the prevalence of integrated neighborhoods can occur in two ways: a larger share of homogeneous neighborhoods might become integrated, or a larger share of integrated neighborhoods might remain integrated.[9] We find that both of these channels to integration increased between the 1990s and the 2000s. Exhibit 3 shows that four of our five types of nonintegrated neighborhoods were more likely to become integrated between 2000 and 2010 than they were between 1990 and 2000. Whereas most increases were fairly modest, the increase for largely Black neighborhoods was dramatic. Although only 5.5 percent of these neighborhoods became integrated between 2000 and 2010, this share was up from only 1.8 percent in the 1990s. In absolute numbers, 173 largely Black neighborhoods became integrated between 2000 and 2010, up from just 54 census tracts between 1990 and 2000. Interestingly, most of the increase came from neighborhoods in the South.

Despite this shift, predominantly White neighborhoods remained far more likely to become integrated than did largely minority neighborhoods. Between 2000 and 2010, 15.0 percent of predominantly White neighborhoods became integrated compared with only 5.5 percent of Black neighborhoods, 3.4 percent of Hispanic neighborhoods, 6.4 percent of Asian/other neighborhoods, and 4.9 percent of mixed-minority neighborhoods. Thus, contrary to media attention on the entry of young White residents into a few urban, minority neighborhoods, integration still results overwhelmingly from the in-movement of minority households to largely White neighborhoods. Indeed, of all newly racially integrated neighborhoods in 2010, 93 percent were White neighborhoods in 2000.[10]

The regional variation exhibit 4 presents is striking. Between 2000 and 2010, 18.8 percent of nonintegrated neighborhoods in the West became integrated compared with 16.3 percent in the South, 9.3 percent in the Northeast, and only 8.6 percent in the Midwest. Such transitions

Exhibit 3

Transitions to Integration, by Nonintegrated Census Tract Type

	Share Integrated (%)	
	1990–2000	2000–2010
White	14.1	15.0
Black	1.8	5.5
Hispanic	3.7	3.4
Asian/other	5.0	6.4
Mixed minority	2.2	4.9
Total nonintegrated	**12.6**	**12.9**

Sources: 2010 Decennial Census; Neighborhood Change Database

[9] In addition, the number of neighborhoods might change, and more new neighborhoods might be integrated from the start. Note, we have also performed our analysis when controlling for the number of neighborhoods and found the same pattern; new census tract designations do not drive the increased prevalence of integrated neighborhoods.

[10] This share was actually down from 2000, when 97.5 percent of all newly racially integrated neighborhoods were White neighborhoods in 1990.

increased slightly from the 1990-to-2000 period, an increase that primarily occurred in the Midwest and South. Despite these differences, in all four regions, more than 90 percent of newly integrated neighborhoods in 2010 were White neighborhoods in 2000.

We next turn to the stability of integrated neighborhoods over this period. Exhibit 5 shows the share of neighborhoods in each of our four categories of integrated neighborhoods that remained integrated at the end of the decade. The first column shows the results for the 1990-to-2000 decade and the second column for the 2000-to-2010 decade.

Two key observations emerge from this exhibit. First, integrated neighborhoods appear fairly stable in each decade. We see that the overwhelming majority of neighborhoods that began each decade integrated ended the decade integrated. Second, a noticeably larger share of each category of integrated neighborhood remained integrated between 2000 and 2010 than between 1990 and 2000. Of White-Black neighborhoods in 1990, 78.6 percent remained integrated 10 years later. That share rose to 82.6 percent between 2000 and 2010. White-Hispanic neighborhoods showed a similar pattern. Between 1990 and 2000, 78.8 percent remained integrated, whereas between 2000 and 2010, 82.7 percent remained integrated. The increases over this period were even more striking for White-Asian/other and White-mixed-minority neighborhoods, with the share of the former remaining integrated rising from 82.8 to 89.4 percent and the share of the latter remaining integrated rising from 50.0 to 64.0 percent.

Despite this substantial increase in stability, White-mixed-minority neighborhoods were considerably less likely to remain integrated than were other integrated neighborhoods, probably because the baseline proportion of White residents in White-mixed-minority neighborhoods is considerably lower than in other integrated neighborhoods. In 2000, the average White-mixed-minority neighborhood was 34 percent White, whereas the average White-Black neighborhood was 51.8 percent

Exhibit 4

Transitions to Integration, by Census Region

	Share Integrated (%)	
	1990–2000	2000–2010
Northeast	9.2	9.3
Midwest	7.7	8.6
South	15.3	16.3
West	18.8	18.8

Sources: 2010 Decennial Census; Neighborhood Change Database

Exhibit 5

Stability of Integration, by Integrated Census Tract Type

	Share Integrated (%)	
	1990–2000	2000–2010
White-Black	78.6	82.6
White-Hispanic	78.8	82.7
White-Asian/other	82.8	89.4
White-mixed minority	50.0	64.0
Total integrated	**76.8**	**81.6**

Sources: 2010 Decennial Census; Neighborhood Change Database

White. Hence, it takes a much smaller decline in the White population for a typical White-mixed-minority neighborhood to transition to an all-minority neighborhood than for a White-Black neighborhood to transition.

To avoid this asymmetry, and in recognition that the primary avenue through which integrated neighborhoods transition to nonintegrated is through declines in share White, exhibit 6 shows changes in share White across decades for each of our integrated neighborhood categories. Column 1 shows that share White fell in all types of integrated tracts in both decades, but the loss in share White was less in each type of integrated neighborhood between 2000 and 2010 than during the 1990s. The mean decrease in share White in White-Black tracts, for example, was 8.2 percentage points between 2000 and 2010 compared with 10.9 percentage points during the 1990s. Even when accounting for changes in the overall rate of share White decrease in metropolitan areas, integrated tracts appear to have been more stable between 2000 and 2010 than they were during the 1990s.[11]

The remaining three columns in exhibit 6 provide more detailed information on the distribution of neighborhoods within each of our categories by the change in share White. The numbers show that, in both decades, a substantial majority of all types of integrated tracts experienced a 5-percentage-point-or-greater decline in share White and were thus at risk of not remaining integrated over time. Once again, however, a lower proportion of integrated neighborhoods experienced a significant loss in share White between 2000 and 2010 than during the 1990s.

In summary, we see an increase in both pathways to racial integration between the 1990s and the 2000s. The shift over time was more dramatic, however, for the proportion of neighborhoods remaining integrated than it was for the proportion of neighborhoods becoming integrated.

Exhibit 6

Change in Share White, by Integrated Census Tract Type

	Mean Percentage-Point Change in Share White	Tract Distribution, by Percentage-Point Change in Share White (%)		
		Decrease ≥ 5	Increase or Decrease < 5	Increase ≥ 5
1990 to 2000				
White-Black	– 10.9	66.3	24.8	8.8
White-Hispanic	– 14.0	80.1	14.4	5.6
White-Asian/other	– 12.8	80.9	16.2	2.9
White-mixed minority	– 12.0	80.4	14.1	5.5
2000 to 2010				
White-Black	– 8.2	61.7	29.0	9.3
White-Hispanic	– 10.4	78.2	16.1	5.7
White-Asian/other	– 9.8	76.7	20.9	2.4
White-mixed minority	– 8.1	71.6	21.4	7.0

Sources: 2010 Decennial Census; Neighborhood Change Database

[11] The overall loss in share White in our metropolitan census tracts was very similar over the two decades, dropping from a 6.8-percentage-point decline during the 1990s to a 6.5-percentage-point decline during the 2000s.

Which Neighborhoods Become Integrated?

As previously stated, almost no existing research examines the question of which neighborhoods become integrated in the first place. We first focus on the predominantly Black neighborhoods that became integrated in the 2000s, because this group of nonintegrated tracts experienced the largest increase in the share becoming integrated. Exhibit 7 compares the 2000 baseline characteristics of largely Black neighborhoods in which the share White increased by at least 5 percentage points over the subsequent decade (thus moving toward integration) with those in which the share White did not increase.[12] Note that when we examined changes in the absolute numbers of White residents, we found that the White population actually grew significantly in the integrating tracts; these tracts did not simply lose Black residents. Perhaps surprisingly, virtually no baseline difference emerged in the proportion of Black residents across the two types of tracts. Perhaps even more surprisingly

Exhibit 7

Characteristics of Predominantly Black Census Tracts, by Subsequent Racial Change

	Percentage-Point Change in Share White, 2000–2010	
	Increase ≥ 5	Increase or Decrease < 5
Baseline neighborhood characteristics		
Share Black (%)	86.3	88.9
Poverty rate (%)	30.7	25.2
Share with college degree (%)	14.1	12.7
Homeownership rate (%)	33.8	49.9
Share with children (%)	31.9	38.0
Share foreign born (%)	11.4	9.2
Median household income ($)	31,438	38,081
Contemporaneous neighborhood changes (2000–2005/2009)		
Poverty rate (percentage-point change)	− 1.6	+ 1.5
Share with college degree (percentage-point change)	+ 10.5	+ 2.2
Median household income ($ change)	+ 2,786	− 2,630
Baseline MSA characteristics		
Share of tracts in central city (%)	93.8	81.8
Minority-White segregation index	0.60	0.61
Contemporaneous MSA changes (2000–2010)		
Overall population (percentage-point change)	+ 7.1	+ 5.5
Minority population (percentage-point change)	+ 21.3	+ 19.3
House prices (2000–2006) (percentage-point change)	+ 43.2	+ 44.4
Total census tracts	**384**	**2,990**

MSA = metropolitan statistical area.

Sources: 2010 Decennial Census; Neighborhood Change Database

[12] The results are largely the same for the 1990s.

(given racial differences in income), the neighborhoods that moved toward integration started the decade with higher poverty rates and lower median household incomes. Middle-class Black neighborhoods, in other words, are not the Black neighborhoods most likely to diversify. Indeed, the largely Black neighborhoods in which the share White increased had average poverty rates of 31 percent, above a typical threshold used to identify high-poverty neighborhoods. This finding suggests that the growth of the Black middle-class does not explain the increased integration of Black neighborhoods.

We find more support for other theories about the entry to integration. In particular, the Black neighborhoods that moved toward integration had lower homeownership rates, consistent with the notion of race-based neighborhood stereotyping, which posits that White renters feel they face less risk than White owners in entering a largely Black community (Ellen, 2000). The communities that became more integrated also had fewer families with children, perhaps suggesting that White households are more open to entering largely Black neighborhoods when those neighborhoods (or those households) have fewer children. The neighborhoods where White populations grew also tended to experience gains in median income and the share of residents with college degrees, suggesting an economic as well as a racial transition (exhibiting patterns of transition typically associated with gentrification).

In terms of broader metropolitan features, the Black neighborhoods where share White grew were typically in more rapidly growing metropolitan areas (including growing minority populations) but not specifically in areas with greater housing appreciation. The Black neighborhoods that became more White were, however, more likely to be in central cities than were other Black neighborhoods.

Given that so many more integrated neighborhoods began as largely White, studying the characteristics of the largely White neighborhoods that became integrated is arguably more important. Exhibit 8 compares the 2000 baseline characteristics and selected contemporaneous changes of largely White neighborhoods in which share White decreased by at least 5 percentage points in the subsequent decade (thus moving toward integration) with those in which share White did not decrease.[13] In this case, we see few notable differences across the two groups of neighborhoods. Largely White tracts that experienced a loss in share White were slightly less White and had slightly lower median household incomes at baseline, but otherwise the two groups exhibited few clear differences, other than a somewhat lower homeownership rate and shorter distance to largely minority neighborhoods. Notably, the two groups of neighborhoods also exhibited little difference in economic trajectory; the contemporaneous income changes in the neighborhoods in which share White decreased were almost identical to those in the neighborhoods in which share White did not decrease.

Consistent with the preceding predictions, White tracts that experienced reductions in share White and moved toward integration tended to be in metropolitan areas experiencing greater overall and minority population growth and greater increases in housing costs than other White tracts. In addition, White tracts that experienced a decline in share White were more commonly in the central city.

[13] Note that the growth in the absolute size of minority populations was a significant driver in the share White decrease. The actual magnitude of the White population in these neighborhoods barely declined, whereas overall population growth was quite high.

Exhibit 8

Characteristics of Predominantly White Census Tracts, by Subsequent Racial Change

	Percentage-Point Change in Share White, 2000–2010	
	Increase ≥ 5	Increase or Decrease < 5
Baseline neighborhood characteristics		
Share White (%)	83.9	91.7
Poverty rate (%)	7.4	7.0
Share with college degree (%)	30.4	31.8
Homeownership rate (%)	69.1	75.1
Share with children (%)	29.5	30.2
Share foreign born (%)	8.8	5.3
Median household income ($)	65,798	68,418
Distance to nearest minority tract (miles)	8.5	12.6
Contemporaneous neighborhood changes (2000–2005/2009)		
Poverty rate (percentage-point change)	+ 1.9	+ 1.2
Share with college degree (percentage-point change)	+ 2.9	+ 3.4
Median household income ($ change)	– 2,215	– 1,088
Baseline MSA characteristics		
Share of tracts in central city (%)	34.0	23.0
Minority-White segregation index	0.55	0.57
Contemporaneous MSA changes (2000–2010)		
Overall population (percentage-point change)	+ 8.7	+ 5.8
Minority population (percentage-point change)	+ 31.4	+ 27.6
House prices (2000–2006) (percentage-point change)	+ 67.0	+ 54.0
Total census tracts	**15,891**	**13,782**

MSA = metropolitan statistical area.

Sources: 2010 Decennial Census; Neighborhood Change Database

Which Integrated Neighborhoods Remain Integrated Over Time?

Another key question that remains unanswered is which integrated neighborhoods remain integrated over time? To answer this question, exhibit 9 compares the 2000 baseline characteristics of (a) White-Black and (b) White-Hispanic[14] integrated census tracts in which the share White decreased by at least 5 percentage points between 2000 and 2010 (thus moving toward becoming largely minority) with those of two other types of integrated neighborhoods: (1) those with stable White population shares, and (2) those that experienced at least a 5-percentage-point increase in share White (thus moving toward becoming largely White).[15]

[14] We focus on these two categories of integrated neighborhoods because they are the most common.

[15] The results were fairly similar when we replicated the analysis for integrated tracts in 1990.

Exhibit 9

Characteristics of Integrated Census Tracts (1 of 2)

	Percentage-Point Change in Share White, 2000–2010		
	Decrease ≥ 5	**Increase or Decrease < 5**	**Increase ≥ 5**
(a) White-Black tracts			
Baseline neighborhood characteristics			
Share White (%)	52.1	53.0	43.9
Share Black (%)	38.6	39.5	45.8
Share Hispanic (%)	5.6	4.4	6.2
Share Asian/other (%)	3.8	3.1	4.1
Share foreign born (%)	8.4	6.4	9.0
Poverty rate (%)	14.2	18.0	21.9
Share with college degree (%)	20.8	21.7	30.0
Black-to-White median household income ratio	0.87	0.73	0.62
Share White with children (%)	25.9	26.4	19.6
Share Black with children (%)	44.9	36.7	30.8
Homeownership rate (%)	57.1	56.0	40.5
Distance to nearest minority tract (miles)	4.2	8.0	4.4
Lag neighborhood changes (1990–2000)			
Share Black (percentage-point change)	+ 14.6	+ 2.7	– 1.3
Contemporaneous neighborhood changes (2000–2005/2009)			
Poverty rate (percentage-point change)	+ 3.4	+ 1.2	– 1.3
Share with college degree (percentage-point change)	+ 1.5	+ 3.7	+ 9.5
Median household income ($ change)	– 10,387	– 7,403	– 1,348
Baseline MSA characteristics			
Share of tracts in central city (%)	54.4	53.2	80.5
Minority-White segregation index	0.57	0.56	0.56
Contemporaneous MSA changes (2000–2010)			
Overall population (percentage-point change)	+ 9.4	+ 7.8	+ 8.3
Minority population (percentage-point change)	+ 30.5	+ 27.4	+ 27.2
House prices (2000–2006) (percentage-point change)	+ 47.7	+ 50.1	+ 49.8
Total census tracts	**3,060**	**1,441**	**461**
(b) White-Hispanic tracts			
Baseline neighborhood characteristics			
Share White (%)	48.5	45.4	42.1
Share Black (%)	6.5	5.8	6.5
Share Hispanic (%)	39.2	42.6	45.4
Share Asian/other (%)	5.8	6.2	6.0
Share foreign born (%)	22.5	27.6	30.4
Poverty rate (%)	14.6	18.5	20.5
Share with college degree (%)	17.4	22.6	28.5
Hispanic-to-White median household income ratio	0.88	0.78	0.74
Share White with children (%)	32.1	26.5	20.1
Share Hispanic with children (%)	57.1	50.3	45.5
Homeownership rate (%)	56.9	44.0	32.6
Distance to nearest minority tract (miles)	4.7	5.5	3.0

Exhibit 9

Characteristics of Integrated Census Tracts (2 of 2)

	Percentage-Point Change in Share White, 2000–2010		
	Decrease ≥ 5	Increase or Decrease < 5	Increase ≥ 5
Lag neighborhood changes (1990–2000)			
Share Hispanic (percentage points)	+ 15.2	+ 9.7	+ 2.4
Contemporaneous neighborhood changes (2000–2005/2009)			
Poverty rate (percentage-point change)	+ 1.8	– 0.5	– 2.5
Share with college degree (percentage-point change)	+ 1.7	+ 5.1	+ 12.1
Median household income ($ change)	– 7,825	– 4,265	– 1,764
Baseline MSA characteristics			
Share of tracts in central city (%)	46.5	61.5	84.2
Minority-White segregation index	0.53	0.55	0.58
Contemporaneous MSA changes (2000–2010)			
Overall population (percentage-point change)	+ 11.2	+ 7.7	+ 6.5
Minority population (percentage-point change)	+ 28.0	+ 20.0	+ 18.6
House prices (2000–2006) (percentage-point change)	+ 99.7	+ 88.2	+ 94.4
Total census tracts	**3,847**	**792**	**278**

MSA = metropolitan statistical area.

Sources: 2010 Decennial Census; Neighborhood Change Database

We begin by contrasting integrated neighborhoods that experienced a loss in share White with other integrated neighborhoods. Notably, integrated neighborhoods experiencing a loss in share White did not have a larger share of non-White residents at the start of the decade than neighborhoods where the White population was stable. Indeed, for White-Hispanic neighborhoods, the share Hispanic was lower. Contrary to Schelling's canonical model, then, the loss of White population share in these neighborhoods does not appear to have been triggered by the size of the minority population reaching some tipping point. In the White-Hispanic tracts, we also see that tracts with more stable White populations had a larger foreign-born population than tracts that lost White households. White residents do not seem to be avoiding immigrants.

The overall differences in socioeconomic status were small and mixed. Tracts with stable or growing White population shares tended to have higher poverty rates but more residents with college degrees. Whereas income differences for White residents across these types of tracts were small, minority incomes were much higher in tracts that experienced a loss in share White. In other words, contrary to theoretical predictions, the tracts in which White and non-White residents had more divergent incomes were more likely to see stable or growing White population shares. The non-White residents in these neighborhoods might have lived in pockets that were less affluent and cut off from the White part of the community. Alternatively, differences in demand from

middle-class minority residents may have explained the differences in growth patterns. Middle-class minority residents may have been especially attracted to the integrated neighborhoods in which minority residents had higher incomes (and thus minority-white income gaps were smaller).[16]

As predicted, past growth in the minority population was highly correlated with losses in share White in the most recent decade, perhaps because White households had little faith that those neighborhoods would remain integrated over time. The tracts that experienced a loss in share White were also closer to largely minority tracts than those integrated neighborhoods that remained racially stable. This closer distance to largely minority tracts might have either contributed to fears of instability among White residents or increased the desirability of such neighborhoods for minorities.

The results are generally consistent with the idea that households with a greater stake in the community will be more wary of integration, although perhaps surprisingly more so for White-Hispanic tracts. Tracts that experienced a loss in share White were generally those in which a greater share of housing units were owner occupied and a greater share of households had children. Within White-Black tracts, the real difference was that these shares were noticeably lower in the small number of tracts that actually saw a gain in share White.

The differential in the share of households with children held for both White and non-White households. The fact that the minority households living in tracts that retained or gained share White also had fewer children might suggest that White households are less comfortable with integration when more of their minority neighbors have children, or suggest that the White households who are open to integration are less interested in living in neighborhoods with services and amenities geared to children.

As for the broader city or metropolitan area, integrated neighborhoods that experienced a loss in share White were in metropolitan areas with more rapidly growing minority and total populations. Counter to expectations, we see no meaningful difference in the baseline metropolitan racial segregation across these types of integrated tracts and no difference in the degree of house price appreciation.

The patterns of growth in the small share (7 percent) of neighborhoods that were integrated in 2000 and experienced a gain of more than 5 percentage points in share White (during a decade when the average change in share White in metropolitan tracts was a *decrease* of 6.5 percentage points) seem to suggest classic gentrification. First, they began the decade with larger minority population shares and higher poverty rates than either of the other two groups of integrated tracts. Second, these tracts saw reductions in poverty levels and large increases in the proportion of college-educated residents. Third, these neighborhoods experienced both large increases in the absolute size of the White population and declines in the absolute size of the minority population. Finally, more than 80 percent of integrated neighborhoods that saw a gain in White population share were located in central cities compared with only about one-half of those that lost or retained White residents. Further, these tracts were much closer to a largely minority tract (also a sign of central location) than were the integrated tracts that maintained their racial composition.

[16] This pattern is consistent with Bayer, Fang, and McMillan (2011), who found that, as the share of Black residents with higher levels of education increases in a metropolitan area, a greater share of these residents is more likely to choose to live in middle-income Black neighborhoods.

Conclusion

We address three distinct research questions in this article. First, we explore how prevalent racially integrated neighborhoods have become from 1990 through 2010. We find significant growth in the presence of integrated neighborhoods during this period, with the share of metropolitan tracts that are integrated increasing from slightly less than 20 percent to slightly more than 30 percent.

Second, we examine the pathways through which integration has increased. We find during this period both a small increase in the number of neighborhoods becoming integrated for the first time and a more sizable increase in the share of integrated neighborhoods that remained integrated. Although we observe a particularly substantial increase in the share of Black neighborhoods that became integrated in the 2000s, the overall share remains small. Thus, belying the growing attention to the gentrification of largely Black neighborhoods, this path to integration remains lightly tread. Examining the stability of racial integration, we find that integration appeared fairly stable in both decades, but a larger share of each category of integrated neighborhood remained stable during the 2000s than in the 1990s.

Third, we shed some light on the types of neighborhoods that have become integrated and have remained so over time. Focusing on the types of Black neighborhoods that attracted White residents, we find not middle-class minority neighborhoods but, rather, neighborhoods that initially had higher poverty rates and lower levels of income. Also, these neighborhoods had lower homeownership rates, a finding that is consistent with the theory of race-based neighborhood stereotyping, because renters are less likely to worry about a community's future. Finally, the largely Black neighborhoods that attracted White residents began with fewer families with children, suggesting that White households might be more open to sharing neighborhoods with non-White neighbors when those neighbors do not have children. As for the predominantly White neighborhoods that moved toward integration, we find few evident patterns.

Finally, exploring the types of integrated neighborhoods that saw stable or growing White population shares, we find, perhaps surprisingly, that they were those in which White and non-White residents had more divergent incomes. In addition, again consistent with the notion of race-based neighborhood stereotyping, the integrated tracts that retained (for White-Hispanic tracts) or attracted (both White-Hispanic and White-Black tracts) White residents appear to be those integrated neighborhoods that households believed would remain stable in the future based on past trends. The integrated tracts that saw stable or growing White population shares were also those with residents that likely had a lesser stake in the quality of a community's services (notably renters and households without children), again consistent with neighborhood racial stereotyping.

In the most recent decade, a small share of integrated tracts actually experienced a meaningful gain in share White. Although the numbers remain small, this pattern suggests that some integrated neighborhoods might unravel by becoming more White. These tracts were overwhelmingly in central cities and closer to largely minority neighborhoods, perhaps suggesting a pattern of gentrification. Indeed, the integrated neighborhoods that saw an increase in share White also saw reductions in poverty levels and increases in the number of college-educated residents.

In sum, although our cities and metropolitan areas remain highly segregated by race, a growing number of neighborhoods are integrated and remain so over time. This article has also provided some stylized facts on the types of neighborhoods that are becoming and remaining integrated over time, but more work is needed to understand these pathways.

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