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Editor: RUTLEDGE M. DENNIS

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THE BLACK MIDDLE CLASS

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DEDICATED TO

My mother, Ora, and to the memory of
my father, David.
My children, Shay, Marlin, Kimya, and Zuri.

INTRODUCTION:
THE BLACK MIDDLE CLASS AS A RACIAL CLASS

Rutledge M. Dennis

About forty years ago, E. Franklin Frazier (1957) ignited an emotional and intellectual debate among black Americans, the reverberations of which have not yet abated, when he wrote a trenchant account of the psychology and sociology of the black middle class. A decade later, Martin Luther King (1968) continued Frazier's critique of this middle class by asserting that "It's time for the Negro middle class to rise up from its stool of indifference, to retreat from its flight into unreality and bring its full resources-its heart, its mind, and its checkbook to the aid of the less fortunate brother." Three years later, Nathan Hare (1970), one of Frazier's former students, entered the fray with an even more vitriolic attack on the black middle class. The issues raised, and the accusations hurled, by these scholars continue to shape the discourse surrounding the contemporary black middle class (Blackwell 1985; Cruse 1987; Landry 1988; hooks and West 1991; Lemann 1991; Billingsley 1992; Cose 1993). Given the ideology of race in American social thought,

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INTRODUCTION

Frazier's poignant arguments are best viewed within the contexts of an anomaly: the strange phenomenon of the emergence of a "middle" class in a society where race relations were predicated on white supremacy which meant, historically, centuries of preferential treatment for white Americans. Indeed, as DuBois (1901) earlier declared, the very idea of a black middle class within a racially divided country amounts to a "double paradox" or a "paradox within a paradox."

Given the race and class parameters of the United States, any analysis of the black middle class must address, simultaneously, class as well as racial issues. The term *racial class* will be used to describe this unique situation. Viewing the class as a racial class suggests several features: that any comparisons made between it and any version of the white middle class must be carefully delimited (see Early 1994; Martin and Martin 1978; Willie 1976; Willie 1991). Second, that discussions relative to race cannot be rigidly demarcated from discussions involving class.

This paper examines two dimensions of the black middle class as a racial class: its historical formation and development as a class, and its class consciousness. A delineation of these features illustrates how this class is not only different in origins from the white middle class; it also demonstrates how, and against great odds, blacks have sought to carve out niches, as much as doing so is possible, in a society which has historically devalued and undermined them.

RACIAL CLASS FORMATION

In his brief social history of the Black North (New York, Philadelphia, and Boston), DuBois (circa 1901, 1969) charts the emergence of the black middle class, the bulk of whom, he notes, are descendants of free black parentage. Frazier (1932), likewise, traces the lineage of one branch of the early black middle class from the "time that they were first introduced into the Virginia colony in 1619." Indeed, using the research findings of the noted historian G. Carter Woodson, Frazier (1932, p. 24) even goes as far to say that the free families in 1830 were "...enjoying in the South at least their greatest prosperity."

Thomas Sowell (1981) also analyzes the important role of the "free person of color." According to Sowell, many among this group had been able to acquire their freedom " by one means or another," while others gained their freedom by virtue of the fact that they were the sons and daughters of slave masters. The unique position of the "free persons of color" is crucial to understanding how and why this group became the leadership and decision-making elite in the nineteenth century; likewise, it to explain this group's key role in the growth of the middle class. Sowell (1981, pp. 195-196) explains it as follows:

> The lives of most "free persons of color" were narrowly circumscribed, economically, politically, and legally. They were usually poor, unskilled workers, lacked basic civil rights in most of the South and much of the North, and had little or no legal protection against fraud or even violence by whites. Nevertheless, they were years-or even generations-ahead of the slaves in their acculturation to American society. Most "free persons of color" could read and write in 1850, although only 1 or 2 percent of the slaves could do so... In short, "free persons of color" had a large head start over the rest of the black population in their adjustment to American society. There were enduring consequences to this head start. The descendants of "free persons of color" remained prominent among Negro leadership in many fields, into the twentieth century...

The historian John Hope Franklin (1967) also discusses the role of the "free persons of color," but he highlights, as does Sowell, a group seldom mentioned when analyzing the Ante-bellum and Post-bellum periods: the large number of skilled slaves who were generally town and city dwellers. Because they were highly skilled, they, too, after 1865, would constitute a part of that small, but important, middle class.

Yet another part of the middle class after 1865 would be comprised of those who were house servants or domestic slaves, in contrast to those who were field hands or field slaves. The Post-bellum status of those domestic servants was derived from their greater exposure to white American culture and values. According to Thorpe (1961), of the enslaved, house slaves and their children, due to their exposure to the slave master's culture (speech, dress, religion, etc.) were, after 1865, able to play a leadership and class role, out of proportion to their number in the larger black population. Many writers have sought to construct an antagonistic relationship between the two groups, however, Blassingame's (1972) careful and detailed study of

the slave community does not support this view. Though agreeing that domestic servants did have a few advantages, he also examines their many disadvantages. More importantly, he notes (p. 210) that rather than the oft-repeated antagonistic relationship, "[D]omestic servants were the field slave's most important windows on the outside world and aids in trying to fanthom the planter's psyche."

The relative political freedom experienced in the North during the post-1865 years, along with greater opportunities for educational and occupational advancement, made it possible for Northern blacks to experience a degree of upward mobility impossible in the South. In DuBois' 1901 study (p. 2), he cites this as a factor in the growing class division within black communities in the North: "there is a sharper division of the Negroes into classes and a greater difference in attainment and training than one finds in the South." Similar patterns of racial class formation have been described for Chicago (Drake and Cayton 1945; Spear, 1967) and New York (Osofsky 1968). Landry (1988) draws the distinction between the old and new middle class, linking the growth of the new middle class to the need for services in the fast-growing communities in the large urban centers. These four books,like DuBois' Philadelphia study, document the occupations which represented middle classness in various stages of the evolution of the black middle class. They also examine the very tenuous and fragile links which occupationally defined middle classness for blacks in contrast to whites.

In his Philadelphia study DuBois traces the formation of the black middle class from those who comprise the following occupations: the professions, composing the smallest percentage and the highest income (teachers, lawyers, physicians, and clergymen); merchants; clerks; and skilled tradesmen. In his 1901 observations of black life in New York City and Boston, DuBois included the following occupations as middle class in New York: teachers, physicians, merchants, clerks, mail carriers, and clergymen. In Boston this class included those in the following occupations: lawyers, teachers, clergymen, mercantile trade, real estate, merchants, undertakers, clerks, and salesmen. Drake and Cayton (1945) documents similar occupations for the black middle class in Chicago.

DuBois' (circa 1901, 1969, p. 29) observation that this class comprises a very small proportion of the communities in New York, Boston, and Philadelphia is not startling news. Rather,it is to be expected. His important observation, however, is that, unlike the

white middle class, the black middle class has great difficulties in passing its knowledge and financial resources to its children. This fact is intricately linked to the classes'inability to receive adequate wages and promotions in competitive situations with whites. This racial division of labor, served to slow rather than terminate the growth of the black middle class. It did mean, however, that blacks in semi-skilled or non-skilled labor would be pushed further down the occupational and wage ladder.

Since the white professional class had no desire to service a pariah or outcast group, the door was opened for black professionals to fill the void. Many of these professionals, especially doctors, dentists, lawyers, and teachers were largely confined to black clients, patients and students since whites generally refused to patronize their businesses. Here we may note three features which operated hand in glove in the formation of the black middle class: structured inequality, group exclusion, and the ideology of race. Each reinforced the other.

Lacking a legacy of middle classness, the members of this small black middle class were transfixed between their collective past and their future aspirations, both personal and collective. Their plight was all the more ambiguous because they were navigating in uncharted waters: there was no aggregate of middle class role models, hence, there were no guidelines for the road on which they had embarked. They were confronted with a dilemma: whites did not want to associate with them and did exclude them, yet tried to undermine them and did not want them to succeed. On the other hand, this class had a collective experience and a common fate with less fortunate, but it was pulled by a desire to move beyond its racial status. It identified with the problems of the less fortunate members of the group but did not want to live as they lived. It wanted to assert its class role but was prevented from doing so. Thus, its class role had to be fulfull within the context of its racial role within the community.

Osofsky (1968, p. 16) describes the special ordeal of this emerging class and quotes DuBois (circa 1903, 1961) on the perilous passage in the making of this class: "The rise of a nation, the pressing forward of a social class means a bitter struggle, a hard and soul-sickening battle with the world such as few of the more favored classes know or appreciate."

When DuBois examines Southern life the formation of the black middle class has different contours. In his Farmville, Virginia study

(DuBois 1898) farmers, teachers, grocers, and artisans comprise the black middle class. In another essay (DuBois 1901) he includes farmers, landlords, and mechanics. Beyond the category of teachers, there is an absence of a professional class to the extent that such a class existed in his study of the North. Given the differences in regional economics (industrialism in the North and agrarianism in the South), this would be expected. In this sense, the formation of the black middle class in the South parallels the formation of the white middle class in that region, just as the black middle class in the North follows, to some extent, the white Northern middle class pattern.

The formation of middle classness in the South is consistent with the three determinants which assisted in the formation of the black middle class in the North: structured inequality, group exclusion, and the ideology of race. But the three determinants would operate more rigidly and more violently in the South. The structured inequality would be deeper, group exclusion more intense, and racial ideology more formal and legal. E. Franklin Frazier (1957a) paints a picture of a very rigid class structure among Southern blacks, between house servants and field slavesand between slaves and "free coloreds." According to him, there was virtual class warfare between the groups.

The position of blacks in general, and more specifically the middle class, was very tenuous, fragile, and subject to the racial winds which constantly traversed the South. The difference between the two regions with respect to blacks amount to one of degree. The three determinants worked similarily in the North and the South because both regions wanted separate black and white worlds. By constructing two separate worlds and enforcing this separation through laws, traditions, and customs in the South, and by tradition, custom, and habit in the North, both regions assisted in the formation of a permanent black racial class.

The formation of a black middle class occurs in the United States for the same reasons middle classes appear in all industrial nations: urbanization and industralization and consumerism. This black middle class emerges, but unlike the larger white middle class, it is a marginal class in as much as its racial status is an obstacle to its class opportunities. It is an economic and social class based on education, income, and occupation, but it is defined more by its race, hence it is primarily a racial class. Chapter Nine of *The Philadelphia Negro* (pp. 97-146) examines the many occupations made possible

by the rapid social change in the city; this rapid social change provided new opportunities for the enterprising individuals from the lower and working classes as well as those individuals who were reared in families which had already begun the emotional and psychological movement into the middle class though it may lack many of the financial and cultural attributes of this class.

The studies cited in this section demonstrate that the black middle class emerges, North and South, due to consistent and persistent themes in American life: racial politics, structured inequality, and group exclusion. The evolution of this class as a racial class is indeed a paradox, for its middle classness is intricately linked to its racial status, thus, it emerges as a special class, a racial class. In this sense, it could not simply become a class for itself in as much as, unlike the white middle class, it could not, even if it wanted to, totally disengage itself from the non-middle class within its midst. Though its status as a racial class made it distinct, Willie (1976, p. 58) notes that this class is very much like the white middle class in that "its members are success-oriented, upwardly mobile, [and] materialistic...They immerse themselves in work and leave little time for leisure. Education, occupation, hard work and thrift are accepted as the means for the achievement of success."

In one sense, slavery, racism, and jim crowism created the foundation upon which this class developed. But despite these features, or it might be, because of these features, it can be said that this class created itself, against great odds. Taking advantage of the limited opportunities available, black Americans pushed and shoved against, as DuBois said, "the veil." As they did, they operated within the only society they knew; they sought to create, shape, and influence the cultural forces within their communities and beyond. This enabled them to pursue their dreams of the "good life" as they had defined it.

RACE AND CLASS CONSCIOUSNESS

DuBois' analysis of Philadelphia, and Allan H. Spear (1967) and Drake and Cayton's (1945) study of Chicago reiterate a central theme: that the emerging black middle class was torn between its racial ideal—integration, and the urban Northern reality—segregation. How to deal with this lack of correspondence between the ideal and

the reality became a major issue. According to both DuBois (1901, p. 41) and Spear (1967, pp. 53-62) the intraracial battle lines were drawn between Northern-born blacks who generally wanted to use the politics of protest to support the abolition of the color line. Many among this group were reluctant to create or build institutions, fearing that doing so might harden the color line. On the other side were many migrants from the South who, in the South, lived under, practiced, and supported the concept of racial solidarity, self-help, and a collectivist group economics. The Southern-born sought to shame the Northern-born, accusing them of running away from their race. This push was assisted by white hostility and resistance to greater racial cooperation.

Spear (1967, p. 91) indicates that the black middle class and black middle class leadership emerge in conjunction with the rise of institution-building in Chicago:

> The rise of the new middle-class leadership was closely interrelated with the development of Chicago's black ghetto. White hostility and population growth combined to create the physical ghetto on the South Side. The response of Negro leadership, on the other hand, created the institutional ghetto. Between 1900 and 1915, Chicago's Negro leaders built a complex of community organizations, institutions, and enterprises that made the South Side not simply an area of Negro concentration but a city within a city.

DuBois' Philadelphia study attests to similar institition-building there as well. In both cases, however, there was great reluctance of many within the middle class to creat strong internal infrastructures within the black community. They feared that the very institutions and organizations being created to serve the immediate needs might, over time, in fact contribute to the very segregation being fought. Despite the apprehensions, however, many believed that blacks had no choice in the matter: A people herded together, because of race, within tightly controlled urban boundaries, sharing a common racial memory of discrimination and exclusion, and confronted with the reality of having to create their own world, had to first define then carve out for itself a collective strategy for group survival. Thus, many reasoned, the dangers of long-term segregation would be offset by the need to construct community life to enable communities to tend to their communal needs.

Over time, it was natural that the institutional and organizational building would create and sustain a degree of racial consciousness.

Such a consciousness was partially ignited by an already existing white racial consciousness which unabashingly proclaimed white supremacy as the political, economic, and cultural ideology. Thus, as blacks became more immersed in institutions such as churches, lodges, social clubs, unions, schools, and the professional groups which were primarily black, there was the sense that these groups would be used to break down the wall of shame and discrimination even as they were being used to fulfill everyday needs. Black racial consciousness was fueled by the racial conflicts, hostility, and the exclusionary policies of whites. As Spear notes, these racial policies by whites forced even those blacks who saw no benefits in racial consciousness to move in that direction.

The institutions and organizations, having been created, shaped, and molded a sense of racial identity, racial consciousness, racial solidarity (see Dennis 1991). In many ways this consciousness was singular in spite of DuBois' analysis of "double consciousness" as a major theme in black life (Dennis 1980, 1995). That DuBois himself understood the singularity of racial consciousness, in contrast to a doubleness, can be shown by his description of the rise of racial awareness, identity, and consciousness among blacks in New York (DuBois 1969, circa 1901, p. 16):

> ...let us follow the life of the average New York negro. He is first born to a colored father and mother...The child's neighbors as he grows up, are colored, for he lives in a colored district...The young man's friends and associates are therefore all negroes. When he goes to work he works alongside colored men in most cases; his social circle, his clubs and organizations throughout the city are all confined to his own race, and his contact with the whites is practically confined to economic relationships, the streets, and street cars, with occasionally some intercourse at public amusements.

If the passage above describes the growing racial identity and consciousness of the" average citizen", what might be said of the middle class citizen? And how did this middle class define its racial class role vis-à-vis the average citizen? Given its income, education, life style, and professional status, can it be assumed that this middle class had a heightened or diminished sense of racial identity and consciousness? Even if the middle class were opposed to community building, the fact is that it did do so, becoming the institutional and organizational leaders.

DuBois views the black middle class at times in a most ambiguous light: on one hand, it is torn between its class aspirations in an upwardly mobile class society; on the other hand, it is divided, perplexed, and angry because of a racial status that cannot be transcended in a racist society. Yet as divided as the class may have been, the process of institution-building had to proceed with a relatively high level of group consciousness and solidarity, points emphasized by DuBois, Spear, and Drake and Cayton, and later Frazier. A point also, by the way, recognized by the non-middle class in black communities. Whites may have viewed all blacks as a collective with little distinctions between individuals and groups; blacks, however, knew better, and responded to these differences.

One of the major issues in any discussion of the black middle class involves the oft made claim that this class does indeed have a consciousness, but that it is the consciousness of a white middle class. A close reading of the sociology, politics, and economics of this class casts doubt on this thesis. That the black middle class became conscious of itself as a racial class can be seen in a variety of institutions and organizations: They made their middle classness felt in the middle class churches they found and attended; the middle class fraternities and sororities; the middle class private social clubs; insurance societies; loan association, labor unions; hospitals; and an assortment of middle class professional and occupational groups.

That the middle class played a pivotal role cannot be questioned. But it often was a struggle as DuBois (1967, circa 1899, pp. 177-178) succinctly describes it:

> It is the germ of a great middle class,but in general its members are curiously hampered by the fact that, being shut off from the world about them, they are the aristocrary of their own people, with all the responsibility of an aristocracy, and yet they, on the other hand, are not prepared for this role, and their own masses are not used to looking to them for leadership. As a class they feel strongly the centrifugal forces of class repulsion among their own people, and, indeed, are compelled to feel it in sheer self-defense. They do not relish being mistaken for servants; they shrink from the free and easy worship of most of the Negro churches, and they shrink from all such display and publicity as will expose them to the veiled insult and depreciation which the masses suffer. Consequently this class, which ought to lead, refuses to head any race movement on the plea that thus draw the very color line against which they protest. On the other hand their ability to stand apart, refusing on one hand all responsibility for the masses of the Negroes and on the other hand seeking no recognition from the outside world...

This statement by DuBois can be viewed as a classic case of the contradictions which abound in discussions of the black middle class. Whereas DuBois paints an accurate picture of the formation of this class, when he moves towards a description of its role in the black community he lapses into inconsistencies. For example, on page 392 of the Philadelphia study he catigates the middle class and upper classes because they "should recognize their duty toward the masses." Yet on the *very* next page (393) he contradicts that assertion by acknowledging that the middle and upper classes are engaged in activities to assist in the betterment of the lower classes "...the Negro must learn the lesson that other nations learned so laboriously and imperfectly, that his better classes have their chief excuse for being in the work they may do toward lifting the rabble...*that they do something already to grapple with these social problems of their race is true, but they do not yet do nearly as much as they must, nor do they clearly recognize their responsibility* [my emphasis]. DuBois does not clearly spell out in specific terms what particular activities he wants performed by the middle class. Later speaking of middle class leader, DuBois (circa 1931, 1970, p. 56) lauds this group for having "worked unselfishly for the uplift of the masses of Negro folk...There is no other group of leaders on earth who have so largely made common cause with the lowest of their race as educated American Negroes, and it is their foresight and sacrifice and theirs alone that have saved the American freedman from annihilation and degradation."

In a review of the interracial activities at the turn of the century we have seen how structured inequality, racial exclusion, and the ideology of race created two communities in Philadelphia, Farmville and New York (DuBois), Chicago (Drake and Cayton; Spear), and Harlem (Osofsky). We have also seen the factors which contributed to the rise and development of the black middle class and the occupations associated with this class; how and why this class became involved in community development; how and why racial pride, racial identity, and racial consciousness emerged as important weapons in the racial struggle between blacks and whites, and how the black middle class role was viewed and accepted.

Ironically, it is E. Franklin Frazier who offers one of the most lucid explanations for the presence of racial pride and racial consciousness among middle class blacks. This is ironic because Frazier (1957) was one of the principal architects of the view which excoriate the black

middle class from the 1950s onward. Writing of youth from middle class families Frazier (circa 1940, 1967, p. 55) proferred the view of this class: "they show more sophistication toward their racial status, that they show more consciousness of their social status, and that they are likely to exhibit a greater degree of race consciousness...the nascent race consciousness of this class is accompanied by a critical attitude toward the deficiencies of the Negro and a deeper resentment of the discrimination practiced by whites." In this passage Frazier captures both the class and race ambivalences of the black middle class, but the quote is light years away from his 1957 statement which attributes a high level of self-hatred for this class and the great disdain, according to Frazier, it expresses towards members of the lower class.

The contemporary black middle class can be defined, as some researchers have, as a "new" class (Landry 1987). Landry contrasts the old and the new middle classes, and he concludes that the thread permeating both classes remain the same: the world of uncertainty at work and in social settings. The article by Richard Lacayo (March 13, 1989) characterizes the uncertainty as a DuBoisian "double consciousness" in which members of the black middle class "...speak again and again of 'living in two worlds.' In one they are judged by their credentials and capabilities. In the other, race still comes first." But in a departure from the double theme, Lacayo notes that the black side of the double conscious may be the stronger of the two, asserting that "Like other ethnic and racial groups, upwardly mobile African Americans often fear that assimilation will mean a loss of identity." In other words, blacks are experiencing the centrifugal as well as the centripetal forces operating in the American society: they fear of being too marginalized simultaneously with their fear of being too assimilated. Out of this dilemma has emerged, according to Lacayo, a movement towards "conserving black traditions."

Ellis Cose's (1993) recent book analyzes the hurt and rage of the black middle class. Amid the hurt and pain, the book examines the degree to which race consciousness still permeates that class—though this consciousness is often fueled by the many slights, mistreatments, and insults experienced by this class. If Lacayo is correct and members of the black middle class do live "between two worlds," we should not, however, conclude, that their identity has been placed in limbo between these worlds. Despite the theory of living "between two worlds," and there may be gaps between emotional and physical worlds, there is a degree to which Lacayo is not describing anything

more about the black middle class that DuBois had not much earlier analyzed.In fact, much of the discontent expressed in the Cose book and the Lacayo article relate to the frustrations on the job and job-related conflicts. Occupational and wage competition with white Americans are issues for middle class blacks in the market place; on these issues, whites continue to be the reference groups against which blacks compare their economic gains, as it should be. However, in many other areas of life, other blacks continue to be the reference group for middle class blacks. For example Karen DeWitt (1975, p. 14) speaks to this point when she argues that, contrary to popular beliefs, members of the black middle class do identify with each other: "while middle and upper-income blacks may share behavioral similarities with their [white]counterparts, there is no sense of peoplehood, and ultimately peoplehood is more significant." As one of DeWitt's (1975, p. 14) interviewer remarks: "We define our lives in terms of each other and the children. If I'm going to be compared to anybody, I'd rather be compared with another black professional. We have made it under similar circumstances."

Awareness of these circumstances has fostered middle class racial consciousness, though this consciousness has a different form from that of the working and lower classes. For example, one is not likely to find many members of the middle class among The Nation of Islam, just as they were not found in large numbers among Garvey's UNIA movement (Cruse 1967). A modified racial consciousness tends to be more acceptable to this class, one which does not require a radical break with certain mainstream values and assumptions. Alphonso Pinkney (1975, p. 156) addresses this point in his comparison of middle and upper class blacks and whites:

> Middle and upper-class blacks are hardly distinguishable from white Americans of comparable social class level in many cultural patterns. There is even some evidence that they frequently overconform to middle-class standards of behavior in religious observations, in dress, in sexual behavior, and in child-rearing practices. But this does not mean that black culture is a myth...

The pre-1960s represented a racial and class consciousness in the direction of integration. For many blacks that meant an abandonment of black institutions and organizations (see Cruse 1987; hook and West 1991; Early 1994). Groups such as the NAACP, the

Urban League, the pre-mid 1960s CORE, SCLC, and the early SNCC epitomized the politics and philosophy of this thrust. The Black Power and Pan-African movements of the mid-1960s and the 1970s pointed black America in yet a new direction and ushered in new levels of racial as well as class consciousness. Here, the integration-Black Power dichotomy is presented as an "ideal type" in as much as there existed a multiplicity of criss-crosses and movements back and forth between the two bipolar types. Indeed, as black life became more diversified, as had the larger society, it would be possible for many members of the middle class to have their feet in several camps (see Allen 1969; Blackwell 1985; Baraka and Neal 1968; Toure and Hamilton 1994).

Recent interest in genealogy, travels to Africa and the Carribbean, as well as interest in black contemporary and folk art, artifacts, and music, among many members of the black middle class, indicate that we may be in the midst of a cultural renaissance. If this assertion is correct, the middle class, because it has the necessary cash reserves and the surplus funds, and because it retains organizational and leadership positions within communities, will be the pacesetter.

What is being examined here are merely the visible and manifest cultural tendencies reflecting patterns of middle class life. There may be as many members of the middle class who do not manifest these cultural tendencies, but this does not negate, nor does it lessen the impact of new cultural forces in the general population. A number of new cultural innovations have surfaced, many of these primarily within and by the middle classes: The origins and growing popularity of Kwanzaa; the creation of "rite of passage" ceremonies for black teenagers; the growing number of middle class newly weds who integrate African practices into their traditional Western weddings. Another visible example of the contemporary cultural resurgence has been the overwhelming popularity of black colleges and universities, this, after a decade or so wondering whether these colleges and universities would survive the last two decades of the twentieth century.

A glance at the magazine rack in any medium or large city will illustrate the growing middle class purchasing power to be wide, for there is a variety of magazines directed towards the black middle class. Such would not exist if the black middle class were simply a shadow of the white middle class, rather than a racial class unto itself with a sense of its own racial class consciousness. There are those

who wish this racial class to have racial consciousness but not class consciousness, just as there are those who would nullify its racial consciousness but keep its class consciousness. Both groups lack a fundamental understanding of the unique role and position of this racial class in the American society.

The examples of black middle class consciousness presented above do not presage any vision cutting ties to the larger society; rather, it suggests a new assertiveness and confidence that it is possible to fully participate in the larger society while at the same time adhere to those particular attributes of one's historic heritage and culture. For contrary to one side of DuBois' theme on double consciousness, it is possible to be both black and an American.

CONCLUSION

The black middle class has had a unique evolution as a racial class. It is a class whose major defining attribute has been its ethnicity. Out of its varied history has emerged the nuts and bolts used in the construction of black community life. DuBois painted the black middle class as ambiguous, uncertain, aloof, and angry that race prevented it from playing its "proper" class role. Later, Frazier provided the middle class with few redeeming values and virtues. Yet it is to this class that we look when we trace the history of black communities. Mind you, it is not only this class, for this class relied upon and needed the support of the vast working and lower classes which comprised the bulk of the population.But this class played an inordinate role in whatever foundations were laid for strictly communal developments.

Albert Murray (1970) castigates those who seek to divide black communities along rigid class lines. Viewing such attempts as mere political posturing,he accuses advocates of inciting class warfare among blacks. Given the fact that the legacy of middle classness among blacks is extremely small, and given the fact that the vast numbers of those who join the contemporary "new" middle class class have working class parents and grandparents (see McAdoo 1975; Landry 1988; Billingsley 1992) it is doubtful that any warfare will occur. It does not, however, discount tensions between the middle and working classes, but the greatest tension will probably occur between the black and white middle classes as many middle class

gains over the past 25 years may be stalled due to middle class white fears of the preferential treatment of minorities. The current debate over affirmative action is a harbinger of things to come. But if the past history of the black middle class tells us anything, it is that this class will fight the "new" racism just as it fought the old version. It will fight, not by giving up its class role to immerse itself in its racial role;rather, it will use both roles as it has done historically, thus affirming its unique status as a racial class.

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PART I

POLITICAL ECONOMY AND THE MIDDLE CLASS

RISING TIDE OR EBB TIDE? RECENT CHANGES IN THE BLACK MIDDLE CLASS IN THE U.S., 1980-1990

Frank Harold Wilson

ABSTRACT

During recent decades the status of the black middle class in the changing U.S. economy and occupational structure has been subject to competing and contradictory interpretations interrelated with macrosociological controversies surrounding the changing significance of race. Where integrative perspectives view recent social and economic indicators optimistically as evidence of increased mobility, convergence, and inclusion, segmentation perspectives viewing the same indicators through more cautious and sober prisms see evidence of persistent segregation, divergence, and exclusion.

This paper sheds light on the black middle class controversy by reviewing the theories and examining census data on economic and occupational changes from 1980 to 1990 as evidence. The paper argues that the continued mobility, differentiation, and desegregation of

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blacks in the middle class during the 1980s have been primarily characterized by the growth of administrative support, marketing/sales, and mid-level administrative and managerial occupations. The complexity of black middle class growth has uneven patterns related to strata, occupations, and gender. At the same time, there are some findings of secondary and emergent patterns of stability, segregation, and reversals. The organization of this paper is threefold. First, different theoretical perspectives of the changing black middle class structure will be reviewed. Second, important economic and occupational trends between 1980 and 1990 will be described and analyzed based on data from the U.S. Census. Third, implications of these findings for theories and research on racial and class stratification will be shared.

BACKGROUND

At the beginning of the post-World War II period, the black middle class in the United States was much smaller than present. According to Gunnar Myrdal, this middle class was a small group of professionals and business people whose existence in the racial caste order derived from monopolizing specialized services to the black masses (Myrdal 1944, pp. 689-704). Myrdal's description captured an economic situation where the status of blacks was constrained by institutional structures of racial discrimination, de jure segregation, poverty, and marginalization that largely excluded them from upwardly mobile, high-paying, and prestigious employment in the industrial economy and occupational structure. Historic and continuing post-World War II discrimination were reflected in most blacks working as servants, domestics, unskilled laborers, and farmers. This description did not capture nor anticipate the dynamic changes in class accompanying the wartime and post-World War II black migration to the cities.

E. Franklin Frazier examined the early post-World War II structural changes in the economy through the 1950s and offered a different assessment. In *Black Burgeoisie* (1957), he saw in the growth and differentiation of the American occupational structure the bases for the increased mobility of blacks into professional, managerial, clerical/sales, and crafts occupations and the formation of a new middle class. Because the wartime and post-war geographic mobility from the South was a condition of this occupational mobility, Frazier

noted that the entry of blacks into the cities of the North was directly correlated with blacks' greater relative incomes (Frazier 1957). Only two years after the publication of *Black Burgeoisie*, the Census Bureau began publishing poverty status data which showed 9.9 million blacks or 55 percent of the black population below the poverty line (U.S. Bureau of Census 1978, p. 28). While Frazier's observations captured large-scale and dramatic economic structural changes among blacks that primarily involved the expansion of working-class and lower-middle class occupations (see Farley and Allen 1987, Table 9.1), these trends occurred alongside a persistence of racial caste.

Frazier's analysis preceded the height of the civil rights movement, the War on Poverty of the 1960s, and the most rapid growth period of the black middle class. The growth of black incomes during the 1960s resulted in the U.S. percentage of blacks below the poverty line decreasing from 55 percent in 1960 to 33 percent in 1970. Blacks in professional, clerical, craftsmen, and operatives occupations grew importantly, while nonfarm and agricultural labor shrank. The rising tides of the black middle class, working class, and poor during the 1960s and 1970s would be organizationally mobilized via the civil rights movements and black power movements and be institutionally codified via federal policies of equal opportunity and affirmative action. These rising tides of Black American would soon meet storms of resistance, reaction, counterrevolution, and conservatism.

William Julius Wilson in *The Declining Significance of Race: Blacks and Changing American Institutions* (1978) would address the economic and political changes bearing on black class changes through the 1970s. Wilson argued that with the growth of corporate and government sectors during the 1950s and 1960s, college educated and talented blacks experienced dramatic movement into white collar employment and occupational upgrading (Wilson 1978, pp. 126-129). Although the rates of black occupational upgrading slowed during the early 1970s, he notes that blacks continued to experience more rapid occupational upgrading than whites (Wilson 1978, p. 130). This "declining significance and race" experienced by young, highly educated, and talented blacks was accompanied by the increasing growth, isolation, and falling behind of the black underclass. By 1987, in *The Truly Disadvantaged: The Underclass, Inner City, and Public Policy*, Wilson continued to argue the dislocation and marginalization of the black ghetto poor or underclass and the mobility of the black middle class from the ghetto.

Controversies remain concerning the continuity of the trends described by Frazier and Wilson and how these anticipate and capture the economic developments affecting the black community by social class through the 1980s. Landry, for example, argues that during the 1973-75 and 1980-82 recessions, middle class blacks fared worse and lost ground relative to middle class whites (Landry 1987, pp. 194-195). He notes that these negative structural effects of the recession were felt earlier and continued longer among blacks, were reflected in a slowed growth of the black middle class. Between 1973 and 1982, the percentage of blacks in all middle class nationally increased only one percent—from 5.8 to 6.8 (Landry 1987, p. 196). furthermore, blacks continued to be overrepresented in the lower black middle class of sales and clerical workers vis-à-vis the upper middle class of professionals and administrators (Landry 1987, p. 198). Careful contextualization of occupational and income changes by race since the 1970s also raise questions of whether the black community is becoming increasingly differentiated largely due to social class or race. Recent studies such as Wilson, Tienda, and Wu indicate that the persistently high gap in black and white unemployment is explained not only by residence, differential access to employment opportunities, and different occupational distributions, but also by segmented labor markets by race and labor market discrimiation. At levels of higher education, the racial difference in unemployment remained rather than decreased (Wilson, Tienda, and Wu 1993).

This paper will shed light on the black middle class controversy by reviewing the theories and examining census data on economic and occupational changes from 1980 to 1990 as evidence. This paper will show that the changes accompanying the growing black middle class are complex and characterized by racial, class, and gender differentials. The paper is organized as follows. First, theoretical perspectives of the American economy and black middle class will be reviewed. Second, census data will be used to examine changes in black income, occupational distributions, and occupational segregation. Third, the implications of these findings for theorizing and research on racial stratification and public policy will be discussed.

THEORIES OF THE AMERICAN ECONOMY, OCCUPATIONAL STRUCTURE, AND CHANGING BLACK MIDDLE CLASS

During the post-World War II years through the 1980s, macro-economic changes have been reflected and reproduced in important class changes among Black Americans. Although nearly all observers agree that the structure of blacks in the economy and black social classes have changed, there are different interpretations and assessments of what this development means. Questions concerning the black middle class, working class, lower class, and their relationships are subject to controversy. There are two competing models of social stratification and social mobility by race that are usually found in the social science literature that can be extended to account for the status of blacks in general and the black middle class in particular: (1) black middle class formation and growth as integration into the post-industrial economy; (2) black middle class formation and growth as dual labor market integration and segregation into the post-industrial economy and occupational structure.

These models differ with respect to the assumptions of the underlying logic of the American economy and occupational structure, the causes of black class growth and decline, the salient variables and relationships, and the future of both the black middle class and lower classes in American society.

Integration Models of Black Middle Class Changes

Integration perspectives view the different outcomes of blacks' education, occupations, and earning as largely a function of their human capital and the degree of match/mismatch between changing black social and economic characteristics relevant to generating income and the changing communities and labor markets were blacks are situated. These perspectives view the economy as a capitalist market one in which competition, profit, rationality, innovation, and growth drive it. In this post-industrial economy, there is expected to be stronger relationships among schooling, occupational status, and earnings for both blacks and whites. Unlike an earlier economy and occupational structure where highly educated blacks experienced discrimination (Blau and Duncan 1967), this contemporary economy and occupational structure are characterized by a decreasing

significance of race for highly educated and talented blacks (Wilson 1978; Hauser and Featherman 1978). The black lover class and underclass are increasingly isolated and left behind due to historic discrimination and lower human capital (Wilson 1987). Integration perspectives argue that the black middle class is bifurcated and fundamentally different from blacks in other social classes.

The integrative perspectives have "progress" themes which emphasize blacks' increasing status attainment as an important phenomenon in quantitative and qualitative terms (Jaynes and Williams 1989; Kilson 1983; Wilson 1978; Freeman 1976; Scammon and Wattenberg 1973). Research which has validated this hypothesis has shown gains in college attendance and graduation since the 1970s, the greatest convergence in racial incomes among younger blacks with middle class occupations, and the steady breaking down of employment barriers in the private and public sectors. Where black middle class persons have lower earnings than similar white persons, this is assumed to be a product of the lower human capital characteristics and historic discrimination. For working class and lower class blacks, and lower human capital characteristics, productivity, access to job information networks, and residence in central cities where post-industrial employment has moved from the traditionally high-wage manufacturing activities and blacks do not have the high-tech training and skills largely explains what has happened (Kasarda 1985). Higher black unemployment grows out of deprivations in blacks' human capital and the growing mismatch.

Macrosociological factors are also relevant to understanding integrative perspectives of blacks changing economic status. First, government interventions in the economy such as affirmative action, compliance, and set-aside programs are argued to have improved equality of opportunity undercutting discrimination in employment and business. Public policies such as Kennedy's Executive Order 11246 (1961) establishing and obligation on the part of federal contractors to undertake "affirmative action" to ensure equal employment, Congressional enactment of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 ending unfair employment treatment of against minorities and women, Nixon's Executive Order 11478 (1969) requiring federal departments and agencies to set plans for equal employment opportunity, and the Civil Rights Act of 1991 are exemplary. Second, because discrimination I perceived as an exogenous "taste" or aberration that contradicts competition, young

blacks and blacks in general are expected, with all other factors equal, to have an edge with similarly educated and trained whites. The preferential treatment given blacks in the post-industrial economy predicts that blacks should be entering new occupations more rapidly than whites and moving up the ladder at least as fast. To the extent blacks experience higher unemployment across classes these may be viewed as statistical artifacts. Third, the growth of the post-industrial economy is characterized by a convergence of high-paying and low-paying occupational opportunities across regions. Unlike earlier, earnings for middle class blacks across metropolitan areas in the South and North are now more similar than earlier. The poverty, which was traditionally higher among blacks in the South, is now characterized by higher levels in the Midwest and Northeast. The integration perspectives minimize and make invisible the affects of outright institutional and class-based discrimination among blacks in the marketplace while acknowledging historic discrimination. Fourth, to the extent that blacks in middle class occupations earn less than similar whites, these should be viewed in the context of the mismatch between education, training, skills, and changing regional and metropolitan labor markets. It is argued that because the black middle class primarily resides in older metropolitan centers characterized by declining economies rather than migrating to newer metropolitan centers characterized by growth, the chances of translating education, training, and skills into higher status occupations and earning are constrained.

Segmentation Models of Black Middle Class Changes

Segmentation perspectives argue that while the economic integration of blacks is nominally driven by competition, growth, equality, and diversity, counterveiling historic and contemporary structures of racial stratification, institutional discrimination, and occupational segregation result in significantly different patterns for contemporary Black Americans in general and the black middle class specifically. Accompanying the changes in the post-industrial economy, these perspectives underscore the dynamic yet persistent structures and processes that dichotomize business and labor markets into primary and secondary sectors which differ in working conditions, wages, and stability. Primary labor markets consist of the more rapidly growing advanced segments of the economy which

have relatively more sustained growth, high wages, strong benefits, secure working environments, and favorable probabilities of upward career occupational mobility. Primary businesses consist of those leading international, national, and regional companies, Secondary labor markets consist of slow growing and declining segments of the economy which experience instability, lower wages, marginal benefits, insecure working environments, and greater probabilities of horizontal and downward mobility. Secondary businesses consist of those local oriented and small busineses most subject to marginal profits, turnover, and failures.

Segmentation perspetives view the post-World War II economic growth as a transformation characterized by uneven processes of growth and decline driven by global competition, deinudstrialization, corporate centralization, automation, and the management of social control. Concomitantly, the growth of the state is driven by organizational relationships and norms of corporate liberalism, governmental reform, and intergovernmental transfer programs which increase its adaptability while insulating it from power contests and conflicts (Piven and Cloward 1972). The growth of the black middle class is primarily explained by macro-sociological processes of state growth, political centralization, bureaucratization, home rule, empowerment, and other interventions which have variably and unevenly integrated blacks into the economy (Darrity 1990; Collins 1983; Hill 1987; Jones 1986). Simultaneously, the growth of the black poor and underclass result out of a logic of capitalist surplus labor where complex forces of agricultural modernization, industrialization, and automation increasingly render blacks into lower paying, part-time, and unemployed ranks of cities. Racial segregation further isolates and distances blacks from the rapid growth industries of the economy. For blacks of all classes, these perspectives view the changing economy as crystallized around a racial division of labor that has race and class consequences fro participation and mobility.

These macrosociological factors are most salient to explaining segmentation perspectives. First, the changing economic status of blacks in the post-industrial economy is importantly characterized by externalities linked to the expansion of corporate and public administration (Collins 1983). While recognizing that the black middle class has grown recently, these perspectives emphasize that these trends are cyclical rather than linear events. The corporate liberalism, governmental reforms, and intergovernmental transfer

programs relevant to the formation and growth of the post-World War II middle class in general and the black middle class specifically are predicted to have a logic of development characterized by structural and intraclass conflicts which may undermine the bases of this class in the long run. Second, the role of deindustrialization, automation, and redlining, and disinvestment have disproportionately and adversely affected the development inner city communities, the wealth of black middle classes and business formation. The marginalization of urban black communities and black labor is reflected in a precarious black middle class vulnerable to horizontal and downward movement. Third, despite governmental policies such as Affirmative Action, segmentation perspectives emphasize that both majority group management and organized labor competition with blacks result in a persistence of institutional discrimination in employment, promotion, lower wages, and less career mobility for the black middle class. Fourth, the contemporary earnings returns for black college graduates have less convergence than described during the 1970s. The greatest convergence in income is now predicted to be found among persons with post-secondary school experience/training short of college completion. The segmentation/segregation perspectives emphasize a persistence of discrimination that cuts across occupations. To the extent that blacks in middle class occupations are growing they are expected to be strongly represented and concentrated in occupations and industries that are declining economic activities or low-paying employment.

THE CHANGING ECONOMIC AND OCCUPATIONAL STATUS OF THE BLACK MIDDLE CLASS

How may the black middle class during the 1980s be characterized? Do economic and occupational statistics suggest increasing integration or segmentation? In an attempt to shed light on these questions, the next portion of this paper is an empirical assessment. The empirical assessment of selected structural economic changes among Black Americans is focused on the following: (1) black income changes; (2) black changes in middle class occupations; and (3) black middle class changes in occupational segregation. These statistics provide a context for describing and analyzing the continuity/discontinuity between the 1980s and earlier.

Black Income Changes, 1980-1990

Changes in black income provide a context for interpreting the intergroup and intragroup dynamics of Black Americans in the larger class structure and the status of the black middle class. Black income changes may be examined in terms of at least two dimensions—concentration changes, distributional changes. Gini rations are used for income distributions to describe the extent of concentration. Sometimes called the coefficient of population concentration (Shryock and Siegel 1975, pp. 178-180), ginis when examined over time provide an important dimension of changing racial differentials in income concentration that permit an assessment of the convergence-divergence issue.

Since the 1970s, national income data shows the gini ratio increasing steadily. Between 1970 and 1990, the overall gini score increased 44 points—from .394 to .428. This increase reflects a pattern of increasing shares of aggregate income earned by families in the two highest quintiles and decreasing shares earned by familites in the lowest quintiles. The overall income distribution increased less rapidly during the 1970s when the gini gained 9 points going from .394 (1970) to .403 (1980). Since 1980, the gini concentration coefficient gained 25 points—from .403 to .428.

Racial differentials show that black income distributions are relatively more asymmetrical than other racial groups in the United States Between 1970 and 1990, the gini increased 42 points going from .422 to .464. Only 17 points of this increase occurred in the 1970s; a 25 point increase occurred in the 1980s. The concentration of white income distribution increased less rapidly going from. 387 (1970) to .419 (1990)—a 32 point increase. It is instructive that during the 1970s, the white gini increased only 7 point. Between 1980 and 1990, the white income concentration increased 25 points—from .394 to .419 (1980 and 1990 figures, respectively). Although the point increase among white income during the 1980s was the same as blacks, the beginning of period levels were much lower. In fact, the unevenness of black income concentration during the 1960s was considerably higher than those for other racial groups during the 1990s.

In the *Declining Significance of Race* (1978), William Julius Wilson argued that the black class structure in the contemporary United States was becoming more differentiated and polarized. This schism in the black community was exemplified by what he perceived

as a more rapid growth of income inequality among black families than white families. Based on his examination of shares of aggregate income during the 1970s, Wilson noted that while the upper two-fifths of black families made greater gains, the lower two-fifths experienced substantial losses (Wilson 1978, 1979, pp. 13-15). These latter sociological facts partly validated the bases of his hypothesis of the increasing significance of class among Black Americans. Independent observation of income shifts between 1970 and 1980 confirm these observations (see Table 1). While the upper two quintiles of black families increased their share of aggregate income from 68 to 70 percent, the share of the lower two-fifths decreased from 15.2 to 13.8 percent. At the same time, the upper two quintiles of white income increased one percent—from 64 to 65 percent and the lower two fifths decreased .8 percent—from 18.3 to 17.5. It is instructive that while Wilson focuses on racial intragroup comparisons with respect to aggregate income distributions, he did not examine racial intergroup differences of income received an understated the race-based changes during the 1970s.

The 1980s are characterized by a continuity of income gains among the highest quintile of black families and losses among the lowest two quintiles of black families. Unlike the 1970s, income improvements among the fourth and third fifths of black families reversed to looses. Among whites, the highest income families grew in absolute and relative shares of income more rapidly than similar black families. Losses in aggregate income remained substantially greater among the two lowest quintiles of black families. In none of these quintiles did black incomes experience improvements.

Close observation of these quintiles with respect to mean income of families is revealing of the divergence or "falling behind" patterns that began during the 1970s. These show that mean family incomes of blacks at each level generally remained below two-thirds that white family income. With the exception of the top five percent which experienced a 1.7 increase during the 1970s and the third-fifth which remained virtually unchanged during the 1980s, these data show that blacks have been experiencing income losses at all levels. During the 1970s, these losses in income were greatest among the working class, the poor, and lower middle class. During the 1980s, the poorest of the poor have fallen behind much faster. Still, the fourth-fifth and third-fifth of black incomes, which captures much of the lower middle and working class, have slowed in momentum.

Table 1. Mean Income of Families and by Quintiles and Percent of Aggregate Income Received by Each Fifth and Top Fifth, 1970-90

	1970	1980	1990	1970-1980	1980-1990
Black					
Top 5 Percent	15.2	15.6	17.3	+4.7	+1.7
Highest Fifth	43.1	44.8	47.3	+1.7	+2.5
Fourth Fifth	24.9	25.4	25.3	+.5	—.1
Third Fifth	16.8	16.0	15.6	+.8	—.4
Second Fifth	10.6	9.6	8.6	—1.0	—1.0
Lowest Fifth	4.6	4.2	3.3	—.4	—.9
White					
Top 5 Percent	15.4	15.1	17.1	—.3	+2.0
Highest Fifth	40.5	40.9	43.6	+.4	+2.7
Fourth Fifth	23.6	24.0	23.6	+.4	—.4
Third Fifth	17.7	17.6	16.6	—.1	—1.0
Second Fifth	12.5	11.9	11.1	—.6	—.8
Lowest Fifth	5.8	5.6	5.1	—.2	—.5
	Mean Income of Families in Dollars				
Black					
Top 5 Percent	74,580	81,510	99,563	6,930	18,053
Highest Fifth	52,867	58,564	67,860	5,697	9,296
Fourth Fifth	30,604	33,193	36,295	2,589	3,102
Third Fifth	20,641	20,966	22,394	325	1,428
Second Fifth	12,990	12,546	12,325	—444	—221
Lowest Fifth	5,619	5,519	4,721	—100	—798
Mean	24,542	26,158	28,714	1,616	2.556
White					
Top 5 Percent	117,172	124,763	159,082	7,591	34,319
Highest Fifth	76,724	84,459	101,161	7,735	16,702
Fourth Fifth	44,712	49,593	54,723	4,881	5,130
Third Fifth	33,476	36,234	38,568	2,758	2,334
Second Fifth	23,721	24,615	25,778	894	1,163
Lowest Fifth	10,909	11,455	11,834	546	379
Mean	37,908	41,272	46,406	3,364	5,134
Black/White Ratios					
Top 5 Percent	63.6	65.3	62.6	+1.7	—2.7
Highest Fifth	68.9	69.3	67.1	—.4	—2.2
Fourth Fifth	68.4	66.9	66.3	—1.5	—.6
Third Fifth	61.7	57.9	58.1	—3.8	+.2
Second Fifth	54.8	48.2	47.8	—6.6	—.4
Lowest Fifth	51.5	48.1	39.8	—3.4	—8.2
Mean	61.0	63.3	61.8	+2.3	—1.5

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Reports, Series P-60, Money Income of Households, Families, and Persons in the United States: 1991. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office. 1992.

Finally, the 1990 actual mean incomes of blacks are depressed roughly one strata downward compared to whites. The mean income for the top five percent of black families ($99,563) was comparable but slightly lower than that received for the highest fifth of white families ($101,161). The mean income for the highest fifth of black families ($67,860) was 13 thousand higher than the fourth-fifth of whites. The fourth-fifth of black families ($36,265) earned less than the third-fifth of white families ($38,568). The lowest-fifth of black families has continued to experience the most rapid dislocation and marginalization. Not only has this strata experienced large relative losses but actual losses in incomes as well. These income trends underscore the slowed growth and inertia in the black middle class.

Black Changes in Middle Class Occupations, 1980-1990

In this analysis of middle class changes, the occupations of principal interest are listed under five divisions based on the 1980 Standard Occupational Classification Manual and International Labor Office Classification (U.S.. Department of Commerce 1980; International labor Office 1988): (1) executive, administrative, and managerial; (2) professional specialty; (3) technicians and technologists; (4) marketing and sales; and (5) administrative support (including clerical). Although these do not cover all middle-income occupations, these cover the principal upper- and lower-middle class occupations.

Executive, administrative, and managerial occupations include the upper- and middle-management activities which are focused on achieving the broader objectives of industrial, commercial, governmental, and other economies while directly supporting management (U.S. Department of Commerce 1980, p. 33). Professional occupations include activities which increase knowledge, apply scientific or artistic concepts and theories, teach about the aforementioned, or engage in any combination of these three activities (International Labor Office 1988, p. 47). Technologists and technicians provide technical assistance in engineering and scientific research, development, testing and related activities, as well as independently operating and programming technical equipment and systems (U.S. Department of Commerce 1980, p. 97). Marketing and sales occupations are concerned with selling goods and services, purchasing commodities and properties for resale and with

conducting wholesale or retail businesses on own or owner's behalf or in partnerhip (U.S. Department of Commerce, 1980, p. 106). Administrative support occupations include activities concerned with the preparation, transcription, transfer, systematizing, and preservation of written communications and records, gathering and distribution of information, operation of office machines and electronic data-processing equipment, communications distribution including telephone operators, mail distribution, and related activities (U.S. Department of Commerce 1980, p. 121).

In 1980, the 3,698,604 blacks in these broad occupational listings make up roughly two-fifths (or 39.6 percent) of all blacks in the labor force. A decomposition of these strata by individual categories show the following contributions to the black occupational structure: administrative support (11.5 percent), professional specialty (8.9 percent), executive, administrative, and managerial (5.5 percent), sales (5 percent), technical specialty (2.7 percent). Viewed indigenously, blacks in these middle class occupations had 1,635,881 persons in administrative support (52 percent), 829,648 in professional specialty (20.5 percent), 516,877 in executive, administrative, managerial (11.2 percent), 468,364 in sales (10.7 percent), and 247-834 in technical specialty (5.6 percent).

Intergroup comparisons showed blacks as generally most underrepresented in the more prestigious and high-paying occupations. Of the total U.S. labor force, blacks made up 9.7 percent of administrative support occupations, 8.5 percent of the technicians and technologists, 6.9 percent of professional specialty occupations, 5.1 percent of executive, administrative, and managerial, and 4.8 percent of the marketing and sales occupations.

The variability of black representation within individual occupations was substantial. The largest absolute numbers of blacks in professional occupations included teachers (354,176), health assessment and treatment occupations (131,681), other professional specialty occupations (94,952), social and recreational workers (88,021), and cultural activities such as writers, artists, entertainers, and athletes (55,642). The next largest strata of professions for blacks was to be found among engineers (24,269), natural scientists (9,421). Among the executive/administrative ranks, largest numbers of blacks were found among unclassified managers and administrators (226,453). The next strata was found within accountants and auditors (51,990), managers in medicine and health fields (38,584), public

Table 2a. Black Population in Middle Class Occupations, 1980-1990

	1980	*1990*	*Change*
Executive, Administrative, Managerial			
Officials and administrators, pub. adm.	30,109	61,481	31,372
Financial Managers	12,524	30,275	17,751
Managers, marketing, advertising, and public relations	12,823	23,858	11,035
Administrators, education and related	38,584	67,310	28,726
Managers, medicine and health	8,673	25,530	16,857
Other Specified Managers	33,028	145,249	112,221
Managers and administrators, n.e.c.			
Salaried	209,931	202,112	—7,819
Self-employed	16,522	12,026	—4,496
Management related occupations			
Accountants and auditors	51,990	106,046	54,056
Personnel, training, and labor relations specialists	44,259	19,690	—24,569
Buyers and purchasing agents	13,612	25,734	12,122
Inspectors and Compliance Officers	16,244	25,851	9,607
Other management related	28,578	135,448	106,870
Professional Specialty occupations			
Engineers, architects, and surveyors			
Architects	2,887	4,327	1,440
Engineers			
Civil Engineers	4,924	7,984	3,060
Electrical and electronic engineers	9,383	19,338	9,955
Industrial engineers	5,395	6,475	1,080
Mechanical engineers	4,567	4,568	1
Other engineers	10,655	20,415	9,760
Surveyors and mapping scientists	671	235	—436
Computer systems analysts and scientists	9,421	24,917	15,496
Operations and systems researchers and analysts	4,781	20,111	15,324
Mathematical scientists	2,825	3,523	698
Natural scientists			
Chemists, except biochemists	4,965	8,617	3,652
Other natural scientists	6,541	8,504	1,963
Health Diagnosing occupations	17,898	28,070	10,172
Health assessment and treating occupations			
Registered nurses	94,845	165,520	70,675
Other health assessment and treating	36,836	50,908	14,072
Teachers, except postsecondary	354,176	435,558	81,382
Social scientists and urban planners	5,418	21,841	16,423
Social and recreational workers	88,021	167,382	79,361
Lawyers and judges	14,839	27,320	12,481
Writers, artists, entertainers, and athletes	55,642	105,042	49,410
Other professional specialty	94,952	304,148	209,196
Total	1,346,525	2,099,481	752,956

Sources: U.S. Bureau of Census, 1980 Census of Population, U.S. Summary (Occupations by Industry), Table 1; 1990 Census of Population (Supplementary Reports) CP-S-1-1, Table 1.

Table 2b. Percent Black in Middle Class Occupations, 1980-1990

	1980	*1990*	*Change*
Executive, Administrative, Managerial			
Officials and administrators, pub. adm.	8.3	12.4	3.8
Financial Managers	3.1	4.8	1.7
Managers, marketing, advertising, and public relations	1.9	3.9	2.0
Administrators, education and related	10.1	10.8	0.7
Managers, medicine and health	8.0	10.9	2.9
Other Specified Managers	6.0	7.6	1.6
Managers and administrators, n.e.c.			
Salaried	4.6	4.1	—0.5
Self-employed	2.9	2.9	0.0
Management related occupations			
Accountants and auditors	5.2	6.6	1.4
Personnel, training, and labor relations specialists	10.8	4.2	—6.6
Buyers and purchasing agents	3.7	5.2	1.5
Inspectors and Compliance Officers	8.1	11.5	3.4
Other management related	4.9	9.2	4.3
Professional Specialty occupations			
Engineers, architects, and surveyors			
Architects	2.8	2.8	0.0
Engineers			
Civil Engineers	2.5	3.2	0.7
Electrical and electronic engineers	2.9	4.1	1.2
Industrial engineers	2.8	3.7	0.9
Mechanical engineers	2.3	2.5	0.2
Other engineers	2.2	3.2	1.0
Surveyors and mapping scientists	2.3	2.1	—0.2
Computer systems analysts and scientists	4.7	5.3	.6
Operations and systems researchers and analysts	6.0	8.0	2.0
Mathematical scientists	6.1	6.2	0.1
Natural scientists			
Chemists, except biochemists	4.9	6.1	1.2
Other natural scientists	3.2	3.2	0.0
Health Diagnosing occupations	2.8	3.2	0.4
Health assessment and treating occupations			
Registered nurses	7.5	8.8	1.3
Other health assessment and treating	8.6	8.1	-0.5
Teachers, except postsecondary	9.7	9.6	-0.1
Social scientists and urban planners	2.5	5.7	3.2
Social and recreational workers	18.5	14.8	—33.7
Lawyers and judges	2.8	3.5	0.7
Writers, artists, entertainers, and athletes	4.3	5.0	0.7
Other professional specialty occupations	7.0	8.1	1.1

Sources: U.S. Bureau of Census, 1980 Census of Population, U.S. Summary (Occupations by Industry), Table 1; 1990 Census of Population (Supplementary Reports) CP-S-1-1, Table 1.

Table 2c. Black Population in Middle Class Occupations, 1980-1990

	1980	*1990*	*Change*
Technicians and Related Support Occupations			
Health technologists and technicians			
Licensed practical nurse	73,600	79,136	2,836
Other health technologists/technicians	56,690	108,525	51,835
Engineering and science technicians			
Electrical and electronic technicians	15,810	29,083	13,273
Industrial and mechanical engineering	1,211	2,297	1,086
Drafting and surveying technicians	16,159	18,377	2,218
Other engineering and science	28,263	18,127	—10,136
Technicians, except health, engineering, and science			
Airplane pilots and navigators	647	1,886	1,239
Air traffic controllers and broadcast equipment operators	7,367	8,327	960
Computers programmers	17,545	39,284	21,739
Other technicians, except h.e. and s.	27,842	63,012	35,170
Sales Occupations			
Supervisors and proprietors, sales			
Salaried	39,653	149,738	110,085
Self-employed	12,937	10,644	—2,293
Sales representatives, finance and business services			
Sales representatives, commodities except retail	30,600	46,311	15,711
Sales workers, retail & personal services			
Cashiers	159,241	409,423	250,182
Other sales occupations	165,816	274,958	109,142
Sales related occupations	931	778	—153
Administrative Support Occupations			
Supervisors, administrative support	97,689	111,542	13,853
Computer equipment operators	47,474	91,065	43,591
Secretaries, stenographers, typists			
Secretaries	218,522	295,199	76,677
Stenographers and typists	115,561	122,069	6,508
Receptionists	40,763	73,590	32,827
Other information clerks	38,776	87,207	48,431
File clerks	46,584	49,701	3,117
Other records processing except financial	77,089	83,871	6,782
Bookkeepers, accounting, & auditing	78,289	107,828	29,539
Payroll and timekeeping clerks	12,930	16,977	4,047
Other financial records processing	23,311	30,346	7,035
Telephone operators	41,798	44,525	2,727
Mail and message distributing	140,191	215,012	74,821
Production coordinators and expediters	31,657	44,987	13,330
Traffic shipping and receiving clerks	62,836	88,349	25,513
Stock and inventory clerks	68,744	99,197	30,453
Other material recording, scheduling	27,345	43,664	16,319
Adjusters and investigators	55,586	137,216	81,630
Data-entry keyers	61,578	113,968	52,390
Other administrative support	349,158	401,991	52,833

Table 2d. Percent Black in Middle Class Occupations, 1980-1990

	1980	*1990*	*Change*
Technicians and Related Support Occupations			
Health Technologists and Technicians			
Licensed practical nurses	17.9	18.4	0.5
Other health technologists/technicians	10.5	7.8	—2.7
Engineering and science technicians			
Electrical and electronic technicians	6.0	7.2	1.2
Industrial and mechanical engineering	4.8	5.1	0.3
Drafting and surveying technicians	4.4	4.4	0.0
Other engineering and science	6.3	7.6	1.3
Technicians, except health, engineering, and science			
Airplane pilots and nagigators	0.9	1.7	0.8
Air traffic controllers and broadcast equipment operators	6.7	10.1	3.4
Computer programmers	5.6	5.9	0.3
Other technicians, except h.e. and s.	6.7	8.0	1.3
Sales Occupations			
Supervisors and proprietors, sales			
Salaried	3.6	5.0	1.4
Self-employed	2.9	2.4	—0.5
Sales representatives, finance and business services	3.3	4.6	1.3
Sales representatives, commodities except retail	2.4	2.9	0.5
Sales workers, retail and personal services			
Cashiers	9.3	14.3	5.0
Other sales occupations	4.9	6.9	2.0
Sales related occupations	3.6	4.0	0.4
Administrative Support Occupations			
Supervisors, administrative support	9.2	12.1	2.9
Computer equipment operators	11.6	13.6	2.0
Secretaries, stenographers, typists			
Secretaries	5.6	7.3	1.7
Stenographers and typists	14.7	16.4	1.7
Receptionists	7.9	9.0	1.1
Other information clerks	10.3	11.5	1.2
File clerks	16.8	18.5	1.7
Other records processing except financial	11.1	13.6	2.5
Bookkeepers, accounting, and auditing	4.3	5.6	1.3
Payroll and timekeeping clerks	8.1	9.5	1.4
Other financial records processing	8.7	10.1	2.4
Telephone operators	14.3	19.1	4.8
Mail and message distributing	18.1	20.8	2.7
Production coordinators and expediters	8.8	9.2	0.4
Traffic shipping and receiving clerks	13.0	13.6	0.6
Stock and inventory clerks	12.0	13.9	1.9
Other material recording, scheduling	11.0	11.8	0.8
Adjusters and investigators	10.8	12.0	1.2
Data-entry keyers	16.3	17.8	1.5
Other administrative support	11.7	6.4	—5.3

administration (30,109), managers, marketing, advertising, and public relations (12,823), financial managers (12,524), and other specified managers (8,673).

In relative terms, the largest percentages of blacks were to be found among social and recreational workers (18 percent), educational administrators (10.9 percent), personnel training and labor relations specialists (10.8), teachers (9.7 percent), other health assessment and treating occupations (8.6 percent), officials and administrators, public administration (8.3 percent), and inspectors and compliance officers (8.1 percent). Blacks make up 5 to 8 percent of the work force in these occupations: managers, medicine and health (8.8 percent), registered nurses (7.5 percent), mathematical scientists (6.2 percent), other specified managers (6.0 percent), operations and systems researchers and analysts (6.0 percent), operations and systems researchers and analysts (5.9 percent), and accountants and auditors (5.2 percent). The smallest, selective, and most isolated conditions of blacks were found in self-employed managers (2.9 percent), natural scientists (2.7 percent), engineering and architecture (2.7 percent), social scientists and urban planners (2.5 percent), and managers in marketing, advertising, and public relations (1.9 percent).

Within the technical, sales, and administrative support occupations the largest numbers of blacks were found in other administrative support occupations (349,158), stenographers and typists (218,522), sales related occupations (165,816), mail and message distribution occupations (140,191), and computer equipment operators (140,191). Blacks were principally represented in administrative support activities involving special tasks, stenographic, typing, and computing equipment and secondarily represented in administrative support activities involving supervision, accounting, auditing, and informational distribution. Within technological and technical occupations, blacks were particularly visible in the health fields and less visible in engineering and other fields. Among sales occupations, black participation was disproportionately concentrated in cashiers and sales work and limited in sales representatives, supervisory, and proprietor occupations.

Relatively speaking, the largest percentages of blacks were found among stenographers and typists (18.1 percent, mail and message distribution occupations (18.1 percent), licensed practical nurses (16.3 percent), file clerks (16.8 percent), stenographers and typists (14.7 percent), stock inventory clerks (13.9 percent), computer equipment

operators (13.6 percent), and other records processing occupations (13.6 percent). Blacks were least represented among airplane pilots and navigators (0.9 percent), sales representatives in commodities (2.4 percent), self-employed supervisors and proprietors, sales (2.9 percent), sales representatives, finance and business (3.3 percent), salaried supervisors and proprietors, sales (3.6 percent), bookkeepers, accounting and auditing clerks (4.3 percent), industrial and mechanical engineering technicians (4.4 percent), electrical and electronic technicians (4.8 percent), and secretaries (5.6 percent).

During the 1980s, blacks employed in these middle class occupations increased 2,273,312—from 3,501,553 (1980) to 5,774,865 (1990). The rate of growth in these occupations (64.9 percent) exceeded the overall black rate of growth in the economy (37.5 percent). In 1990, blacks in these occupations made up 44.9 percent of the black work force—up from 39.6 in 1980.

Decomposing the contribution of each of these occupational categories to the make-up of blacks employed in middle-class work in 1980 had 17.6 percent in administrative support, 9.5 percent in professional specialty, 7.9 percent in sales, 6.9 percent in executive, managerial, and administrative, and 3 percent in technical/ technicians. Although absolute increases occurred in each occupational category, it is instructive that most of the movement was accounted for by two broad occupational listings—sales and administrative support. The dynamics of the post-industrial economy were now indigenously reflected in 39.1 percent of black middle class employees in administrative support, 21.1 percent in professional specialty, 17.5 percent in sales, 15.6 percent in executive, administrative, and managerial, and 6.7 percent in technical occupations. In the total U.S. labor force, black representation increased in percentage terms most in sales—from 5 to 7 (a 2 percent increase) and administrative support—from 9.7 to 11.4 (a 1.7 percent increase). Slow but steady growth resulted in blacks making up 8.8 percent of the technicians (+0.3), 7.3 percent of the professional specialty occupations (+0.4), and 6.2 percent of the executives, administrators, and managers (+0.6).

Between 1980 and 1990, black employment in the executive, administrative, managerial, and professional occupations experienced greatest increases in management-related occupations (158,086), other specified managers (112,221), teaching (81,382), social and recreational workers (79,361), and registered nurses

(70,675). The next leading growth occupations for blacks were found among writers, artists, entertainers, and athletes (49,410), officials and administrators, public administration (31,372), and engineers (23,856).

Rates of growth were usually most rapid in lines of work having smaller base black occupational representation. The most rapid rates of growth for blacks were found among managers and administrators, n.e.c. (340 percent), social scientists and urban planners (303 percent), computer systems analysts and scientists (164 percent), financial managers (142 percent), electrical engineering (106 percent), and administrators in public administration (105 percent). Robust growth did occur among social and recreational workers (90 percent), buyers and purchasing agents (89 percent), writers, artists, entertainers, and athletes (89 percent), educational administrators (80 percent), lawyers and judges (84 percent), registered nurses (75 percent), chemists (74 percent), civil engineers (62 percent) inspectors and compliance officers (59 percent), health diagnosing occupations (57 percent), and architects (50 percent). Growth was slower among teachers (39 percent), mathematical scientists (25 percent), and industrial engineers (20 percent). There were four occupations among this strata experiencing decreases of blacks—surveyors and mapping scientists (-65 percent), personnel, training and labor relations specialists (-66 percent), self-employed managers and administrators, n.e.c. (-27 percent), salaried managers and administrators (-4 percent). Although the decreases among surveyors and mapping scientists and self-employed managers have continuities in the larger population, the losses among personnel, training, and labor relations specialists and salaried managers, n.e.c. are discontinuous with overall and white trends.

Among the technical, sales, and administrative support occupations, the largest scale increases occurred in other administrative support occupations (821,970), other health technologiests and technicians (250,970), other health technologists and technicians (250,417), cashiers (250,182), supervisors and proprietors, sales occupations (119,085), other sales occupations, retail and personal services (109,142), adjusters and investigators (81,630), secretaries (76,677), and mail and message distributing occupations (74,821). It is important to note that these occupations accounted for nearly four-fifths (or 78.9 percent) of all black increases in technical, sales, and administrative support occupations. Within

the total U.S. populations, increases in these same categories accounted for 87.4 percent of all increases suggesting that back growth was in fact slower. The next leading growth occupations for blacks include sales representatives, finance and business services (55,445), data-entry keyers (52,390), other information clerks (48,431), other technicians (35,170), receptionists (32,827), stock and inventory clerks (30,453), and bookkeepers, accounting, and auditing clerks (29,539).

Decade rates of growth were very rapid in these occupations: other health technologists and technicians (442 percent), salaried supervisors and proprietors, sales occupations (278 percent), other administrative support occupations (235 percent), airline pilots and natigators (191 percent), adjusters and investigators (147 percent), other technicians (126 percent), other information clerks (125 percent), and computer programmers (124 percent). It is significant that within each of the aforementioned occupational categories, black participation at least doubled. Recent movement and expansion was particularly robust among sales representatives, commodities (94 percent), computer equipment operators (92 percent), industrial and mechanical engineering technicians (90 percent), data-entry keyers (85 percent), electrical and electronic technicians (83 percent), receptionists (80 percent), and other sales occupations (66 percent). Conversely, the slowest occupational growth for blacks occurred among licensed practical nurses (4 percent) file clerks (6.7 percent), telephone operators (6.5 percent), stenographers and typists (5.6 percent), and other records processing occupations. Decreases occurred among other engineering and science technicians (-35.8 percent), self-employed supervisors and proprietors (-17.7 percent), and sales related occupations (-16.4 percent). Within the overall and white population these latter occupations registered decade decreases.

Gender Differentials in Black Middle Class Occupational Changes

To what extent are decade occupational changes among blacks continuous or discontinuous with overall trends when disaggregated by gender? Have the macroeconomic changes in the economy during the 1980s that are preliminarily reflected in black entry, growth, and mobility across these occupations suggestive of increased integration of has the recent black movement been more illustrative of segregation by race and gender? For purposes of this discussion, black

Table 3a. Percent Black Men in Middle Class Occupations, 1980-1990

	1980	*1990*	*Change*
Executive, Administrative, Managerial			
Officials and administrators, pub. adm.	6.9	9.2	2.3
Financial Managers	2.4	3.6	1.2
Managers, marketing, advertising, and public relations	1.6	2.5	0.9
Administrators, education and related	8.3	9.1	0.8
Managers, medicine and health	6.0	10.7	4.7
Other Specified Managers	5.7	7.0	1.3
Managers and administrators, n.e.c.			
Salaried	3.2	3.3	0.1
Self-employed	2.9	3.1	0.2
Management related occupations			
Accountants and auditors	3.6	5.0	1.4
Personnel, training, and labor relations specialists	8.8	3.7	—5.1
Buyers and purchasing agents	2.9	4.2	1.3
Inspectors and Compliance Officers	6.6	8.6	2.0
Other management related	3.5	8.1	4.6
Professional Specialty occupations			
Engineers, architects, and surveyors			
Architects	2.7	2.8	0.1
Engineers			
Civil Engineers	2.4	2.9	0.5
Electrical and electronic engineers	2.6	3.6	1.0
Industrial engineers	2.5	3.2	0.7
Mechanical engineers	2.2	2.6	0.4
Other engineers	2.12.9	0.8	
Surveyors and mapping scientists	2.2	1.7	—0.5
Computer systems analysts and scientists	3.8	4.2	0.5
Operations and systems researchers and analysts	4.2	6.2	2.0
Mathematical scientists	3.7	3.8	0.1
Natural scientists			
Chemists, except biochemists	4.4	5.5	1.1
Other natural scientists	2.5	2.5	0.0
Health Diagnosing occupations	2.4	2.6	0.2
Health assessment and treating occupations			
Registered nurses	10.3	9.7	—0.5
Other health assessment and treating	6.3	7.0	0.7
Teachers, except postsecondary	6.97.8	0.9	
Social scientists and urban planners	2.6	5.3	2.7
Social and recreational workers	16.5	11.5	—5.0
Lawyers and judges	2.3	2.6	0.4
Writers, artists, entertainers, and athletes	4.6	5.5	0.9
Other professional specialty	5.6	6.4	0.8

Sources: U.S. Bureau of Census, 1980 Census of Population, U.S. Summary (Occupations by Industry), Table 1; 1990 Census of Population (Supplementary Reports) CP-S-1-1, Table 1.

Table 3b. Percent Black Men in Middle Class Occupations, 1980-1990

	1980	*1990*	*Change*
Technicians and Related Support Occupations			
Health technologists and technicians			
Licensed practical nurse	19.6	20.5	0.9
Other health technologists/technicians	11.7	6.3	−5.4
Engineering and science technicians			
Electrical and electronic technicians	5.3	6.4	1.1
Industrial and mechanical engineering	4.4	4.4	0.0
Drafting and surveying technicians	4.3	4.2	−0.1
Other engineering and science	5.2	6.1	0.9
Technicians, except health, engineering, and science			
Airplane pilots and navigators	0.8	1.5	0.7
Air traffic controllers and broadcast equipment operators	5.6	8.8	3.2
Computers programmers	4.5	4.6	0.1
Other technicians, except h.e. and s.	5.6	7.1	1.5
Sales Occupations			
Supervisors and proprietors, sales			
Salaried	3.3	4.1	0.8
Self-employed	2.9	2.4	−0.5
Sales representatives, finance and business services	3.0	3.9	0.9
Sales representatives, commodities except retail	2.1	2.5	0.4
Sales workers, retail & personal services			
Cashiers			
Other sales occupations	9.6	11.6	2.0
Sales related occupations	4.5	6.1	1.6
Administrative Support Occupations			
Supervisors, administrative support	8.3	11.4	3.1
Computer equipment operators	11.4	12.9	1.5
Secretaries, stenographers, typists			
Secretaries	8.4	12.5	4.1
Stenographers and typists	14.9	16.5	1.6
Receptionists	13.6	13.9	0.3
Other information clerks	10.1	11.3	1.2
File clerks	15.4	19.9	4.5
Other records processing except financial	10.7	13.2	2.5
Bookkeepers, accounting, & auditing	6.5	9.2	2.7
Payroll and timekeeping clerks	8.5	11.6	3.1
Other financial records processing	7.9	9.2	1.3
Telephone operators	14.4	17.0	2.6
Mail and message distributing	16.3	19.2	2.9
Production coordinators and expediters	7.4	8.2	0.8
Traffic shipping and receiving clerks	13.8	14.6	0.8
Stock and inventory clerks	12.3	14.5	2.2
Other material recording, scheduling	10.0	10.8	0.8
Adjusters and investigators	6.9	9.5	2.6
Data-entry keyers	15.6	16.3	0.7
Other administrative support	11.9	4.9	−7.0

Table 3c. Percent Black Women in Middle Class Occupations, 1980-1990

	1980	*1990*	*Change*
Executive, Administrative, Managerial			
Officials and administrators, pub. adm.	11.5	15.6	4.1
Financial Managers	4.6	6.1	1.5
Managers, marketing, advertising, and public relations	3.4	7.0	3.60
Administrators, education and related	13.0	12.4	—0.6
Managers, medicine and health	10.0	11.0	1.0
Other Specified Managers	6.7	8.3	1.7
Managers and administrators, n.e.c.			
Salaried	8.5	5.7	—2.8
Self-employed	3.0	2.6	—0.4
Management related occupations			
Accountants and auditors	7.9	8.2	0.3
Personnel, training, and labor relations specialists	13.0	9.3	—3.7
Buyers and purchasing agents	5.1	6.3	1.2
Inspectors and Compliance Officers	17.1	20.8	3.7
Other management related	0.0	9.6	2.8
Professional Specialty occupations			
Engineers, architects, and surveyors			
Architects	3.2	2.6	—0.6
Engineers			
Civil Engineers	5.8	5.9	0.1
Electrical and electronic engineers	9.0	9.2	0.2
Industrial engineers	5.5	6.7	1.2
Mechanical engineers	7.5	5.5	—2.0
Other engineers	6.3	6.3	0.0
Surveyors and mapping scientists	4.0	6.2	2.2
Computer systems analysts and scientists	7.6	7.8	0.2
Operations and systems researchers and analysts	10.7	10.4	—0.3
Mathematical scientists	10.0	9.6	—0.4
Natural scientists			
Chemists, except biochemists	7.1	7.6	0.5
Other natural scientists	5.8	5.0	—0.8
Health Diagnosing occupations	5.3	5.5	0.2
Health assessment and treating occupations			
Registered nurses	7.4	8.7	1.3
Other health assessment and treating	10.4	8.6	-1.8
Teachers, except postsecondary	10.8	10.2	-0.6
Social scientists and urban planners	2.5	6.1	3.6
Social and recreational workers	19.5	17.8	—1.7
Lawyers and judges	6.4	6.2	—0.2
Writers, artists, entertainers, and athletes	3.7	4.5	0.8
Other professional specialty occupations	9.2	8.6	—0.6

Sources: U.S. Bureau of Census, 1980 Census of Population, U.S. Summary (Occupations by Industry), Table 1; 1990 Census of Population (Supplementary Reports) CP-S-1-1, Table 1.

Table 3d. Percent Black Women in Middle Class Occupations, 1980-1990

	1980	1990	Change
Technicians and Related Support Occupations			
Health Technologists and Technicians			
Licensed practical nurses	17.9	18.3	0.4
Other health technologists/technicians	10.0	9.8	—0.2
Engineering and science technicians			
Electrical and electronic technicians	12.1	12.6	0.5
Industrial and mechanical engineering	7.1	9.4	2.3
Drafting and surveying technicians	5.1	5.5	0.4
Other engineering and science	9.3	10.9	1.6
Technicians, except health, engineering, and science			
Airplane pilots and nagigators	2.6	7.5	4.9
Air traffic controllers and broadcast equipment operators	8.9	14.5	5.6
Computer programmers	8.0	8.6	0.6
Other technicians, except h.e. and s.	8.7	9.1	0.4
Sales Occupations			
Supervisors and proprietors, sales			
Salaried	4.4	6.6	2.2
Self-employed	2.9	2.5	—0.4
Sales representatives, finance and business services	3.8	5.6	1.8
Sales representatives, commodities except retail	4.3	4.4	0.1
Sales workers, retail and personal services			
Cashiers	9.2	15.1	5.9
Other sales occupations	5.2	7.5	2.3
Sales related occupations	3.8	4.9	1.1
Administrative Support Occupations			
Supervisors, administrative support	10.3	12.6	2.3
Computer equipment operators	11.8	14.1	2.3
Secretaries, stenographers, typists			
Secretaries	5.6	7.3	1.7
Stenographers and typists	14.7	16.4	1.7
Receptionists	7.6	8.7	1.1
Other information clerks	10.3	11.6	1.3
File clerks	17.1	18.2	1.1
Other records processing except financial	11.3	13.7	2.4
Bookkeepers, accounting, and auditing	4.0	5.2	1.2
Payroll and timekeeping clerks	8.0	9.2	1.2
Other financial records processing	8.9	10.3	1.4
Telephone operators	14.3	19.4	5.1
Mail and message distributing	22.3	23.5	1.2
Production coordinators and expediters	10.3	9.9	—0.4
Traffic shipping and receiving clerks	10.7	11.1	0.4
Stock and inventory clerks	11.6	13.0	1.4
Other material recording, scheduling	12.7	13.1	0.4
Adjusters and investigators	13.1	13.0	0.1
Data-entry keyers	16.3	18.1	1.8
Other administrative support	11.6	8.7	—2.9

changes in these same middle class occupations are examined separately for men and women (see Table 3).

Decade changes show black men experiencing relatively more stability than mobility in status. When percentage increases in national work force are examined, blacks did experience important increases among other specified managers (4.74), social scientists and urban planners (2.67), public administrators (2.30), operators and systems · researchers and analysts (2.0), and as inspectors and compliance officers (1.96). Black men increased at least 1 percent of the labor force during the 1980s in these occupations: financial managers, other managers, accountants and auditors, buyers and purchasing agents, and chemists. At the same time, a majority of these executive, administrative, managerial, and professional occupations were characterized by slow to stationary growth. Contractions in the larger work force were reflected in net losses for black men employed as personnel, training, and labor relations specialists, surveying and mapping specialists, other natural scientists, registered nurses, and social and recreational workers. The latter occupational category, one of the traditional professional specialties among blacks, experienced the strongest absolute losses for black men.

Black men employed in technical, sales, and administrative support occupations experienced similar patterns. The greatest percentage growth was found in nontraditional areas such as secretarial, filing clerks, payroll and timekeeping clerks where black men make up a small numeric part of the work force. In marketing and sales occupations, only cashiers and sales occupations relating to retail and personal services experienced increases greater than 1 percent; all others were less than 1 percent. Within the technologists and technicians ranks, only air traffic controllers and broadcast operators (3.2 percent increase) and electrical and electronic technicians (1.1. percent increase) did employment improve at least 1 percent.

Black women experienced the greatest percentage increases nationally in the female work force as mechanical engineers (4.9 percent), official and administrators, public administration (4.1 percent), buyers and purchasing agents (3.7 percent), social scientists and urban planners (3.6 percent), managers, marketing, advertising, and public relations (3.5 percent), other specified managers (1.64 percent), industrial engineering (1.2 percent), buyers and purchasing agents (1.15 percent), and managers in medicine and health (1.05 percent). Still, the 1980s were particularly characterized by uneven

growth and decline for black women. Growth occupations for black women in the upper middle class strata were primarily in administrative areas of public administration, marketing advertising, public relations, inspectors and compliance officers, and secondarily in specific professions such as mechanical engineering and as social scientists and urban planners. It is instructive that while experiencing absolute increases in most professional specialty occupations, black women still experience the highest occupational segregation.

At the same time, black women in the lower middle class strata experienced increases in administrative support occupations such as cashiers (5.9 percent), air traffic controllers/broadcast equipment operators (5.6 percent), telephone operators (5.1 percent), and airline pilots and navigators. Decreases were found among other technicians, except health, engineering, and science (-1.1), other health technicians (-2.2), self-employed supervisors (-.36), other administrative support (-2.9), and traffic, shipping, and receiving clerks (-.04).

Trends in Occupational Segregation

In an attempt to summarize the recent changes in middle class occupational distributions, indexes of occupational dissimilarity have been calculated. These indexes are frequently used as measures of the degree of occupational segregation between groups and are interpreted as the percentage of workers of either group that would have to change occupations to equalize the distributions. For purposes of analysis, occupational dissimilarity measures in this discussion focus on: (1) racial differences of same gender (black men and white men, black women and white women); (2) racial and gender differences (black men and white women, white men and black women); and (3) gender differences of same race (black men and women, white men and women).

Farley and Allen examined overall trends in the indexes by race and sex between 1940 and 1980 using broad occupational categories (Farley and Allen 1987, pp. 264-265). These showed that occupational distributions converged most rapidly between black and white women. During this 40-year time span, racial differences between women decreased 45 points—from 63 to 18 and racial differences between men decreased 19 points—from 43 to 24. Other researchers such as Albelda note that while the period levels of occupational

Table 4. Indexes of dissimilarity for Selected Middle Class Occupations by Race and Gender, 1980-1990

	1980	*1990*	*Change*
Black Men and White Men	22.8	22.6	—1.2
Black Women and White Women	16.3	13.9	—2.4
Black Men and White Women	36.6	37.2	+0.6
White Men and Black Women	60.1	53.2	—6.9
Black Men and Black Women	44.4	42.1	—2.3
White Men and White Women	48.2	47.1	—1.1
Technical, Sales, and Administrative Support (including Clerical)			
Black Men and White Men	29.9	21.3	—8.6
Black Women and White Women	22.4	17.0	—5.4
Black Men and White Women	46.4	31.8	—14.6
White Men and Black Women	59.4	46.1	—13.3
Black Men and Black Women	47.9	35.9	—12.0
White Men and White Women	54.9	38.9	—16.0

Sources of Raw Data: U.S. Bureau of Census, 1980 Census of Population, U.S. Summary (Occupations by Industry), Table 1; 1990 Cenus of Population (Supplementary Reports) CP-S-1-1, Table 1.

segregation have been highest between white men and black women, these decreases have also been greatest. He concludes that while improvements in occupational segregation by race have been substantial, changes in occupational segregation by gender have been small. The Farley and Allen and Albelda studies examined occupational segregation through 1980 and 1981 respectively.

These data confirm earlier findings showing the greatest movement and largest decreases of occupational segregation in the strata of technicals, sales, and administrative support occupations (see Table 4). In 1980, occupational segregation was greatest between white men and black women (59.4) followed by white men and women (54.9), black men and women (47.9), black men and white women (44.6), black and white men (29.9), and black and white women (22.4). Unlike earlier decades, decreases in gender segregation during the 1980s between white men and women (-16) exceeded segregation decreases between black men and white women (-14.5), white men and black women (-13.3), and black men and women (-12). Similar to earlier, decreases in occupational segregation between black and white men (-8.6) and black and white women (-5.4) changed more slowly. The findings suggest the salience of race and gender interaction in very dynamic economic activities.

Changes in segregation were slower, smaller, and stable in the upper middle-class executive, managerial, administrative, and professional specialty occupations. In 1980, occupational segregation was greatest between white men and black women (60.1) followed by white men and women (48.2), black men and women (44.4), black men and white women (36.6), black and white men (23.8), and black and white women (16.3). between 1980 and 1990, the greatest movement occurred in work situations between white men and black women (-6.9). Small decreases between black and white women (-2.4) and black men and women (-2.3) were comparable as were decreases between black and white men (-1.2) and white men and women (-1.1). However, occupational segregation between black men and white women (+0.6) showed the most stability. This latter pattern of persistent occupational segregation runs counter to the other comparisons. Despite black women's changes, they continue to be most segregated from white men and black men in these occupations.

IMPLICATIONS AND SUMMARY

How can the decade changes and differentials in black employment growth in middle class occupations be explained? What are the salient relationships between the changing status of blacks in the middle class and larger changes in the U.S. economy and division of labor? From a macrosociological perspective, these recent changes are interconnected with the restructuring of the American economy from industrial to service activities, the modernization of work involving increased use of high-tech, automation, and information, and a "new federalism" role of the state in civil rights and affirmative action interventions. It is important to underscore that the growth of blacks in these selected middle class occupations occurred in an economic context where the relative distribution of income by race for upper-, middle-, and other income blacks fell behind. The growth of the black middle class during the 1980s with decreasing shares of income is relatedly suggestive of a precarious status characterized by this class' lower investments and savings and higher underemployment and unemployment. During the 1980s, the growth of blacks in middle class occupations occurred in an economic context of decreased income, savings, and capital investment and increased underemployment and unemployment.

Dynamics of black middle class growth were not uniform and should be viewed in both intragroup and intergroup contexts. Blacks employed in these occupations increased from 39.6 (1980) to 44.9 (1990) and their rate of growth (64.9 percent) exceeded the overall rate of growth fort all blacks employed in the economy (37.5 percent). In absolute terms, black persons experienced largest employment increases in occupations such as cashiers, management-related occupations, other specified managers, sales supervisors and proprietors, retail and personal services, adjusters and investigators, teaching, social and recreation workers, secretaries, mail and message distribution workers, and registered nurses. In relative terms, rates of growth were particularly rapid among salaried supervisors and proprietors, airline pilots and navigators, computer systems analysts and scientists, adjusters and investigators, financial managers, other technicians, other information clerks, computer programmers, electrical engineers, administrators in public administration, sales representatives in commodities, computer equipment operators, social and recreational workers, industrial and mechanical engineering technicians, buyers and purchasing agents, writers, artists, and entertainers, educators administrators, and data keyers. Slow growth occurred among licensed practical nurses, stenographers and typists, telephone operators, other records processing occupations, and mechanical engineers. Although blacks experienced increases in most of the middle class occupations examined, decreasing employment opportunities were found in occupations such as surveyors and mapping specialists, unclassified self-employed managers and administrators, engineering and science technicians, self-employed supervisors and proprietors, and sales related occupations.

Gender patterns show that black men grew slowly in a majority of the upper-middle executive, administrative, managerial, and professional occupations and the lower-middle class technical, sales, and administrative support occupations. Rapidly growing employment for black men occurred among operations and systems researchers and analysts, unclassified managers, managers in health and medicine, social scientists and urban planners, computer systems analysts and scientists, airplane pilots and navigators, supervisors and proprietors, cashiers, data entry keyers, and nontraditional clerical and administrative support occupations. Black women experienced greatest movement in administrative areas of public administration,

marketing and advertising, public relations, inspectors and compliance officers, and professions such as social scientists and urban planners and mechanical engineers. Within the technical, sales, and administrative support occupations, black women grew most as cashiers, secretaries, supervisors of administrative support occupations, salaried sales supervisors, and as adjusters and investigators. Overall, these distributional changes are reflected in improvements in occupational segregation which show the greatest mobility and desegregation in the strata of administrative support, sales, and technical occupations with slower and smaller decreases of occupational segregation in the upper-middle class executive, managerial, administrative, and professional occupations. While black women experienced greater gains than black men across both strata of the middle class, their continued segregation from the higher paying occupations through 1990 remains greater than black men, white men, and white women. Black men's occupational movement continued in the lower middle class strata but appears to be slowing in the upper middle class.

This paper provides findings which inform the hypotheses and claims of both the integrationist and segmentation perspectives of the changing black middle class. The complex patterns and trends identified underscore the importance of examining the role of each perspective, their complementarity, and value added insights in understanding this phenomenon. At the same time, there are other points where the integrationists and segmentation perspectives offer contradictory assumptions and dynamics concerning the contemporary structure of the American economy and the future of the black middle class.

Continued growth of blacks in the middle class and the increased desegregation of blacks across these broad strata are partly suggestive of progress themes in integration perspectives. Distributional changes across most of the individual occupational listings indicate that black middle class entry and movement have been steady. Continuous with earlier post-World War II decades, the quantitative growth of economic activities has been also characterized by qualitative changes of increased diversity and dispersion of the black middle clalss. Within the strata of upper middle class occupations, increases of blacks in "middle-level" management-related and administrative activities surpassed traditional professions such as teaching, social and recreational work, and nursing. Among sales occupations, the

emergence of a large cohort of black salaried supervisors and proprietors is symbolic of the promises of capital development. Rapid growth areas of the post-industrial economy such as services, high tech, medicine/health, marketing/sales, real estate, and information are reflected and reproduced in dynamics of the black middle class. More so than earlier, these occupations are structurally connected to the private sector.

Contextualization and careful analysis of the changing relationships among the economy, occupations, and income suggest that the growth of the black middle class was generally reproduced is slow and uneven movements broadly characterized by persistent racial segmentation. This more sober assessment recognizes that while the occupations supportive of the black middle class continued to grow nationally, the economic activities accounting for this phenomenon were primarily within lower middle class administrative support occupations such as adjusters and investigators, secretaries, mail and message distribution, and computer equipment operators and sales occupations such as cashiers, salaried supervisors/proprietors, and sales representatives. Within the upper-middle class executive, administrative, and managerial occupations it is significant that black growth was largest in activities involving public employment and quasi-public services—accountants, auditors, public administration, educational administration, inspectors and compliance officers, health managers. These same governmental relationships bear on the high growth professional occupations of teaching, social and recreational work, registered nurses. Outside of activities with these state relationships, improvements for blacks in these upper-middle class occupations, with a few exceptions, appear slow and incremental.

Other contemporary developments suggest further caution. First, accompanying the recent recessions since 1990, there are signs that blacks in many of the sales and administrative support occupations are being disproportionately affected by central city retailing closings, and administrative reductions in force (Sharpe 1993). Second, racially segmented occupations such as practical nursing, mail and message distributing, telephone operators, typists/stenographers, social and recreational work, and others where blacks have gained niches are potentially vulnerable at a time of increased deregulation, privatization, automation, and deracialization. Third, while the role of affirmative action and minority set aside programs have continued

for blacks, the momentum has slowed and reversed. In a zero-sum economy, the distributional benefits of these policies are increasingly competitive and being shared by other important minority groups such as Hispanic- and Asian-Americans and white women. Fourth, to the extent that changing income inequality indicators continue to show the relative size of the larger middle class in the United States as decreasing (Duncan, Smeeding, and Rodgers 1992; Thurow 1987), the implications for a growing black middle class are problematic. In particular, the challenges of continued recruitment, employment, and promotion facing highly educated, talented, and trained black men in higher-paying administrative and professional, and technical activities and the persistent occupational segregation and lower pay of black women in the aforementioned activities are suggested.

Although the movement of blacks into middle class occupations continued during the 1980s, this was not the rising tide depicted in "progress" assessments.

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CRITIQUING WILSON'S CRITICS:
THE DECLINING SIGNIFICANCE OF RACE THESIS AND THE BLACK MIDDLE CLASS

George Wilson and Deirdre Royster

ABSTRACT

This essay is a review and critique of studies that examine the black middle class in the context of William Wilson's "declining significance of race" thesis. An ideal examination of the thesis should control for period effects and examine racial differences in "life chance" outcomes. Because existing studies are few and of uneven quality, conclusions about the merits of Wilson's thesis for the black middle class are premature. The findings of a group of studies that are the most appropriate examinations of the thesis reach inconsistent results; a second group of studies do not constitute valid examinations of the thesis because they do not consider the influence of period effects and examine social psychological "life experiences" rather than objective "life chances" for the black middle class. Areas of future research that would contribute to the declining significance of race debate as it pertains to the black middle class are suggested.

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INTRODUCTION

More than 15 years after its original formulation, William Wilson's "declining significance of race" thesis remains an important theoretical perspective that attempts to explain the complex interplay between race and social class in the "life chances" of blacks in the United States. The thesis was elaborated by Wilson to assess the extent to which race and social class determine the labor market opportunities of an increasingly polarized and heterogeneous black population. However, because of the "rediscovery" of poverty by social scientists in the last decade as well as the notoriety of Wilson's most recent book, *The Truly Disadvantaged* (1987), much of the debate about Wilson's thesis has been directed towards understanding the plight of the "underclass" segment of the black population (see Gans 1990; Peterson and Jencks 1991; Ricketts and Sawhill 1986).

It is difficult to overstate the importance of the growing research on the underclass.[1] However, it must be emphasized that this research has proliferated at a time when the black population in the United States has reached an unprecedented level of socio-economic differentiation. For example, data from the U.S. Census and the Current Population Survey indicate that between 1970 and 1986, the proportion of the black population employed in the most prestigious census occupational categories increased more rapidly than for whites. In this period, the number of black men holding executive, administrative, or managerial jobs rose an average of 8 percent each year; for white men their number increased by an average of 3.5 percent per year (Farley and Allen 1987). Among women, the corresponding growth rates were 13.5 percent for blacks and 10 percent for whites (Farley and Allen 1987). In other census occupational categories with above average earnings, black employment grew more rapidly than whites, particularly in the decade of the 1970's (Farley and Allen 1987).

Fortunately, in the last few years, several studies have included elements of the black population other than the underclass in their assessment of the declining significance of race thesis. In our opinion, these studies are long overdue: they examine an important, but relatively overlooked segment of the black population. As such, they bring much needed additional evidence to bear on this important debate in sociology. This paper is a review and critique of studies

that examine these other elements of the black population in the context of the declining significance of race thesis. These other elements of the black population have been loosely referred to by Wilson and other scholars as constituting the black "middle class". In this paper we adopt this terminology.

This paper has four specific objectives: (1) to review the tenets of Wilson's thesis in order to delineate a set of criteria necessary for undertaking valid tests of it for the black middle class, (2) to assess the extent to which existing studies adhere to these criteria and are thus valid tests of the thesis, (3) to assess the contribution existing studies make towards resolving the declining significance of race debate, and, (4) to suggest areas of future research that would contribute to the debate about the merits of Wilson's thesis for the black middle class. Our argument in this paper is that while some studies constitute appropriate tests of the Wilson thesis, others misconstrue its parameters. We believe that this mis-specification problem has resulted in a tendency to reject Wilson's thesis on grounds that are not relevant to his argument. Further, the uneven quality of existing studies combined with their paucity make conclusions about the merits of Wilson's thesis, at this time, premature. This paper, then, provides an assessment of recent studies and offers suggestions for how researchers can better investigate Wilson's controversial thesis as it applies to the black middle class.

WILSON'S THESIS ABOUT THE BLACK MIDDLE CLASS

In *The Declining Significance of Race*, Wilson (1978) argues that American society has gone through three stages of race relations between blacks and whites, with each stage representing different forms of racial stratification structured by particular arrangements of both the economy and the polity. As Wilson (1978, p. 3) says:

> My central argument is that different systems of production and/or different arrangements of the polity have imposed different constraints on the way in which racial groups have interacted in the United States, constraints that have structured the reltations between racial groups and that produced dissimilar contexts not only for the manifestation of racial antagonisms but also racial group access to rewards and privileges.

The initial period lasted until just after the Civil War and was characterized by a black slave system in a plantation economy. The second stage, which lasted from the latter part of the 19th Century to the 1950s, was a period of industrial expansion and class conflict but also continued racial oppression. The third and present stage is the modern industrial period. This period, which began with the Civil Rights era in the early 1960s, is characterized by Wilson (1978, p. 2) as involving a "progressive transition from racial inequities to class inequities." In other words, in this modern industrial period, social class has become more important than race as the determinant of economic opportunities for blacks in the United States. Specifically, macro-economic changes such as the consolidation of protective unionism, labor market segmentation, the suburbanization of industry, and the decline in the production of goods relative to the production of services have structured the economy in such a way that black poverty has become institutionalized. The result of this trend is growing economic impoverishment for an urban black "underclass." According to Wilson, past racial discrimination created the underclass, but macro-economic changes rather than current racial discrimination explains their current economic plight.

At the same time, the dramatic growth of the state sector, active pressure from the state to improve civil rights, economic interventionism, and the implementation of affirmative action policies have created unprecedented economic opportunities for the more advantaged segment of the black population. Wilson calls this segment the "black middle class." According to Wilson, the increased significance of social class permits those blacks who have been fortunate enough to have "made it" to have the economic resources necessary to sustain their relatively privileged position; it also provides middle class blacks with economic opportunities that are comparable to whites with similar credentials.

A careful specification of the parameters of the declining significance of race thesis is necessary if we are to have a foundation for assessing the studies that attempt to examine it. As such, several aspects of the thesis must be highlighted. First, the declining significance of race thesis includes an important "period effects" component. Wilson's argument is that social class has become more important than race as a determinant of economic opportunities only since the 1960's. Therefore, any valid test of Wilson's thesis should be mindful of the fact that the legacy of past discrimination should

be found in the economic opportunities for individuals who entered the labor force prior to the civil rights period; these workers may be significantly hampered in the job market by pre-civil rights era discriminatory employment practices and human-capital-investment decisions whch lock them into career paths and seniority ladders from which change is difficult (Freeman 1978).

Second, Wilson's repeated use of Weber's notion of "life chances" indicates that the declining significance of race thesis is intended to be structural and market oriented. "Life chances" is one of Weber's key terms in his analysis of economic action in the market. For Weber, "life chances" refers to the shared "market situation" experienced by members of a "class" (Weber 1968, p. 843). The shared "market situation" for Weber refers to "similar economic exigencies that causally influence the material standards of their existence" (Weber 1968, p. 927; Giddens 1971, p. 156). As such, any valid test of the declining significance of race thesis must examine aspects of the "life chances" of blacks in the Weberian sense, that is, economic factors that have a causal effect on their material standard of living.

Third, the thesis applies only to racial antagonism that takes place in the "economic" sector of society. Wilson maintains that in the civil rights era, the arena of racial antagonism has shifted from the "economic" to the "sociopolitical" sector. According to Wilson, (1978, p. 153) this shift is important because racial antagonism in the sociopolitical sector has less effect on the "life chances" of blacks than racial antagonism in the economic sector. Wilson does not maintain that racial discrimination is absent or even on the decline in America; he acknowledges that there is continued white opposition to residential integration, and public school desegregation as well as pronounced racial discrimination against blacks in public places—all signs of "the unyielding importance of race in America" (Wilson 1978, p. 152). However, because these forms of antagonism take place in the sociopolitical arena, according to Wilson, they are of negligible importance in determining the life chances of middle class blacks (Wilson 1978, p. 152). Unfortunately, Wilson does not delimit the "economic" or the "sociopolitical" sector. Without this delineation, the assumed relative independence of these sectors from each other is problematic. As such, while any valid test of Wilson's thesis must examine racial inequality in the "economic" sector, the absence of an explicit definition of this sector necessitates that its parameters be interpreted liberally.

STUDIES OF WILSON'S THESIS

Studies that assess the declining significance of race thesis for the black middle class are of two types[2]: those that focus exclusively on the middle class and those that include the middle class as one segment of the black population in an assessment of Wilson's thesis. An ideal examination of the Wilson thesis should investigate both period effects and dependent variables that measure objective life chances in addition to the possible influences (on life chances) of racial antagonism in both the socio-political and economic arenas. Although we have found no studies that do this, we believe that existing studies vary in the degree to which they examine aspects of Wilson's thesis. We have divided existing studies into two sections: those that claim to examine Wilson's thesis but which do not, and those that incorporate at least one of the three above highlighted aspects in their examination. We should note that both groups of studies make an invaluable contribution to our understanding of the life *experiences* of the black middle class, but that only a few add to our understanding of the changing life *chances* of the black middle class.

Studies of the Life Experiences of the Black Middle Class

Several of the studies we review utilize attitudinal or social psychological dependent variables to examine the declining significance of race thesis. These studies assess the relative influence of race and socioeconomic status in determining a range of attitudinal and social psychological outcomes; they conclude that the declining significance of race thesis is refuted if socioeconomic status is not as important a determinant of these outcomes as race. These studies are problematic mainly because they examine neither period effects, nor dependent variables that are indicators of objective life chances, nor aspects of racial antagonism that have either direct or indirect effects on the life chances of middle class blacks. For example, they do not demonstrate that having psychological stresses associated with experiences of racial victimization leads to decreased life chances. We review studies by Herring (1989), Austin and Stack (1988), Thomas and Hughes (1986), Nash (1991), Feagin (1991), Benjamin (1991), and Broman (1992).

Herring (1989) uses 1964-1984 data from the National Election Surveys to examine the effects of socioeconomic status on attitudes about economic well-being, political party identification, and identification with blacks. Herring finds that on all three attitudinal outcomes, the views of blacks, irrespective of socioeconomic status, are more similar to those of other blacks than to those of non-blacks with similar socioeconomic status. Herring concludes that because socioeconomic status did not become more important than race as a determinant of these attitudes, Wilson's declining significance of race thesis has "not been realized" (Herring 1989, p. 278).

Austin and Stack (1988) use 1972-1984 data from the General Social Survey to examine the effects of socioeconomic status on two separate anomie scales. The authors find that between 1973 and 1984: (a) there was no significant decline in the statistical influence of race on anomia at all socioeconomic status levels, (b) the influence of the relationship between socioeconomic status and anomia did not increase in the whole population or for blacks alone, and (c) the influence of race on anomia did not decrease more over time at upper socioeconomic status levels than at lower levels. The authors conclude that their findings "are inconsistent with Wilson's major propositions about the declining significance of race" (Austin and Stack 1988, p. 367).

Thomas and Hughes (1986) use 1972-1984 data from the General Social Survey to explore the effects of socioeconomic status on measures of psychological well-being which include a general life-satisfaction scale, a trust-in-people scale, an anomie scale, a general happiness item, and a self-report item on physical health. The authors find that on all measures of well-being, blacks had significantly lower scores than whites even after statistical controls had been introduced for socioeconomic status variables and marital status. The authors conclude that while their study directly addresses only an extension of the Wilson thesis, it "provides evidence not for the declining or "inclining" significance of race, but for the continuing significance of race in determining well-being" (Thomas and Hughes 1986, p. 21).

Nash (1991) examines the effects of socioeconomic status and race on a standard English vocabulary score in the General Social Survey. Nash finds that differences between blacks and whites in the vocabulary score are consistent across all socioeconomic variables even after statistical controls were introduced for education, subjective financial status, and subjective class identification. Nash

concludes that his evidence does not provide support for Wilson's notion that "race is being replaced by socioeconomic factors as the salient determinant of life chances and outlooks of individual blacks" (Nash 1991, p. 253).

Another study was conducted by Feagin (1991), who reports vignettes of racial discrimination in public places such as stores and restaurants experienced by 37 urban black white collar workers and successful businessmen. Taking as a point of departure that Wilson's argument in *The Declining Significance of Race* is that middle class blacks no longer face "overt discrimination in the workplace and public accommodations," Feagin produces a vivid and moving account of the subtle forms of racial discrimination encountered by his respondents in public places. However, primarily because it is not a form of racial antagonism in the economic sector, it is problematic to argue that racial discrimination occurring in public accommodations falls within the parameters of the declining significance of race thesis.

In another study, Benjamin (1991) reports the discriminatory experiences of young, successful black professionals. Motivated by her belief that "William Wilson... and others missed the subjective component of institutional racism because they lacked an experiential base" (Benjamin 1991, p. XXIV), she reports the loss of identity, alienation, isolation, and culture shock experienced by her informants in middle class occupations. However, her exclusive focus on the subjective dimension of discrimination limits her contribution to the declining significance of race debate; the vignettes of her informants, similar to the findings of the studies reviewed above, do not establish that objective "life chances" of blacks are adversely affected by race.

Broman (1992) uses data from the National Survey of Black Americans to examine how blacks interpret their labor market experiences. He finds little support for the self-serving bias in attribution theory; blacks at all socioeconomic status levels express adherence to the "dominant stratification ideology" (see Huber and Form 1973) that labor market failures are caused by lack of individual effort and talent. Broman concludes that this finding may have implications for the debate about the declining significance of race. He says (1992: 88): "...as black views come more and more to parallel those of whites...it will be the case that, at least in the opinion of African-Americans, that race has declined in significance as a factor in labor market outcomes."

Studies of the Life Chances of the Black Middle Class

Several studies, when taken together, offer an approximate examination of Wilson's thesis on the black middle class. The studies tend to focus on three distinct areas: (a) changes in access to middle class occupations by blacks; (b) racial differences in returns to human capital characteristics in middle class occupations, and (c) discrimination in occupational distribution of blacks in middle class occupations. Results for the first category support Wilson's thesis, whereas results for the second are more ambivalent, and results for the third are contrary to the declining significance of race thesis.

Changes in Access to Middle Class Occupations by Blacks

Hout (1984) uses data From the "Occupational Change in a Generation" Surveys of 1962 and 1973 to examine the influence of social class and race on the occupational mobility of black men. Hout finds significant intra-and intergenerational social class effects. First, by 1973 the occupational standing of black men depended on socioeconomic criteria to a greater extent than was true in 1962. Men who beat the odds and attained a level of occupational success by 1962 were able to hold on to those positions to a greater extent than in the past. Second, the effect of socioeconomic origins on destinations among black men increased between 1962 and 1973; black men who moved up in status were drawn from relatively advantaged origins. Hout (1989, pp. 320-321) concludes that "The available evidence... supports Wilson...class became more important for the occupational chances of black men over the course of the 1960s." Pomer (1986), using the same data, found that while neither whites nor blacks from "low origins" during 1963-73 experienced a high degree of mobility to middle or upper-paid stratums, whites were much more likely than blacks to experience upward mobility. Pomer's findings complement those of Hout and lend support to Wilson's hypothesis that opportunities expanded for middle income blacks into the seventies, while opportunities remained dismal or worsened for blacks from low social origins.

Racial Differences in Returns to Human Capital Characteristics in Middle Class Occupations

Several studies compare the monetary and nonmonetary rewards for blacks and whites with similar background characteristics such as education. In an important study, Son, Model, and Fischer (1989) use data from the Panel Study of Income Dynamics to examine the returns of occupational status and income among whites and blacks who entered the workforce in the civil rights era. They find that by 1981, college-educated blacks had higher mean levels of occupational status and income than college-educated whites. The authors (1989, p. 324) conclude: "This analysis supports the portion of the polarization hypothesis asserting that race is of declining significance in the determination of economic rewards for the black middle class and that civil rights policies have contributed to this outcome." The findings of Son, Model, and Fischer provides support for that portion of Wilson's thesis that maintains that race is of declining significance in the determination of economic rewards for blacks holding significant human capital, such as a college degree.[3]

However, different results are reported in another important study by Farley and Allen (1986). The authors use census data to examine racial differences in the probability of attaining executive, management, and professional jobs. The authors compare those who entered the labor force before and during the civil rights era; they find that at every level of educational attainment the odds of black men attaining employment in top jobs lagged behind white men. Furthermore, the racial differences were only slightly smaller for younger than older workers, suggesting only a modest improvement for men who entered the workforce in the civil rights era. However, the same analysis performed for women reveals that at every level of educational attainment older and younger women were more likely than white peers to hold upper level occupations. In the same study, the authors find that on measures of relative income, black men at upper educational levels (one to three years of college and college graduates) have gained on white peers since the 1960s. However, throughout this period, there has existed large absolute racial differences: for example, black men with a college degree have had incomes roughly equal to white peers who attended but did not graduate from college. For women, again, the situation is different: since the 1960s, black women with at least a high school education

have had incomes that exceeded those of white peers (for similar results see Allen and Farley 1986).

Discrimination in Occupational Distribution of Blacks in Middle Class Occupations

A few studies examine the discriminatory placement of the black middle class in middle class occupations. In interviews with black executives in predominantly white-owned firms, Collins (1988, 1989) found that blacks who entered the labor force in the civil rights era succeeded within white management hierarchies, but that their upward mobility had been delineated racially. Two examples of this will suffice: Collins found that the majority of middle-level black managers were concentrated in sales departments where they were responsible for selling and supervising a sales force in predominantly black consumer territories, or worked in community relations capacities; other black managers were found disproportionately in personnel departments, where they were involved in creating or implementing policies to recruit or train blacks. In another study, Collins (1983) examined the conditions of employment of blacks in professional and managerial census occupational categories who work in the public sector. Collins documents the public sector as a niche for black middle class employment. Collins challenges the notion that underpins the declining significance of race perspective, namely that middle class blacks are assimilating. She argues that because of special post-World War II legal and political protections that created and which sustains them, the black middle class in the public sector occupies a fragile labor market position; they tend to be segregated in institutions dependent on public subsidy and concentrated in functions geared exclusively towards delivering public services to low-income blacks. Although Collins did not compare the salaries of the blacks she interviewed with those of comparably situated whites, nor the overall placement trends within the organizations studied, large-scale employment trends do indicate that a disproportionate number of the black middle class resides in occupations within the public sector and that when blacks are hired in the private sector they often face a different career-ladder than their white counterparts (Landry 1987; Moore 1981). The findings of Collins are consistent with those of Brown and Erie (1981). Using census data, the authors document that a substantial portion of the

economic gains made by the black middle class in the civil rights era came about as a result of their acquisition of a significant share of the jobs in the new social welfare sector. The authors conclude that the role of the black middle class as low-income service providers makes their existence politically precarious.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Although *The Declining Significance of Race* has received substantial attention from the media and from the social science community, much of the research that investigates Wilson's thesis as it pertains to the black middle class is problematic. Instead of examining "life chances" in the objective sense, several studies have focused on social-psychological or attitudinal outcomes among middle class blacks. If studies do not examine the effects of race on life chances, they cannot test either of two related tenets, namely, whether race *or* racial antagonism in either the economic or sociopolitical spheres affects life chances. While these studies do provide us with useful information about how blacks interpret and experience their racial (and class) status, they are not tests of Wilson's thesis as they allege.

Studies that constitute more valid tests of Wilson's thesis do not settle the declining significance of race debate. First, they consider only a limited range of "life chance" outcomes that merit consideration in the debate. Conspicuously absent are several non-monetary aspects of work such as job autonomy and supervision over the work of others. Neglecting these sorts of indicators is problematic because they have been shown to have important consequences for the structure of the later career-ladder (Rosenbaum 1977) and also for the values and beliefs that adults tend to pass on to their children, such as self-directedness and ideational flexibility (Kohn and Schooler 1983). We see these aspects of work as an important part of the reward structure that have not yet been examined in the context of the declining significance of race debate. Second, existing studies that examine Wilson's thesis reach inconsistent results; the available evidence for the influence of period effects is persuasive. Studies reviewed provide evidence that blacks who acquired middle class credentials during the civil rights era were able to break into occupations from which they were previously absent, and achieve income levels and occupational status that increasingly came to rival

those of whites with similar credentials; however, whether this convergence has resulted in racial parity is not settled. In addition, there is preliminary evidence of a growing convergence between the black and white middle class in the way social class influences occupational opportunities. However, preliminary evidence indicates that middle class blacks may be experiencing subtle forms of discrimination not captured by outcomes such as income and occupational status; in both the public and private sectors they may be channeled into race-conscious mobility tracks in which jobs are created to comply with government regulations and other policy interventions rather than through the working of the marketplace. This may introduce an element of race-linked vulnerability into the jobs most often held by middle class blacks.

Finally, we would be remiss if we did not mention aspects of Wilson's thesis that appear problematic. In particular, we see as dubious the tenet that racial antagonism has shifted from the economic toward the sociopolitical arena *and* that such a shift has less adverse consequences for the life chances of the black middle class. First, we suspect as do others (see Braddock and McPartland 1987; Feagin 1987) that racial antagonism continues to exist and limit blacks in the economic arena. We agree with Wilson that it is less blatant, but see statistical, institutional and other subtle forms of discrimination as playing a critical role in limiting the careers of middle class blacks in the types of job condition/organizational power variables mentioned earlier. Second, we have found no compelling empirical evidence to suggest that racial antagonism in the sociopolitical arena (as distinct from the economic arena) has less influence on the life chances of middle class blacks. To the contrary, residential segregation patterns provide a case in point that demonstrates the danger in overlooking the possible direct and indirect effects of racial antagonism in the sociopolitical arena.

Being prohibited from purchasing or investing in property has a direct effect on one's ability to accumulate wealth. Certainly comparing the property-wealth held by comparably educated blacks and whites would be an examination of the (past and contemporary) influence of race discrimination on life chances. But in addition to the direct effects are indirect effects which influence life chances of the next generation of blacks and whites who will compete for occupational slots and power within organizations. Having wealth in the form of home-ownership means having collateral or home

equity which can be used to finance the acquisition of credentials for the next generation. We concentrate on the aforementioned economic benefits of being free to acquire, invest in, and inhabit property of one's own choosing not to belittle the importance of being able to send one's children to elite neighborhood schools or to have wealthy neighbors who may help with finding and getting jobs, but to point out the explicit disadvantage in one's life chances and those of one's children in being kept from acquiring property where one chooses. In this sense, we argue that racial antagonism may have shifted toward the sociopolitical arena as Wilson argues—but clearly not without threats to the life chances of blacks that are at least comparable to those obstacles that remain in the economic arena.

In addition, findings from other research literatures in sociology casts doubt on Wilson's contention (Wilson 1978, p. 32) that discrimination which results in residential segregation is irrelevant to his thesis because it falls within the sociopolitical sector.[4] First, a growing literature in sociology indicates that black residential segregation constricts job opportunities through reduced access to important job networks (Glasglow 1980; Holzer 1986; Freeman and Holzer 1986). Although most of this research has focused on the employment difficulties of low-income blacks, several studies indicate that having extensive job networks is equally important for the life chances of middle class or professional workers (Granovetter 1974; Marsden and Lin 1982). Additional sociological research indicates that black residential segregation may impact adversely on "life chances" because it reduces access to potential places of employment (e.g., Farley 1987), and is associated with both inferior neighborhood and local occupational structures (e.g., Parcel 1979), low-quality educational institutions (e.g., Farley and Allen 1987), and increased exposure to environmental hazards and risks (e.g. Packham 1991; Bullard and Wright 1987). In sum, there is no reason to believe that there is not a price paid by middle class blacks who suffer from a lack of access to affluent white neighbors.

In conclusion, we agree with Pettigrew (1979) who notes that the declining significance of race debate encompasses a multitude of ways in which racial inequality can occur. Pettigrew argues that a resolution of the debate requires an issue-by-issue analysis of the extent to which race inhibits the "life chances" of blacks. Our critical review of Wilson's thesis and existing studies that purport to examine it lead us to make three specific recommendations for future research.

Table 1. Studies That Examine The Black Middle Class In Context Of Wilson's Thesis

	Period Effects	*Life Chance Dependent Variables*	*Sociopolitical vs. Economic Sector*
Ideal Examination	x	x	x
Broman (1992)	-	-	-
Benjamin (1991)	x	-	-
Feagin (1991)	-	-	-
Nash (1991)	-	-	-
Collins (1989)	x	-	
Son et al. (1989)	x	x	-
Herring (1989)	-	-	-
Austin and Stack (1988)	-	-	-
Collins (1988)	x	x	-
Farley and Allen (1986)	x	x	-
Thomas et al. (1986)	-	-	-
Hout (1984)	x	x	-
Collins (1983)	-	x	-
Brown and Erie (1981)	x	x	-

First, only comparisons of future cohorts will shed more light on the period effects component of Wilson's thesis. In the civil rights era, blacks appear to have attained increasing parity in incomes and in representation in specific occupational categories; however, only in time will we be able to see if the gains made by the black middle class continue. Future studies should also compare the experiences of those who entered the labor force before and after the civil rights era; this will permit an assessment of the effect of past discrimination on current labor market inequality. Second, the inclusion of additional "life chance" variables are necessary to provide a satisfactory answer to the "returns to human capital investment" portion of Wilson's thesis; variables worthy of investigation include job authority and job autonomy as well as those that assess the extent to which middle class blacks are segregated in politically induced, race-conscious mobility tracts. Third, we suggest that future research compare the effects of racial antagonism in the "economic" and "sociopolitical" arenas on the "life chances" of middle class blacks. Such comparisons will provide a better understanding of the sources of labor market discrimination. As such, it will expand and refine the parameters of the declining significance of race debate.

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NOTES

1. See Farley and Bianchi (1985) for a comprehensive analysis of the economic and social indicators along which the black population is experiencing increasing as well as decreasing social differentiation.

2. The studies of one of Wilson's most vociferous critics, Willie (1989; 1979) are not included in this review. Wilson (1989) has responded to these studies and puts forth an extensive critique of them as valid tests of his declining significance of race thesis.

3. Several studies that do not examine Wilson's thesis indicate that in the civil rights era relatively advantaged blacks have made progress vis-a-vis whites on several economic indicators. See e.g. Smith and Welsh 1984 and Lii 1985. For evidence that in the same period blacks have not made progress see e.g. Hill 1981.

4. An important emerging line of sociological research has been devoted to documenting the range of deleterious social and economic consequences that have resulted from the geographic concentration of black poverty in inner-cities. The importance of this research is acknowledged here but it is not strictly relevant to the purposes of this paper as it focuses on the "underclass" portion of the black population. For a review of these studies see Massey, Gross and Shibuya 1994 and Massey and Denton 1993.

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RACISM AND THE UNDERCLASS

Mark R. Warren

ABSTRACT

This article takes issue with William Wilson's thesis that contemporary racism plays no significant role in the rise of a black underclass in America. By critically reviewing the debate concerning Wilson's "declining significance of race" thesis, I argue for an appreciation of how race and class have always interacted to define the African-American condition. Although the recent structural changes highlighted by Wilson are essential to the emergence of a modern underclass, these factors can not be isolated from the culture and social relations in which they operate. Drawing on the embeddedness framework developed in economic sociology literature, an alternative framework is advanced that examines the connection between economic processes and a racially shaped culture and social structure. From this standpoint, contemporary racism appears highly significant for the rise and maintenance of an underclass. Its effects are explored in several areas that are key to the development of an underclass: residential segregation, discrimination in employment and in the opportunities for small business, and education. Public policy implications are briefly discussed.

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> To put the question more pointedly, even if racism continues to be a factor in the social and economic progress of some blacks, can it be used to explain the sharp increase in inner-city social dislocations since 1970?... people who argue that *current* racial bias is the major cause of the deteriorating economic plight of the black poor fail to recognize how the fate of poor blacks is inextricably connected with the structure and functioning of the modern American economy. The net effect is that policy programs are recommended that do not take into account the fundamental cause of poverty—underemployment and unemployment (Wilson 1987, p. 11, 134).

In *The Truly Disadvantaged* William Wilson (1987) argues that the rise of a black underclass in America is fundamentally a result of structural changes in the U.S. economy. He presents a complex picture of the underclass' development, one that acknowledges the importance of historic racial discrimination and demographic shifts, particularly the movement of large numbers of middle class black people out of ghetto areas. But he explicitly counterposes his structural argument to the view that contemporary racism plays a significant role in the growth and maintenance of an underclass. Wilson acknowledges that racism continues to exist in the socio-political realm. But in economics, the arena crucial to the life chances of poor African Americans, class not race has become the determining factor.

Wilson's thesis has sparked renewed and extensive research efforts concerning black poverty. Social scientists have investigated such issues as the existence of neighborhood effects, the transmission of poverty, effects of structural economic change, spatial mismatch between residential location and jobs, and ghetto out-migration (Jencks and Peterson 1991). By and large, however, this renewed research has not addressed the issue of the importance of continued racism. In Wilson's Presidential address to the American Sociological Association, where he reviews the research spawned by his thesis, he cites only one effort to explore the impact of racism, Neckerman and Kirschenman's study of employer discrimination in hiring (Wilson 1991, p. 8; Neckerman and Kirschenman 1990). Wilson's thesis on the declining significance of race, then, appears to have been largely accepted, at least by poverty researchers.

This is a mistake. The underclass is primarily a black and minority phenomenon. By definition, the underclass is made up of the poor who live in areas of concentrated poverty.[1] Very few whites fit this definition, while about 30 percent of poor urban blacks live in areas

of concentrated poverty (Jargowsky and Bane 1990, p. 32). And the social dislocations that have helped concentrate the public's attention on the underclass, for example, crime, teenage pregnancy and drug violence, are often concentrated in poor black ghettos.

In Wilson's account, these dislocations arise from the effects of historic discrimination combined with recent structural changes in the economy. I agree that these structural changes have played a key role in the development of the underclass. But I find Wilson's account unsatisfactory because it isolates structural factors from the culture and social relations in which they operate. Instead, I will argue that these economic processes are embedded in a culture and social structure that are racially shaped. For Wilson, racism is important only in the past, as an historic legacy. In contrast, I will argue that contemporary racism has been highly significant for the rise and maintenance of the underclass.

I will begin my argument by reviewing the debate over Wilson's book *The Declining Significance of Race*, where he first presented his thesis that class, not race, accounts for the rise of the underclass. I will then treat some of the weaknesses in Wilson's thesis, particularly in his conception of racism, before going on to consider the relationship of race and structural changes using the embeddedness framework.

The Declining Significance of Race: The Debate

While most current poverty researchers do not concentrate on the racial aspect of the underclass problem, social scientists hotly debated the issue when Wilson originally put forward his thesis of the declining significance of race. In fact, Wilson's contention that class has replaced race in determining black life chances caused a storm of protest. It is to this debate that I turn to begin an investigation of the role of race in the underclass phenomenon.

In *The Declining Significance of Race* Wilson (1980) presents an historical analysis of racism in America, highlighting the shifting roles of economic interests, the state and ideology in shaping the realities of black life. In Wilson's view, during the pre-industrial periods of slavery and reconstruction as well as in the pre-World War II industrial period, economic forces backed up by the state combined to produce a racial oppression restricting all black people. However, in the modern industrial period, economic changes have opened up

opportunities for African Americans. Because of the effects of the Civil Rights movement and other factors, the state has moved decisively to outlaw discrimination in employment and to establish various affirmative action programs.

The result, according to Wilson, has been growing differentiation among black people. The black middle class has expanded significantly. Unlike the old black middle class, which was small and restricted to specific service categories in black communities, the new middle class has been able to take up positions in growing corporate, financial and service sectors. Moreover, the wages of young black professionals are comparable to whites. Significantly, however, Wilson argues that only those blacks most prepared to advance gained entry into the middle class. Poorer blacks, whose education, skills and capital were restricted by the effects of historic discrimination, remained behind. In fact, economic changes since the sixties, that is, the decline of basic industry in Northern and Midwestern cities, have trapped them into an underclass.

Wilson takes a Weberian approach to class in that he concentrates on how similar economic resources lead to similar life chances for people in the economic realm. From this point of view, Wilson concludes that "the net effect is a growing class division among blacks, a situation, in other words, in which economic class has been elevated to a position of greater importance than that of race in determining individual black opportunities for living conditions and personal life experiences" (Wilson 1979, p. 3).

Wilson's book provoked a storm of protest from many social scientists and political activists (Willie 1978; Pettigrew 1979; Clark 1980; Brewer 1982; Hill 1978; Jorgensen 1982; Payne 1989; Bennett, Foner and Bryce-LaPorte in Washington 1979) who stress the continued existence of racism. Some critics (e.g., Hill 1978; Pinckney 1984), go so far as to argue that black progress has been a "myth" or an "illusion" and thereby deny that the black middle class has been growing. But Wilson (1979, 1980) and others (Landry 1987) present a wealth of statistics to document the growing class differentiation among blacks. Trends in the eighties confirm this growth. Other critics accept the rise of a new middle class, but contend that middle class blacks still face racism. Willie (1978) goes further and contends that the black middle class, because it is in more frequent contact with whites, actually experiences heightened problems of racism.

That racism continues to affect middle class blacks in some ways is, I think, accepted by most students of race relations, including Wilson himself (1980, p. 167). In a recent *American Sociological Review* article, Joe Feagin documents the continued existence of racism towards the black middle class in public places (Feagin 1991). But the relevant question is not whether racism exists. The debate concerns the nature and significance of this racism. The continuing growth of the black middle class shows that racism is not a monolithic experience for African Americans. And the fact that recent black college graduates earn similar incomes to whites and have similar access to jobs means that racism towards them has changed. The efforts of many of Wilson's critics to list examples of racism does little to address its significance in light of these changes. In addition, the concentration of Wilson's critics on the situation of the black middle class obscures the plight of poor blacks.

Some critics do attempt to discuss the situation of a growing black underclass. Several of these writers offer useful ideas to begin an exploration of the continued effects of racism. Willie (1978) argues that race and class intersect in explaining the continued existence of black poverty. Pettigrew (1979) also notes the class-race interaction, and criticizes Wilson for separating the economic sphere from the socio-political sphere where racism continues to exist. Clark (1980) notes that a key aspect of racism has always been its institutionalized feature, which may persist even if racist attitudes decline.

Charles Payne (1987) provides the most extensive critique of Wilson's thesis. He criticizes Wilson for being an economic determinist, ignoring the importance of cultural (racist) belief systems and racism in the socio-political order for economic processes. He goes on to criticize Wilson for a narrow conception of economic order, restricting it to job acquisition and ignoring issues of control over productive resources or consumption patterns. Finally, he criticizes Wilson for ignoring the literature on institutionalized discrimination, where "race continues to be a salient element in stratifying processes despite the fact that it is not used as overtly nor as deliberately as before" (Payne 1987, p. 127).

On the whole, however, these streams of thought remain brief remarks and are unexplored in the debate. What they lack is a clear argument about how race and structure interact. I will use the embeddedness framework to construct such an argument.

Meanwhile, the focus of most critics on the conditions of the black middle class left Wilson's interpretation of the class origins of the black underclass unchallenged. Listing examples of racism fails to address the very real changes, that is growing class differentiation, that Wilson highlights. As a result, by the time Wilson published *The Truly Disadvantaged*, poverty researchers were ready to focus on Wilson's structural arguments, ignoring for the most part the role of race.

The first task in considering the role of race is to critique Wilson's thesis of the declining significance of race in a way that his critics failed to do. The appeal of Wilson's thesis appears to rest on three claims:

1. What sense does it make to stress racism as the cause of the underclass when the underclass arose precisely at a time of decreasing racism, in the sense of a decline in overt racist ideology and prejudice.
2. Class, not race, can best explain the expansion of the size of the black middle class and its improvement in socioeconomic status, that is, it can best explain why some blacks have "made it" and others have not.
3. Economic shifts have caused and still maintain the underclass, that is, even if racism were entirely eliminated, the life conditions of the underclass would not improve much, since its members would still be unemployed.

None of Wilson's critics attempt a systematic refutation of these claims. I will take each argument in turn.

Racist Ideology and Institutionalized Racism

What do we mean by racism? In an earlier work, *Power, Racism, and Privilege*, Wilson (1976) employs a multifaceted conception of racism. But in his arguments for the declining significance of race Wilson essentially equates racism with prejudice. He accepts that racism, in this context, means "the conscious refusal of whites to accept blacks as equal human beings and their willful, systematic effort to deny blacks equal opportunity" (1987, pp. 10-11). In this view, prejudice leads to discrimination. But, Wilson argues, prejudice has declined while black ghetto conditions have deteriorated. So racism can not be a significant factor.[2]

The claim that prejudice leads to discrimination, however, is not as straight-forward as it initially appears to be. First of all, equating racism with prejudice is problematic. Racism is a complex phenomenon that continually thwarts easy explanations. Mark Chesler discusses the range of definitions and theories of racism that have been advanced. He concludes that racism has three components: (a) personal attitudes and cultural values; (b) discriminatory institutional procedures; and (c) discriminatory effects (Chesler 1976, p. 21). Racism can not be reduced to prejudice alone.

Second, the causal link between prejudice and discrimination is complex. In a classic article, Robert Merton (1985) analyses four types of actors: the prejudiced discriminator, a straightforward case; the nonprejudiced discriminator who discriminates so as, for example, not to offend his racist white clientele; the prejudiced nondiscriminator who does the opposite; and the nonprejudiced nondiscriminator, another straightforward case (Merton 1985). Consequently, while prejudice may sometimes be a causal factor, it can also usefully be seen as a dependent variable, dependent on institutional factors (Yetman 1985, p. 12).

Moving from the level of individual action to that of societal processes, Wilson himself argued in an earlier work (1976, p. 34) that racism is not essential for a system of racial stratification; in fact, racist ideology often arises in an effort to buttress a situation of racial dominance once it is challenged. He uses the development of racism to justify black slavery as a case in point: racism did not cause slavery; in fact, slavery predated a well developed racist ideology. In the terms of our contemporary debate, does that mean that race was not significant in slavery?

Patterson (1989) discusses the relationship of the post-Civil War debt peonage system to racism, arguing that debt peonage could be explained solely as a "class" phenomenon if one chose to, without any reference to racism. The Jim Crow system of racial segregation, in fact, arose as an attempt to buttress the debt peonage system when institutional controls alone no longer sufficed.

These historical considerations help place the present relevance of race in perspective. They show the fallacy of accepting a decline in racist ideology as a sufficient argument for the decline in the significance of race. Instead, when examining the significance of race, we must examine institutional racism, that is, the normal workings of a racially stratified system, and not just overt racial prejudice.

Historical considerations should also warn us that racist ideology, far from always being the causal factor in discrimination, can be a dependent variable as well. Although overt racism has declined in the recent period, it has not disappeared. And certain factors may combine to shape subtler forms of racism and even cause a later increase in overt forms.

In fact, the whole question of the nature of contemporary racist ideology and prejudice requires systematic attention. While the decline in the belief in racial superiority by whites is well appreciated, little attention has been paid to the contemporary molding of racial attitudes. It is beyond the confines of this paper to attempt such an analysis, although it is essential to a full examination of the significance of racism to the underclass. Some questions to address would include: whether there is a shift in white racial attitudes from a perception of blacks as biologically inferior to culturally inferior or culturally undesirable; how class interacts with race to create particular racial stereotypes of underclass men and women; and how contemporary patterns of economic, social and political contact and competition shape race relations and beliefs.

This argument should not be taken as a denial of the importance of structural factors in the explanation of black poverty; indeed, they are essential. The point is to highlight the complexity of racism for a later demonstration that structure and race are intertwined.

Has Racism Been Monolithic?

Discriminatory results vary by class for African Americans. Wilson argues that race cannot explain the contemporary differentiation in the black community. Again, Wilson's logic is straight-forward: racism, if it is significant, should affect equally all people of the same race.

Yet this argument also fails an historical test. There has always been differentiation among African Americans. During slavery, there were house and field slaves. Moreover, the sizeable number of free blacks faced racism under very different conditions than slaves. During the early twentieth century, southern rural blacks and northern urban blacks lived different lives, although both were mostly poor. E. Franklin Frazier in the 1950s described the growth of a black middle class, which although it faced racism, was differentiated from the large mass of black people (Frazier 1957).

The "new" black middle class is, of course, different in important ways from the one Frazier described: it is not restricted to certain occupations serving segregated ghettos; and it is more integrated into corporate America (Landry 1987). But black workers in basic industry in the 1940s, like auto workers, held a comparable position to the new black middle class today in the sense that they were integrated into the mainstream economy and earned pay comparable to white workers of their cohort. Of course, black workers faced discrimination, for example, relegation mostly to unskilled work (Foner 1974). But those who worked in basic industry earned wages comparable to their white coworkers in the same jobs, which is really the only claim Wilson makes about the situation of young black professionals.

Race and class, therefore, have always interacted in accounting for the life chances of African Americans. More privileged black people have always been the ones to benefit from new opportunities opened up by economic changes or changes in racial attitudes. The black experience in America has never been monolithic. New differentiation of the black community, then, can not be a prima facie argument against the continued significance of race.

Racism and the Underclass

The foregoing arguments have demonstrated that the decline in overt racist ideology and the growing differentiation of the black community are not sufficient developments upon which to base an argument that class, not race, is the prime factor in the conditions of black people. Instead, we must see racism as a complex phenomenon which always interacts with class to define the black condition. What remains is to begin to sketch how racism actually does play an important role in the development and maintenance of the underclass.

Wilson argues that racism continues to play a significant role in socio-political life, but not in economic life—the area key to black life chances (1980, pp. 152-153). Instead, in Wilson's view, structural economic shifts are key to the rise of an underclass. I agree with Wilson's argument that the decline of industry in Northern and Midwestern cities played a crucial role in the development of an underclass. But we cannot ignore how these structural shifts are filtered through a racially stratified socio-political order. Wilson

includes past discrimination, leading to the concentration of low-skilled blacks in urban areas, as part of his model. But contemporary racism of an institutional and cultural variety must be included as well.

Rather than counterposing structure and race as Wilson does, race can be seen as shaping structural processes. Wilson assumes that the markets of neoclassical economics operate freely, allocating benefits by differentia (class) resources. In this view, such outcomes as what jobs people have and what housing they can buy are decided in free and autonomous markets. In contrast, recent sociological theories have highlighted the embeddedness of economic processes in culture and social relations (Granovetter 1985; Zukin and DiMaggio 1990). While this literature concentrates on explaining variation in forms of economic organization, it can be applied to broader issues of economic action as well. Granovetter argues precisely against the view that the economy is an autonomous arena. In Granovetter's words, "the anonymous market of neoclassical models is virtually nonexistent in economic life and that transactions of all kinds are rife with the social connections described" (1985, p. 495).

In particular, I wish to demonstrate that such outcomes as jobs and housing are not decided in isolation from the broader culture and social relations of the society. For underclass blacks, racism shapes the social processes through which Wilson's structural changes occur. Using the embeddedness concept, I will examine several areas in which race plays a highly significant role in the formation and maintenance of the underclass. I will concentrate mainly on housing and employment, since they play the key role in the defining attributes of the underclass as poor people living in areas of concentrated poverty.

Residential Segregation

The first case of embeddedness to consider involves the interplay of structural changes with residential segregation in the formation of the underclass. In Wilson's view, the concentration of poverty is a defining feature of the underclass. It produces the social isolation that accounts for the uniquely new features of black poverty, differentiating the underclass from traditional sociological conceptions of lower class communities. Concentration of poverty arises from the decline of industry in central cities, its shift to suburbs

and overseas, and the exodus of more upwardly mobile African Americans from the ghettoes, leaving a poorer, highly unemployed population behind. The result is a spatial mismatch: good paying blue-collar jobs in the suburbs with poor blacks trapped in the city (Wilson 1991, p. 7).

This explanation, however, fails to address why previously employed blacks could not follow their jobs. The "class" explanation is that they could not afford to move, while those with adequate resources, that is, the middle class, often did leave for the suburbs. But this is only part of the explanation. White resistance to residential integration has also served to limit the possibilities for black mobility to suburban areas where blue collar and low-skilled, but decent paying jobs remain available. According to a study of residential segregation by Dorothy Newman and her associates, only 10 percent of American neighborhoods were integrated in 1974, a figure virtually unchanged from 1940 (Newman et al. 1978, pp. 142-143). Meanwhile, the blacks who did move to suburbs tended to move to black suburbs. Even so, from 1965-70 whites suburbanized at a rate 3 times as high as blacks (163). Meanwhile blacks pay from 3-20 percent more for the same quality housing as whites, wherever it is. Hermalin and Farley address the income versus race cause of segregation by demonstrating that given black family income and suburban housing prices, more than 3 times the number of blacks should have lived in suburbs than actually did if income were the determinant (Hermalin and Farley 1973, pp. 602-603). They conclude: "We believe then that the current level of residential segregation must be attributed largely to actions and attitudes, past and present, which have restricted the entry of blacks into predominantly white neighborhoods" (p. 608).

A complex institutional structure operates to restrict blacks to inner city ghettos: bank red-lining procedures and mortgage discrimination, real estate agent restrictive covenants, restrictive suburban zoning laws, FHA mortgage policies and public housing siting policies (Newman 1978). Meanwhile, the African Americans who do make it to white suburbs often face racial threats and mob actions (Massey and Denton 1993). Meanwhile, Newman (1978) demonstrates that white fears of falling housing values as a result of neighborhood integration is based on a myth and often serves as a veil for prejudice. White people, who may no longer see black people as biologically inferior, may still see them as "culturally

undesirable" neighbors. The previously cited Schuman study (1985) that demonstrates a steady decline in overt racial prejudice, also notes that resistance to implementing desegregation remains strong. Newman concludes that "the moral of the housing story is that for black families, there has been no choice... Blacks cannot choose where to live, in what conditions, at what price, in what safety" (p. 178).

Wilson's "class" explanation of the concentration of poverty falsely assumes such a free choice. But the housing market is not the "free" market of neoclassical economics. It is embedded in a racially shaped culture, that is, the racial preferences of whites and the institutional networks and policies of racial exclusion in housing. In addition, economic results, like unemployment, are embedded in social structure, since blacks are not "free" to follow jobs to the suburbs.

If blacks are not free to follow jobs, what happens to the communites left behind by economic restructuring? They suffer a concentration of poverty that defines their underclass status. Massey and Denton (1993) use computer simulations to demonstrate that economic restructuring and increasing poverty under conditions of residential segregation lead to the creation of underclass communities. Their model works well to account for the existence of the underclass phenomenon primarily in Northern and Midwestern cities where segregation is highest and where economic restructuring hit urban areas hardest. They conclude that segregation and high poverty interact to make geographically concentrated poverty inevitable despite any trends in middle class out-migration.

While the mobility of many blacks has been restricted, urban whites have been free to follow jobs to the suburbs. Meanwhile, the white poor usually live in mixed income (white) areas, not ghettos with their "class" brothers and sisters (Jargowsky and Bane 1990). Including race along with class is essential to understand why the underclass is predominantly a phenomenon of people of color. In sum, it is not only poverty that keeps blacks in the ghetto, but racism as well.

Structural economic shifts, then, can not be seen in isolation from the socio-political order, in this case racially defined residence patterns and housing opportunities. Since concentration of poverty and social isolation are key elements of the definition of the underclass, racism appears highly significant to its development and maintenance.

Employment

The second key defining feature of the underclass is its marginal economic position. Wilson argues that unemployment constitutes the key cause of black poverty, that is, even if racism disappeared, underclass blacks would still be unemployed. This analysis leads directly to his public policy recommendation for the creation of employment opportunities and a tight labor market. I do not dispute Wilson's argument that unemployment is the root cause of poverty. But it is wrong to counterpose unemployment to racism as poverty's causal factor in the way that Wilson does (Wilson 1987, p. 134). Instead employment must be seen as embedded in the racially defined culture and social structure of a society.

For example, hiring is a racially shaped process. Wilson himself discusses Neckerman and Kirschenman's study of employment discrimination (Wilson 1991, p. 8). Neckerman and Kirschenman (1990) demonstrate that Chicago employers use racial stereotypes to discriminate in their hiring policies, particularly against young black males. Chicago area business people screen out young and poor black men as potential bad employees based on racial prejudices, seeing them as uneducated, unstable, uncooperative and dishonest. This practice, which Neckerman and Kirschenman call statistical discrimination, uses race and class as a proxy for judgments about future labor productivity. While the overwhelming majority of the surveyed business people did not express overt racist attitudes or a categorical dislike of blacks, they did racially discriminate using stereotypes (Wilson 1991, p. 8; Neckerman and Kirschenman 1990).

Richard Freeman (1989) has demonstrated that in tight labor markets, employers are more willing to hire black men. Wilson cites Freeman's work approvingly, saying "although jobless rates among disadvantaged young blacks remain high, dramatic progress occurred during the recent economic recovery period in the metropolitan areas with the tightest labor markets" (1991, p. 8) But Freeman's study of Boston during its tight labor market conditions in the late 1980s also showed racial differences, with poor white youth getting the better paying blue-collar jobs while poor black youth ended up in lower paid retail trades (Freeman 1990, p. 7). Wilson concludes that "the practice of statistical discrimination will vary depending on the tightness of the labor market and therefore ought not to be analyzed without reference to the overall state of the local or national

economy" (1991, p. 8). Equally so, however, the impact of economic changes will vary by race and these changes ought not to be analyzed without reference to the nature of racial discrimination in hiring.

The construction industry provides another example of racially embedded economic processes. A recent controversy in Boston, Massachusetts can serve to highlight the continued significance of race in employment as well as in small business development. In 1990 construction of a new post office building began in Roxbury, the heart of Boston's poor African American population. The $2.4 million project represented the first significant new public building built in the area for 10 years. In December local residents began picketing the site because virtually no local workers or subcontractors were being employed. The general contractor claimed it fulfilled federal regulations requiring 30 percent of a federal government construction project to be minority workers; virtually none of the minority workers, however, were from Roxbury. The protesters cited the relationship between joblessness and such social problems as violence, family decay and low self-esteem, saying local youth needed to see local residents working at good paying jobs. The protesters demanded that 50 percent of the project's employees be Roxbury area residents. After the protestors forced the shut-down of the site for 3 weeks, the general contractor, Suffolk Construction Company, agreed to hire one third of its workers on all trades locally. In addition, Suffolk agreed to abide by the Boston Residents Job Policy which specifies that 50 percent of a city project's workers be Boston residents (Boston *Globe*, December 13, 1990, p. 56; January 7, 1991, p. 49; January 13, 1991, p. 79).

Racial discrimination in construction trades has been well documented. Intent, however, is often hard to prove. Courts have been willing to accept evidence of discrimination based on statistical comparisons. In the Roxbury case, discriminatory intent may or may not have been present; yet such intent is not essential for a discriminatory outcome. Institutional racism, the normal workings of the system, can explain why virtually no Roxbury residents were originally hired.

Robert Eccles, in a study of Massachusetts construction firms, discusses the normal workings of the construction business. He demonstrates that general contractors develop long-term working relationships with subcontractors. They do not advertise each contract widely for bids, but give subcontracts to one of a few firms

with whom they always work. Such actions can be attributed to the benefits of transaction cost reduction through stable relationships and of the greater trust contractors have for those they know, as well as the preference to work with friends (Eccles 1981; Granovetter 1985, p. 498). Once again, markets for subcontracting and for labor are not "free." They are embedded in historical friendship networks and working relationships, which are racially shaped.

Suffolk Construction does not usually work with Roxbury subcontractors or workers, and chose not to again. While overt prejudice may be present, it is not necessary to cause a discriminatory result. Institutional racism, the normal workings of a subcontracting and hiring system based in segregated social relations, is sufficient. Meanwhile, white subcontractors may have an exaggerated perception of the untrustworthiness of black workers and subcontractors and a racial preference to work with white coworkers as well. These attitudes may help to reinforce the exclusion of African Americans from construction. The embeddedness of economic action in segregated social relations, then, is a cause of the continuing contemporary significance of race.

The construction case involves both impediments to employment as well as small business development. In Wilson's approach, upward mobility comes from access to middle class or well paid jobs. But small business represents another traditional avenue for upward mobility in the United States. The Roxbury case suggests that race continues to restrict African American life chances in this avenue as well.

The construction case links together two weaknesses of the structural approach that have been highlighted. First, by defining racism solely as prejudicial attitudes, Wilson ignores the effect of institutional racism, that is, the normal workings of the construction industry that lead to black exclusion. Second, by assuming free markets for economic activity, Wilson ignores how job availability is embedded in racially defined social relations, leading once again to black exclusion.

Race affects the ability of African Americans to take advantage of new urban economic opportunity. Jobs have left the inner city. But some jobs remain and some jobs are newly created. The question is who will get these jobs. Wilson's explanation of the continuing unemployment of poor blacks solely as a result of class or structural factors is therefore insufficient. Rather than counterpose race and

class, their combination and interrelation can best explain the maintenance of the underclass.

Other Racial Effects

Once we recognize the interconnection of race and class and the embeddedness of economic action in social relations, then a range of continued race effects on black poverty can be appreciated. For example, Wilson argues that poor blacks lack the skills and education to get good jobs. But race, as well as class, can cause this problem. Several studies have documented the impact of low teacher expectations of black children in poor communities on educational attainment (Rist 1970). Racial prejudices can combine with institutionalized racism so that poor black communities often have poorly funded, inferior schools with inferior educational materials. Studies have documented the effect on blacks (Dreeben and Gamoran 1986). Resistance to metropolitan or other alternative sources of funding for education, and resistance to metropolitan-wide school integration plans, at least partly due to racial preferences, ensure the continuation of poor schooling for poor blacks.

In addition, discriminatory treatment can have a psychological effect on poor African Americans. Wilson's concept of social isolation tends to overlook the contact that underclass blacks do have with mainstream white America. In fact, poor blacks are immersed in a web of contact, in schools, welfare agencies, stores and other businesses, health clinics, on the street with pedestrians and police, and in prisons. The effects of discriminatory treatment received in these contexts can range from low self-esteem and a sense of hopelessness to anger and distrust. Wilson has little to say about the psychological effects of underclass life. In his Presidential Address he discusses low self-efficacy, but only as it results from unemployment and the context of living among the desperately poor, not from interaction with the broader society (1991, p. 11).

Few sociological studies directly take up psychological effects. Elijah Anderson in *Streetwise* (1991) analyzes the black male's experience in public, demonstrating that racial categories shape how pedestrians perceive and negotiate contact with him and how police treat him. In an insightful article in the *New Yorker*, William Finnegan (1990) traces a year in the life of a 16 year old black male in a New Haven ghetto. He documents the constant racial treatment

the young man faces as well as the complex web of structural constraints in his life. Further, he identifies a growing trend: young black males are becoming a social pariah in America. Finnegan quotes a young community activist:

> The older (black) folks just don't understand that being a teen-ager these days is brutal. It's much worse than it was to be a teen-ager in the forties, when people were afraid of the klan, of being called 'nigger', of having somebody spit on them. These kids know that the whole society hates who they are. And they can't *help* who they are. Why do you think their favorite band calls itself Public Enemy Number One?" (p. 56)

Since African Americans are not just passive objects in the economy and society, their psychological and social attitudes will play an important role in how they respond to economic opportunities. It is beyond the scope of this paper to attempt to measure the exact significance of such an effect. Such an examination, however, would require an analysis of the nature of modern racism as it interacts with class and gender to produce racial attitudes towards underclass men and women.

CONCLUSION

The various ways racism affects the black underclass are numerous and complex. Much fruitful research can be done to contribute to a better understanding of the changed but continuing significance of race in the development of the underclass. To proceed, however, requires a different framework for approaching the problem than either Wilson or many of his early critics used.

First, racism must be seen as a complex phenomenon. It is not reducible to prejudice; nor does prejudice lead in a unidirectional way to discrimination. Instead, we need to examine the significance of institutional racism in addition to contemporary forms of racial prejudice. We also need to appreciate that the impact of racism can vary by class; so the experience of middle class and underclass blacks can be differentiated. This approach will then allow for a focus on the significance of contemporary racism towards the underclass.

Second, understanding the contemporary significance of race also requires rejecting the idea that economic action is autonomous, operating by "free" markets. Instead we must appreciate the

embeddedness of the structural factors that produce and maintain the underclass in America's racially impacted culture and socio-political relations. Such an approach overcomes the error of counterposing race and class that Wilson and many of his early critics make.

In Wilson's view:

> The problem for poor blacks, I maintain, is that even if we could wave a magic wand and eliminate all racial discrimination, if all racial discrimination in labor market practices were eliminated tomorrow, the problem for poor blacks would not be solved. Their economic conditions will not improve significantly until something is done to deal with structural barriers to decent jobs (quoted in Washington 1979, pp. 112-113).

I agree, except I would add that eliminating racial discrimination would help. But I would also argue, conversely, that even if we could wave a magic wand and eliminate virtually all unemployment, the problem for poor blacks would not be solved either, although it would be helped. Without eliminating racism many blacks may be relegated to the lowest paying jobs, which often do not pay enough to rise above the poverty level.

Important public policy implications follow from this analysis. Wilson advocates universalist programs, emphasizing job creation and tight labor markets, to address the structural causes of poverty. He argues that race-specific programs, like affirmative action, are irrelevant to poor blacks (1987, part II). I would agree that job creation policies are crucial. But the case of the post office construction in Roxbury, certainly a job creation program, demonstrates that poor blacks don't automatically benefit from these programs. Furthermore, a magic wand that creates completely full employment and good paying jobs for all at one stroke doesn't exist. Instead, structural reforms, job creation and tight labor markets, if they come at all, will come gradually. Therefore, policies that address the discriminatory effect of contemporary racism must be an integral part of any job creation program if poor blacks are to benefit fully from them.

In the context of job creation and tight labor market strategies, anti-discrimination policies could take the form of continuing and reinvigorating affirmative action and minority set-aside programs. Or perhaps new and different methods need to be considered. Anti-

discrimination policies should be evaluated on a number of criteria, including long-term effectiveness in alleviating poverty and political feasibility. In any case, the analysis presented in this paper indicates that, to be effective, programs addressing the problems of the black underclass cannot ignore contemporary racism. Efforts to overcome contemporary racial discrimination in the economic as well as the socio-political realm, in housing, education and social relations, play an essential role in combatting black poverty, since racism shapes the economic processes determining the life chances of poor African Americans.

NOTES

1. The definition of the underclass is a controversial issue. The definition I use is comparable to the one Wilson employed in his ASA Presidential Address where he incorporates Van Haitsma's notion of people in a structurally marginal economic position (weak labor force attachment) living in a social context that maintains marginality (Wilson 1991, p. 9).

2. Howard Schuman and his associates have documented the steady decline in overt racist attitudes since the forties. On the basis of extensive survey data, they conclude "whereas discrimination against, and enforced segregation of, blacks was taken for granted by most white Americans as recently as the 1940s, today the dominant belief is that blacks deserve the same treatment and respect as whites, and that some degree of racial integration is a desirable thing" (1985, p. 202)

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POPULATION CHANGE AND THE EMPLOYMENT STATUS OF COLLEGE EDUCATED BLACKS

Hayward Derrick Horton

ABSTRACT

A number of recent studies on the status of black Americans have focused upon the increasing gap between the black middle class and the disadvantaged. Framed in the context of the declining significance of race thesis, many sociologists have reported that middle class blacks have reached parity with their white counterparts in terms of lifestyles and life chances. This study challenges that assumption by taking a population approach to the analysis of change in the employment status of the black middle class. Specifically, three questions are addressed: (1) Have college educated blacks gained parity with comparable whites in levels of employment? (2) How have the levels of employment for college educated blacks changed over time? and (3) Are demographic and socioeconomic variables more important than race in explaining the patterns of black-white employment? The

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results of the logit analysis reveal that net of demographic and socioeconomic variables, blacks have lower levels of employment than whites. Moreover, the race effect increased in magnitude over the 1980-1990 decade. An analysis of interaction effects showed that college educated blacks did improve in the likelihood of being employed over the decade, but so did college educated whites. However, despite this improvement for blacks, parity with whites did not occur. The paper concludes with a discussion of the theoretical implications of the results.

The historical and social significance of the black middle class has been well recognized in research on racial inequality (Morris 1984). DuBois (1899) documented the system of class stratification within the black community in his classic work, *The Philadelphia Negro*. He maintained that the black middle class had the potential, if not moral obligation, to uplift the black population as a whole via its leadership (1903). Others have criticized the black middle class for its failure to provide leadership (Woodson 1933) or its preoccupation with assimilation (Frazier 1957; Cruse 1967). However, in contemporary sociological research the major focus has been placed on the social and economic gains of the black middle class as a consequence of the Civil Rights Movement (Wilson 1980; Hout 1984; Farley 1984). To date, black middle class gains have yet to be placed in the context of the joint effects of changes in population size, population composition and the structure of the American economy (Lieberson 1980). Most analyses which attempt to link the socioeconomic status of blacks to the transformation of the American economy have focused on the black disadvantaged (Wilson 1987, 1991). As a result, most researchers implicitly assume that the future for the black middle class lies in eventual social and economic parity with whites (O'Hare et al. 1991). To the contrary, the black middle class is vulnerable to economic downturns as well as increased discrimination as employment opportunities for middle class whites become more scarce (Lieberson 1980; Gans 1988; Feagin 1991). Accordingly, the purpose of this paper is to assess the extent to which the level of employment has changed for the black middle class over the 1980-1990 decade. The following research questions are addressed: (1) Have college educated blacks gained parity with comparable whites in levels of employment? (2) How have the levels

of employment for college educated blacks changed over time? (3) Are demographic and socioeconomic variables more important than race in explaining the patterns of black-white employment?

The Sociology of the Black Middle Class

The black middle class has its origins in the old mulatto elite that emerged during the antebellum era (Spickard 1989). Membership in this group was based upon subjective status (light skin) rather than objective class indicators (Franklin and Moss 1988; Childs 1989). This group eventually gave way to a bonafide middle class based upon achieved characteristics and consisting of darker-skinned blacks (Landry 1984).

Historically, members of the black middle class have been marginalized and precluded from experiencing the full benefits of their relatively privileged positions (Blau and Duncan 1967; Duncan 1968; Franklin and Moss 1988). As Landry (1984) noted:

> The severe restrictions faced by black professionals—lack of opportunities for acquiring a professional education, an impoverished black community, prejudices among educated blacks, racial and exclusionary norms—resulted in a slow and uneven growth in the number and types of black professionals between 1915 and 1960 (p. 52).

It is this group that Frazier (1957) severely criticized for being preoccupied with creating a black middle class fantasy world based upon mimicking the white aristocracy. Similarly, Cruse (1967, 1987) criticized the black middle class for abdicating its leadership role in the black community and the failure to establish autonomous black institutions. Blackwell (1991) likewise noted the in-fighting among prominent black leaders for legitimation by the white power structure.

Despite its shortcomings, the black middle class has played a pivotal role in advancing the cause of the entire black population and disadvantaged minorities as a whole (Franklin and Moss 1988; Horton 1992). Morris (1984) noted that the black middle class of the South, specifically black ministers, provided the leadership during the Civil Rights Movement. In fact, their leadership was indispensable because the white power structure of the South had virtually eliminated the NAACP as a force in that region (Morris 1984).

In a significant advance of the debate on the role of the black middle class, Butler (1991) introduced the concept of the "truncated middleman." Documenting the diversity within the black middle class in his analysis, Butler (1991) noted:

> The major implication is that, among this group today (those who have attained a degree of economic security), we really have two groups which trace their success to different patterns of adjustment to America by their foreparents. Because of this, the two groups continue to adjust to racism and discrimination in similar but significantly different ways. Thus it is a theoretical and methodological mistake to lump all Afro-Americans into one group called the "middle class" (p. 234).

Butler (1991) identifies the two groups as: (1) *the truncated Afro-American middleman*; and (2) *the Afro-American new middle class*. The former is distinguished by a tradition of self-help and entrepreneurship within the black community. The latter adjusted to racial oppression in the form similar to the assimilation patterns of other racial and ethnic groups. According to Butler (1991) there is a distinct difference betweens the two groups in terms of economic stability, intergenerational mobility, and the support of black community institutions.

However, much of the contemporary debate in the area of racial inequality centers on whether and to what extent that conditions for middle class blacks have changed. Wilson (1980) wrote:

> However, in the economic sphere, class has become more important than race in determining black access to privilege and power. It is clearly evident in this connection that many talented and educated blacks are now entering positions of prestige and influence at a rate comparable to or, in some situations, exceeding that of whites with equivalent qualifications (p. 2).

While there is general agreement that opportunities for blacks have increased (Hout 1984), many sociologists refute the claim that class has superseded race as the determinant of the lifestyles and life chances for black Americans (Killian 1990; Kluegal 1990; Feagin 1991). Horton (1992) found that middle class blacks were less likely than comparable whites to be homeowners. Horton and Burgess (1992) found that race superseded class in determining levels of black male marriageability. Thomas and Horton (1992) reported that middle class blacks had not achieved parity with middle class whites in terms of family income.

Whereas this debate is far from being resolved, one point is irrefutable: the black middle class continues to be a standard by which the level of racial inequality in American society is assessed (Landry 1984; Farley and Allen 1987).

Population Change in the Context of Structural Inequality

One perspective on racial inequality that transcends the race/class debate is the *population and structural change thesis* (Horton and Burgess 1992). According to this perspective, racial inequality is a function of the interaction of changes in the minority population and the economic/occupational structure. This approach provides linkage between the changes in the size and composition of the black population and the structural changes in the economy that impact upon the overall opportunity structure (Horton and Burgess 1992). Population and structural change was alluded to by Wilson (1987) when he placed the social dislocation of black workers in the context of the structural transformation of the American economy. However, Wilson focused on black blue collar workers and the disadvantaged (Wilson 1987, 1991). Similarly, Lichter (1988, 1991) alludes to this approach in his study of black underemployment and black female marriage markets. However, this study represents the first formal articulation of the population and structural change thesis.

Hence, according to this approach, the black middle class should experience increasing disadvantage in the labor market as the size of this population segment increases. Moreover, that disadvantage will be exacerbated in periods of economic restructuring and/or downturns. As opportunities for white middle class workers decline, the competition between blacks and whites at that level should increase proportionately.

History provides considerable support for the population and structural change thesis (Franklin and Moss 1988). Racial discrimination and oppression, the Black Codes, and Jim Crow were all mechanisms to eliminate blacks from competition with whites in the labor force (Wilson 1980; Landry 1984; Franklin and Moss 1988). Lieberson (1980) documented that the increase in the size of the black population and its perceived economic threat to white workers resulted in the institutionalization of racial discrimination in the labor force in the North. Similarly, the resurgence of blatant forms of racism and anti-minority sentiments on the part of middle class whites

provides additional support for this view (Gans 1988; Kluegal 1990; Feagin 1991; Hacker 1992; Terkel 1992).

The 1980s provide an excellent test of the thesis because it was a period of unprecedented economic restructuring and white displacement during the post Civil Rights Era (Bluestone and Harrison 1982; Ackoff et al. 1984). Likewise, the 1980s was a period in which there were significant occupational gains for blacks (O'Hare 1991). Thus, in accordance with the population and structural change thesis, black middle class labor force participants are expected to experience an increase in discrimination. One manifestation of this discrimination would be lower levels of employment than that experienced by middle class whites. Therefore, one major contribution of this study will be to test this thesis in the context of those blacks who have presumably the highest levels of human capital: college educated blacks.

The population and structural change thesis also has some bearing on the employment status of black females. Black females are expected to have experienced significant labor force displacement as white females increased their numbers in the labor force and experienced substantial occupational mobility in the face of the economic restructuring of the 1980s.

Similarly, blacks of every age cohort are expected to have lower levels of employment status—irrespective of social class. Moreover, the employment gap is expected to be greatest at the young adult cohort level. These are persons who have relatively little human capital (i.e., work experience). Therefore ascriptive characteristics (race, family background, and network of friends and acquaintances) are more likely to have an effect on the likelihood of being employed. Placed in the context of the declining employment opportunities for all age cohorts, black young adults are expected to be the most disadvantaged of all labor force participants.

Statement of Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1. There will be an increase in the magnitude of the effect of race on employment status from 1980 to 1990.

Hypothesis 2. The employment status of college educated blacks will be lower than that for college educated whites in both 1980 and 1990.

Hypothesis 3. The employment status of black females will decline relative to white females between 1980 and 1990.

Hypothesis 4. Young adult blacks will have significantly lower levels of employment than their white counterparts in both 1980 and 1990.

DATA AND METHODS

There are two sources of data for this study. The first is the 1 in 1000 Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS) of the U.S. Bureau of the Census. The second source is the 1990 Current Population Survey. The study includes only black and nonHispanic white labor force participants between the ages of 25-54. The 1980 sample size is 99,324 (10,567 blacks, 88,757 whites) and the 1990 N is 75,405 (6,771 blacks and 68,634 whites).

Multiplicative logit models are employed as the multivariate method of analysis. This method is appropriate because the variables of the analysis are categorical in nature.

Operationalization of the Variables

Employment Status. This is the dependent variable of the analysis, coded as 1 for employed and 2, if unemployed.

Race. A dichotomy with black and white coded 1 and 2 respectively.

Age. This variable is coded as a trichotomy with the categories 25-34, 35-44 and 45-54 in that order.

Sex. Male is coded as 0 and female is coded as 1.

Education. Persons with 4 or more years of college were placed in category 1. All others received a code of 2.

Occupation. There are two categories for this variable, white collar and blue collar. The first was created by combining managerial and professional specialty with technical, sales and administrative support occupations. The second was the result of combining: (1) service occupations; (2) precision production, craft and repair areas;

and (3) operators, fabricators and laborers. Farming, forestry and fishing occupations were excluded from this analysis.

Sector. Two codes were used for this variable representing public and nonpublic categories.

Region. This variable has two codes, 1 being South and 2 non-South.

RESULTS

Table 1 presents the descriptive analysis of employment status by race for 1980 and 1990. These data show that blacks do not equal whites in levels of employment. This relationship holds across demographic and social categories as well as time. However, the one area where blacks are near parity is within the college-educated category. In 1990, there is only a -.6 percent difference between blacks and whites. This represents an improvement over the 1980 gap which was -2.0 percent.

Age and sex differences provide some mixed results. The black-white gap in employment status widened at the 25-34 category and declined for the 45-54 age group. The 35-44 area was virtually unchanged over the two points in time. Similarly, there was a 1.2 percent decline in the gap for black and white males but the gap for females remained essentially unchanged.

Table two presents the logit analysis of employment status for 1980 and 1990. These results show that even in the face of an array of social and demographic controls, race is a major determinant of employment status. Also, the effect of race increased in magnitude from 1980 to 1990. The odds for blacks in 1980 was .87 to 1 while the value for blacks was 1.15 to 1. The 1990 odds for blacks and whites were .67 to 1 and 1.49 to 1, respectively. Thus for blacks, the likelihood of being employed was less than that for whites and the discrepancy increased over the decade. This finding supports hypothesis number one which argued that race would increase in its effect on employment status over the decade. It is likewise important to note that this finding is at odds with the declining significance of race argument. However, it is supportive of the population and structural change thesis.

The relative odds for the interaction effects are presented in table three. The interaction of race, education and employment status

Table 1. Employment Levels in the United States by Race, 1980 and 1990

	1980			1990		
	Black	*White*	*% Pt. diff*	*Black*	*White*	*% Pt. diff.*
Total	87.6	94.1	-6.5	90.3	95.9	-5.6
Age:						
25-34	88.9	94.6	-5.7	89.4	96.0	-6.6
35-44	92.8	96.0	-3.2	93.7	97.0	-3.3
45-54	92.1	96.2	-4.1	95.3	97.7	-2.4
Sex:						
Male	86.7	94.1	-7.4	89.6	95.8	-6.2
Female	88.5	94.2	-5.7	90.9	95.9	-5.0
Education:						
College	95.6	97.6	-2.0	98.0	98.6	-.6
No College	86.6	93.3	-6.7	90.0	95.6	-5.6
Occupation:						
White Collar	93.9	97.0	-3.1	94.3	97.5	-3.2
Blue Collar	83.8	90.7	-6.9	87.5	93.6	-6.1
Sector:						
Public	92.9	97.1	-4.2	96.9	98.4	-1.5
Nonpublic	88.3	94.2	-5.9	89.9	95.6	-5.7
Region:						
South	93.2	96.7	-3.5	91.0	96.1	-5.1
Nonsouth	85.6	93.6	-8.0	89.5	95.8	-6.3
N	10,567	88,757		6,771	68,634	

Table 2. Logit Analysis of Employment Status, 1980 and 1990

Independent Variables	*1980*	*1990*
Race:		
Black	.87***	.67***
White	1.15***	1.49***
Age:		
25-34	.76***	.79***
35-44	1.12***	.99
45-54	1.17***	1.28***
Sex:		
Male	1.03	1.11***
Female	.97	.90***
Education:		
College	1.26***	1.21**
No College	.80***	.82**
Occupation:		
White Collar	1.60***	1.41***
Blue Collar	.63***	.71***
Sector:		
Public	1.35***	1.56***
Not Public	.74***	.64***
Region:		
South	1.33***	1.08**
Not South	.75***	.92**
Constant	31.73***	35.45***
G^2/df	1.32	.95

Notes: * $p < .05$
** $p < .01$
*** $p < .001$

reveals that college educated blacks improved in the likelihood of being employed over the two time periods. In 1980 the odds for blacks were 1.00 to 1. In other words, college educated blacks had an even chance of being employed. But, by 1990, the odds had improved to 1.26 to 1. College educated blacks were more likely than not to be employed in the later year. On the surface, this appears to provide support for the declining significance of race thesis. However, a different picture emerges when one compares the black relative odds to those for college educated whites. In neither 1980 nor 1990 do blacks achieve parity with whites in employment status (1.64 in 1980 and 1.96 in 1990 for whites). In fact, the differences in the magnitudes of the relative odds for the two groups remained unchanged. This is because college educated whites experienced a gain in employment status that was comparable to that for blacks. The net result is that

Table 3. Relative Odds for the Logit Interactions of Race with Age, Sex and Education: 1980 and 1990

	Black		*White*	
	1980	*1990*	*1980*	*1990*
Age:				
25-24	.54	.50	.89	.78
35-44	.94	.87	1.55	1.36
45-54	.93	1.17	1.52	1.82
Sex:				
Male	.73	.83	1.20	1.30
Female	.83	.78	1.36	1.22
Education:				
College	1.00	1.26	1.64	1.96
No College	.61	.51	1.00	.79

college educated blacks are no better off in 1990 than in 1980 when compared to their white counterparts. These findings support the second hypothesis and clearly demonstrate that race is not declining in significance.

The race-sex interaction with employment status is a direct test of the third hypothesis. Black females were expected to have lower levels of employment status than their white counterparts in 1980 and 1990. These results support that hypothesis. In fact, black women lost ground over the period. The 1980 and 1990 odds for black females were .83 to 1 and .78 to 1 respectively. In both years, black women are less likely than not to be employed. The opposite is true for white females. Their 1980 and 1990 odds are 1.36 and 1.22 in that order. In fact, it is clear that black women are more similar to black men in employment status than to white women.

Finally, an examination of the race-age interaction shows that the effects of race supersedes that of cohort. As predicted by hypothesis four, blacks in the youngest age cohort had lower levels of employment status than their white counterparts. However, following the 1980 cohorts for both races demonstrate the extent of the race effect. This cohort has an odds of .54 to 1 in 1980. Ten years later, the odds is .87 to 1. Hence, in both years blacks in this cohort are less likely than not to be employed. This is not the case with whites. In 1980 this cohort has an odds of .89 to 1. In short, whites at this age are less likely to be employed. But by 1990, the odds have reversed (1.55 to 1). In fact, these whites have the highest odds for any cohort. This dramatic difference in the likelihood of being employed demonstrates the impact of race for blacks and whites who are comparable on every other socioeconomic dimension. According to the declining significance of race thesis, the experiences of this group should have been similar. Once again, this argument fails to be consistent with the social reality that blacks face in America. Conversely, these findings are quite consistent with the population and structural change thesis.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between changes in the employment status of middle class blacks between 1980 and 1990. Specifically, three questions were addressed: (1) Have

college educated blacks gained parity with comparable whites in levels of employment? (2) How have the levels of employment changed over time? and (3) Are demographic and socioeconomic variables more important than race in explaining patterns of black-white employment?

The results of the logit analysis revealed that, contrary to the prevailing wisdom, race *increased* rather than *decreased* in its effect on employment status. The magnitude in the difference between blacks and whites was greater in 1990 than it was in 1980. College educated blacks experienced some *absolute* gains in employment status over the decade. However, in *relative* terms, they were no better off in 1990 than in 1980 because of the substantial gains for white middle class labor force participants.

In addition, black women lost ground when compared to white females. In both years they were less likely than white females to be employed. Similarly, the race effect was manifest when comparing black and white age cohorts. This is particularly the case for the cohort in the young adult category where by 1990 the black and white employment statuses had dramatically diverged.

Theoretically, these findings bring into question the validity of the declining significance of race thesis. This argument is based upon an absolute change in the lifestyles and life chances of blacks. However, if race is in fact declining, then there should be some evidence of relative change. The improvement in employment status that has been experienced by middle class blacks has been matched by middle class whites. Hence, black middle class labor force participants have merely held their own over the decade. This is particularly important given the white backlash that was witnessed during the decade of the 1980s (Franklin 1991).

These findings do support the population and structural change thesis. To reiterate, the perspective holds that there is an interaction between changes in the minority population and the overall opportunity structure. An increase in the size of the black middle class resulted an increase in the competition between blacks and whites for white collar jobs in a period of economic decline. The net result is an increase in the effects of race in determining employment. This effect is so strong that the employment status of black females are dramatically different from white females and brings into question attempts to link the socioeconomic conditions of the two groups (Collins 1991). Blacks in the youngest cohorts experience

significant disadvantage relative to similar whites in terms of employment opportunities. Duncan (1968) argued that in the face of multivariate controls, the residual race effect was a direct measure of racial discrimination. It is ironic that after more than two decades, these findings lead to a similar conclusion.

In summary, these results suggest that without fundamental change in the economy, the gap between black and white middle class labor force participants is likely to increase. The black population is growing at twice the rate of the white population (O'Hare et al. 1991). Other minority populations are growing at faster rates (O'Hare et al. 1991). As whites increasingly, and perhaps correctly, perceive that their economic opportunities are dwindling, racial tensions are likely to be exacerbated. Thus, whether the black middle class substantially grows in absolute terms is immaterial. They will more likely be victims of anti-black sentiments that even white middle class liberals openly espouse (Hacker 1992; Terkel 1992). These trends appear to foretell a dramatic decline in the state of race relations and an increase in the level of racial inequality in American society.

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FACTORS INFLUENCING THE RETENTION OF BLACK FACULTY ON PREDOMINANTLY WHITE CAMPUSES

Joan Krenzin

ABSTRACT

Problems of retention of black faculty on predominantly white campuses of comparitively small universities were examined by interviewing all of the 15 black professors in one border-state institution. Social distance (explained by conformity, a means of resolving cognitive dissonance, and insecurity) and sponsored mobility were examined as theoretical foundations. Agreement was found with past research on failure of tenure and rank to match years of service, the loneliness of minority status, expenditure of an inordinate amount of time on campus racial issues, and exploitation as token black on committees and task forces. The lack of administrative support and poor rapport with colleagues, found in previous studies, were not found here. Additional concerns on this campus, possibly relating to the size of the city, centered on the lack of social life and the lack of black experiences for children.

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INTRODUCTION

In the wake of Federal mandates to increase integration in institutions of higher education receiving government funds, there has been an extensive effort to increase the number of black faculty in predominantly white universities. The reasons for the Federal mandate, and for universities to seek to increase minority faculty representation even without that mandate, seem obvious. Black role models for both black and white students are long overdue. The manifestation of black competence, evidenced by the black professor, provides the "proof," still sought by a number of students, that blacks have the intellectual capacity to compete with whites.

At the present time, however, far too few black scholars are available to fill the demand. Moreover, in a sellers' market the regional university is ill-equipped to compete with those who can pay the bigger price. The lament heard is that black faculty leave these smaller schools almost as rapidly as they arrive. If one were to concede that the smaller school has attracted many outstanding white professors, many of whom we must assume could qualify for the positions at more prestigious schools, why do they, too, not leave? What, besides money, causes black professors to abandon their posts at regional universities?

It must, of course, be recognized that the exodus is not universal. Some black professors, albeit a small proportion, remain at the regional universities and progress through the ranks. Nevertheless, on the whole, black professors, like female professors, are grossly underrepresented. Moreover, both groups contain fewer tenured professors, fewer associate and full professors, and fewer administrators than does the group of white male professors.

This chapter seeks to examine the factors, both personal and structural, that cause black professors to stay at or depart from regional universities. The situation in one border-state institution will be examined.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Problems in the retention of black faculty might be viewed conceptually from the perspectives of social distance, culture conflict, and sponsored mobility. Although some might lump all of these

concepts together under the general heading of racism, examination of the concepts individually should help to explain specific behaviors more precisely.

Social Distance

Bogardus' (1959) concept of social distance helps to outline the framework for examining this problem. Social distance is the degree of distance (ranging from acceptance in marriage to refusal to allow a person to visit one's country) that a person wants between himself/herself and some minority person. It can be explained by conformity, a resolution of cognitive dissonance, and insecurity (Triandis and Triandis 1960).

Social distance may be, in part, the result of conformity (Newcomb 1943). Through conformity one takes on the values of the group. Allport pointed out that "about half of all prejudiced attitudes are based only on the need to conform to custom, to let well enough alone, to maintain the cultural pattern" (1954, p. 286).

Segregated schooling was experienced by many of the faculty in the university being studied, and most of the faculty are older. A disproportionate number of the older faculty were raised either in this state or in an adjacent border state. As we know, not only does prejudice cause discrimination, but also discrimination causes prejudice (Merton 1949). That prejudice, although it may not be acknowledged, may influence white faculty to maintain a certain social distance from black faculty. It would be extremely unusual to find a white faculty member who would not be friendly, courteous, and considerate toward black colleagues. On the other hand, joint social activities outside of school, collaboration on research, and serious joint exploration of ideas are not the norm.

Cognitive dissonance (Festinger 1957) might be expected when one views the disproportionately small number of black faculty on college campuses. That cognitive dissonance is lessened if a group can believe that its position advantage occurs because the disadvantaged group is somehow inferior. Otherwise cognitive dissonance would be a problem because prejudice runs counter to the American belief in the equality of all people and in religious beliefs of treating all people as "brothers."

After postdecision dissonance has been handled, there may be an increase in social distance. This, of course, decreases the opportunity

for reality testing of one's prejudiced ideas. Unintentional modeling for co-workers may, in turn, decrease the chance for reality checking among those colleagues (Hraba 1979).

Insecurity, the third factor influencing social distance, may be partially attributed to child-rearing practices in the lower classes, which tend to be more authoritarian (Triandis and Triandis 1960). People higher on the F-scale (Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswik, Levinson, and Sanford 1950) are less secure. There is some indication that more professors at regional universities may have their roots in lower socioeconomic backgrounds than do professors at more prestigious schools. Moreover, they have been raised in cultural settings, such as schools, which were dominated by lower-income populations. Insecure people cannot tolerate ambiguity as well so they adopt a single set of values and allow no contradiction. Black faculty may be both younger and more liberal than their white counterparts. They may challenge established norms and procedures and cause older professors to fear that the status quo may be threatened.

Sponsored Mobility

All of the previously mentioned concepts may help to explain the absence of sponsored mobility. Upward mobility, in the form of tenure and promotions, may have been a product of sponsored mobility for the traditional white male professor. That sponsorship is lacking for black professors.

In her study of black faculty at white institutions Debra Blum (1988) found that:

> Most faculty members said they were aware of what it takes to earn tenure, yet a large number did not recognize the importance of having a mentor or of establishing formal or informal contacts with colleagues—two factors that are crucial to the tenure process (p. 13).

William Exum lends further support to this position:

> Mobility—in this case, access, promotion, and tenure—is not simply a result of an individual's research and teaching. Rather, in most successful academic careers, there is an important element of sponsored mobility. Minorities, with racial, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds not common or highly valued in the academic world, find it difficult to succeed in a patronage merit system (1983, p. 393).

Moore (1988), too, talks of an institutional environment which is less welcoming for blacks. Collaboration on research projects is seldom invited, and African Americans are less likely to find mentors.

DESCRIPTION OF SAMPLE

In an effort to determine the level of job satisfaction and the reasons for satisfaction or dissatisfaction, interviews were conducted with all of the black faculty at one regional university in a border state (border between North and South). This amounted to 15 faculty members out of a total of 557 in a school of slightly over 15,000 students, offering associate's, bachelor's and master's degrees. Although the percent of black faculty is extremely low, it is as high as or higher than the percents at the other regional universities within the state (Hershberg 1991a).

The respondents included 10 women and five men, ranging in age from 28 to 55. They range in experience at this institution from three who began in the fall of 1991 to one who has been there for 19 years. Ten have been there for five or fewer years. Only three are tenured. There are five instructors, eight assistant professors, one associate professor, and one full professor. There are two in psychology and one each in government, English, economics, history, intercultural studies, journalism, social work, religion, biology, physical education, education, and allied health. One is listed as a community college instructor. All but the five instructors have terminal degrees, but the doctorate is not the required terminal degree in social work, journalism, or allied health. Eleven are married, all marrying before they started to teach at this university. They are the parents or 10 children.

Forty-three questions were included in the interview. A limited review of the literature accompanies the faculty responses of each of the conceptual notions being examined.

CONFORMITY

If we accept Newcomb's (1943) premise that social distance is practiced as a result of conformity to group norms, we might expect to see a sizable residue of discrimination in most parts of the United States today. As recently as 1991 Feagin learned from his interviews

with middle-class blacks that all had experienced discrimination in public accommodations. One of his interviewees, a professor, commented that her status gave her protection while at the university but that she had no such protection while shopping in stores.

The interviewees in the present study found some similar problems in this city of 44,000; however, there was no one area of concern. Most, for example, had not experienced housing discrimination, yet they knew of existing problems:

> I have not experienced any housing discrimination, and the black friends that I have had come through and to recruit in the area haven't experienced any. But we all have been using the same realtors. You know, years ago I've heard stories where some white apartment owners wouldn't rent to blacks.... In the _____ department [the department head] and _____, his secretary, were looking for an apartment for _____, the new person, before he got here... and a woman that had an apartment for rent on _____ Street, or one of those streets, asked, "Was it for a black person?" And, they said, "Yes." And, she refused to [rent the apartment and made] some very negative comments.... That was just this summer.

Another faculty member told of his experience:

> I was out house hunting, and I'd been taken out by a realtor. And the realtor didn't know that I was black when he talked to me on the telephone. So when he met me, he was a little bit shocked, I guess.... He had already set up appointments for me, for us, to go by. But at the houses he took me to, he apologized to the owners of the residences: he had not had a chance to meet me beforehand. And I realized what his problem was. Now the homeowners actually seemed not to be troubled. He was the only one troubled by it.... All the other realtors were quite decent folks.

Several of the faculty commented that salespeople were slower to wait on them. White people who arrived later were waited on first, and the black customer might be left waiting even if no other customers were present. In some stores, on the other hand, black faculty found that salespeople were following them around and watching them quite closely.

In terms of discrimination in recreational activities, the country club was mentioned most frequently. The local country club has no black members, and one woman cited an incident of a black student who had ben hustled away from the property when she was found talking with a white student on the premises. Most did not desire

country club membership, but they certainly wanted the choice. Nevertheless, one woman had been at a dinner at this country club.

In a general statement about feeling unwelcome in the community, one individual noted:

> Sometimes you get the feeling that people presume that you get a position or responsibility or status because of color additive, and it does seem that sometimes people are always questioning that, and challenging, probing, testing. And so there is a sense...that others are in the mode of proving your competency.

> I was supposed to play in a [golf] tournament and I was registered for the tournament from [another city]. And when I came to play in the tournament, they told me I could not play because my kind was not welcome at their club.

Although there seems to be a prevailing attitude of caution in trying to go to "safe" public places, two women said they try to get out of town frequently to go to bigger cities where segregated black social life is available. "Many Black faculty members are looking for a critical mass of people with the same social and cultural interests which extend beyond the workplace" (Cisek 1988). On the other hand, a study of urban blacks in Chicago revealed that informal domestic activities (watching TV, barbecuing, visiting family, having friends over, and reading magazines and newspapers) ranked far above any other leisure activities (Woodward 1988). The faculty members in this study also emphasized recreation within the home. The away-from-home activities tended to be "safe" in that they included church, public performances of the arts, sporting events, and black fraternity and sorority meetings.

It is possible that the faculty members who can thrive in this atmosphere are those who define their leisure desires as those which are available. The two women who leave town for the big-city life are relatively new on campus. Two, who have been at the university longer, defined themselves as loners. None denied experiencing discrimination, but some seemed to define it as less important than others did.

The ratio of 10 black female faculty to five black male faculty found in this institution is fairly typical. That same educated black male deficit occurs in the rest of the community, a real concern for young black women. Interviewees were asked how hard it is for an educated black to find a dating partner in this town.

> I belong to the Kentucky Association of Blacks in Higher Education. We heard Julia Hare.... She was talking about black educated females—that we can't afford to be selective. If there's a good man out there who is working and loving and whatever else, that you should not hold against him an education.... Half of the prison population is black males. If they're not in prison, they're dying on the streets from drugs, and we can't afford to be selective. And I think that's a good point.... As far as in [city] trying to find someone, it's slim to none.
>
> I've been told it's near to impossible. I wouldn't live in [city] if I was single.
>
> It may be reasonably difficult simply because the number of persons, black persons, in [city] is relatively small. So the pool of individuals is small.... The number of black professionals in [city] is generally limited to persons at the university and some persons who are in the business community. We now have one black dentist in town. We have a sprinkling of teachers.... I think somebody described it as you could carry them all away on a Greyhound bus.... Young people who go to college and finish from [college] tend to leave [city] to find opportunities.... I think that's very problematic. And, I think not only is it problematic, it becomes a factor in recruitment of black faculty. And, I think both male and female black faculty certainly consider that when they're looking at this community as a place to live.
>
> The best part of my life I'm not even dating because most of the men I have met are intimidated by the fact that I am educated.... The thing that I've been dealing with now—I don't know if I should say this—is it's harder for black men to accept my education. The thing I'm faced with nowadays is there's been a lot of Caucasian gentlemen that have asked me out. And, I'm faced with the dilemma of, "Do I want to date interracially?' And I haven't made up my mind yet.

Two women also pointed out that one shouldn't sit here and complain but should venture out to neighboring cities.

Palmer noted that "the loneliness of being a minority-group member is a special problem of blacks on white campuses" (1983, p. 19). Social distance does not seem to be manifested, on the other hand, in the non-dating friendships made by black people. All but four included a white person among his or her five closest friends, and one said her five closest friends were white. Among the 10 closest friends, all but two included at least one non-black. Most, in fact, counted at least half of their closest friends to be white.

Blacks are more inclined than whites to see racism in colleges and universities (Elmore and Blackburn 1983). Of interest, though, is the fact that most report a positive racial climate in their own departments. Elmore and Blackburn caution, however, that one must note:

> That individual faculty can see the racial climate of their departments as positive and yet assert that the university is racist is an apparent but not necessarily a real contradiction. The racial climate of the university is more than the sum (or average) of the departmental climates (p. 8).

As suggested above, faculty in this sample, with two exceptions, felt good about their relations within their own departments. They even contradicted the findings of Elmore and Blackburn (1983) that relations beyond the local department would not be as good:

> You get along with people in your group if you have something in common. The more contact I have with faculty in other areas, the more I begin to really be surprised by the good feelings that people seem to send out.

> I have a notion that I don't think white people are racist because they choose to be racist always, any more than I'm bigoted sometimes because I choose to be. I think we both operate out of cultural reality that makes it such that we do things out of ignorance sometimes. We do things because we don't know how the other person is affected by what we do and say. You see? So, if I call people on things, it's because I think that's what we need to do more of. Instead of being hurt by it and walking away from it and saying simply, "You know, those white people, how they are." I mean, that's not good at all. That's why we're not getting anywhere because we choose too often to do that, as opposed to calling people on things and saying, "You know how I was affected by that?"

The faculty member who felt most uncomfortable with departmental colleagues concluded that "your greatest opponent in the battle is your friend who knows you best." This faculty member had experienced a situation in which a colleague, who was supposedly a friend, had gone into the black professor's classroom before class had started and asked the students whether they were learning anything. He then told the students in that class that the department was having trouble with that black faculty member.

Two departments seem to have done less than might be hoped to encourage collegial relations between the new African American faculty member and his/her colleagues. One new black faculty member was assigned an office on a different floor with just three or four others from the discipline, and the other was assigned an office on a different floor with *no* departmental colleagues.

One of the respondents mentioned that one of the state universities gives the state incentive money of $10,000 for hiring a black faculty member (Martin 1991) to the department that hired him or her. Then,

the university gives a like sum to that department each year that the faculty member is retained. This incentive would seem to have the potential for causing departmental colleagues to try to be congenial and supportive. It might even provide the incentive for a tenured faculty member to take an office in the outpost area so that the new faculty member could experience being part of the department.

When subjects were asked if they would feel more comfortable if there were more black faculty and staff at this university, their response was a resounding, "Yes." Only two, however, responded to the question in terms of personal comfort:

> Of Course!...I think they would be more sensitive to some of the things that are going on. I wouldn't have to explain everything. Some of them would be more astute to the problems that are going on. More sensitive.
>
> In many ways it helps you to at least commiserate with someone who's experiencing the same sorts of problems. It's very much like women wanting to get more women on the campus.

Others responded affirmatively because of the need for role models for blacks and the need to sensitize whites:

> Because I think both black and white students need to have their views either affirmed or modified to include a more positive view of what blacks *can* do, what whites can do. Sometimes do it better.
>
> Some of my students have never had a black professor, never even knew a black adult that did anything. So they look at me like, "How'd you do this?"

Racism on college campuses is not limited to the faculty. Staples (1984) points out that evaluations of black professors made by white students may suffer simply because white students may expect lower intelligence in black professors.

> I've often said that every first day of class...in a white university when you walk into the classroom, you are immediately placed in the position of having to impress the students....So there is a lot of pressure for us to be on guard, not to slip up...We've acknowledged we have to make fewer mistakes.
>
> "Does she know what she's talking about? You know she's got a degree, and they hired her, but I don't know."
>
> Sometimes I can look at a young man, and he cannot stand me, just because of how I look. And he may be from a little town where there are no

> blacks... And, then he comes in class and sees me there,... "What the hell does he know? And how's a black guy going to know anything." So then they close their minds off.

Yet, one woman commented, "For those who come in with stereotypes, they are shed." Another pointed out that her evaluations from students were very good. The scores from student evaluations that she gave me indicated they were far above average for white professors. Most seemed to feel that students evaluated them fairly.

Respondents were also asked if the institution was treating them fairly. All were extremely positive. Several felt that they were treated better than whites were.

Thus, the question of social distance caused by conformity to racist ideology generated mixed responses. Certainly social distance as it affects dating and marriage still exists. Social distance in recreation may be more of a factor of black choice, except in the case of the country club. Social distance in the workplace seems to be limited.

COGNITIVE DISSONANCE

Moore and Wagstaff (1974) told of a student's summary of the assumptions conveyed by a workshop speaker: "Send a black student to an all-white college; it is good for the student. Send a white student to an all-black college; it is good for the school" (p. 130).

Colleagues in white institutions assume that black faculty come to the white institutions to be enriched. It does not occur to the whites that the blacks might enrich the white institution. The result of this attitude is that white scholars do not consult black scholars on academic or research concerns so the black scholar is intellectually isolated from the very experiences that were supposed to "enrich."

Moore and Wagstaff surveyed 3228 black college professors. They gave those teaching in predominantly white institutions nine selections of reasons for choosing the particular institution at which they were teaching. In rank ordering the choices, preference was shown for "interest in students and in teaching" (first), "an opportunity to work in an intellectual atmosphere" (second), and "more money was offered" (third). Blacks are teaching at white colleges not because of a desire to be with whites but because of the status and higher salary afforded by a predominantly white college and because of better facilities and access to research funding (Watts

1989). Nevertheless, it is a common assumption that blacks are less competent than whites.

In terms of research productivity it was hard to compare this sample to whites because some were working on terminal degrees. This university, in order to attract more black professors, operates a Junior Black Faculty Program. Through this program tuition and other educational expenses, as well as a $5,000 scholarship, are paid for African American faculty who wish to pursue doctoral degrees. These faculty teach one semester per year and study the rest of the year (Albrecht 1989a).

The black faculty listed relatively few publications and papers presented at meetings. Yet record albums, grants, a book, a paper presented in England, and a limited number of journal articles were mentioned. Other contributions to the profession were more numerous, especially in relation to committee work relating to the needs and concerns of women and blacks.

Although no one mentioned it, it seemed that the disproportionate amount of university committee work done by the black faculty would cut deeply into the time they have available for research and creative activity. Black professors are hardly allowed to work on their own academic pursuits because they are almost forced into a plethora of service activities that are frequently outside the realm of their expertise. Both administrators and the black students, who push for the hiring of black professors, see roles of black faculty as black advocates, student consolers and counselors, and political advisors. Many black intellectuals choose to put more effort into nonacademic concerns (Banks 1984).

Locke (1983), a black professor at a white university, bemoaned the amount of his energy spent on "racial" issues and listed a number of committees and task forces, of which he was a member, that were devoted to increasing the numbers of black faculty and students on his predominantly white campus. His college classmate at a formerly black college did not have to spend time worrying about white recruitment. She could spend more time on professional activities.

It seems that blacks employed at predominantly white universities are expected to have knowledge, and accompanying concern, about any matter related to race. "Since the first black graduate of an American college in 1827, African American college graduates have been expected to fulfill race leadership as well as professional aspirations" (Hardin, 1992). Stacy Palmer (1983) noted "expectations

that you are a minority encyclopedia, capable of explaining the 'black perspective' on any campus issue or development" (p. 20). As a result, they are called upon to give speeches and serve on committees related to racial issues, regardless of their areas of expertise. Other expectations of them are not diminished accordingly (Conyers 1986).

This sample of black faculty had not been spared the burden. Since over half of this sample had been at the institution fewer than three years when interviewed and since six were working on doctorates, some were not as deeply involved in committee work. Of the others, only one faculty member listed current membership on fewer than five committees and task forces and even one in his second year had been assigned five committee positions. One said he was on "too many to mention." Most white faculty were spared that time expenditure until they have been granted tenure.

These faculty were also asked if they had ever been put on a committee specifically because they were black. A typical response was, "Well, of course!" However, the practice was defended somewhat by a woman who said:

> I think that it may have something to do with that. I was appointed by the President to be on the sexual harrassment committee, and I think that's important because when you are dealing with any kind of thing that deals with a complaint you've got to really get a woman, a person of color. All that's important to get a balanced perspective, you know, of something that's going to affect others' lives here on this campus.

She went on to say:

> And also black history month. I was also on that committee. And that's important. You talk about something. I am an African American. And being on that committee and in my area may help bring some kind of a contribution to the organization.

Another noted, in relation to a search committee: "I think it was very appropriate for me to be on that committee because I was black."

Because the concept of cognitive dissonance also suggests that whites may not consider blacks competent for positions of community leadership, that question was explored also. The request made was, "Give me the names of blacks who have positions of leadership in the community." Thirty names were produced. Six of them were ministers, and three faculty noted that fact. One

respondent was almost apologetic that black leadership was not more universal than the black church. Seven leaders were people employed by the university; but the rest came from a variety of fields—including government, education, social service, and business. Faculty members differed in their ability to perceive the presence of black leadership in the community. One could list none while another quickly offered sixteen.

This university currently employs two blacks in administrative positions. I asked the faculty if they perceived either of these men as having any real power. Several seemed to feel the positions were just image; however, several pointed out their perceived realities of administrative power.

> No. Not really....There's so little of it. It's kind of hard to say that anyone in administration has any power because if they use that power, then they stand to lose it.
>
> I think so, at least at a limited level....As far as sort of a higher-level, decision-making authority I don't think that either one has it; but, then, not a lot of people do. But I think that they have opportunity to intervene, and they have. And they have gotten some things done, some things changed.
>
> I believe, in organizational structures, that people in higher-level positions—everyone at a certain level only has so much power—they become the mouthpiece for the head of that organization or whatever agenda has been set by the head of that organization. And, you have to know that's where I'm coming from. Or else they wouldn't be there. So, within the context of that, I think that they are two different people, and the two different people use those positions very differently....To answer your question more directly—a limited amount.

A more cynical response from one was:

> In an institution like [college],...you have to forget your blackness if you're going to make it...[Name of administrator] is the HNIC, head Negro in charge.

INSECURITY

Insecurity of white faculty, as they react to the invasion of the blacks on "their" campuses, might best be illustrated by the way they treat those blacks on a day-to-day basis. Alali, Ross, and Calhoun (1990) sense a backlash by white professors who feel affirmative action has

gone too far. This attitude may help to make black appointments at predominantly white universities transient. Many blacks, who want to "belong," feel isolated. Informants in academic labor market research (Exum, Menges, Watkins, and Berglund 1984) felt themselves to be rather distant from their white colleagues. The black women, in fact, professed disinterest in their colleagues, at least on a personal level.

Faculty in this study were asked if they felt comfortable in the faculty house or faculty lounges. The great majority declared that they felt comfortable there *but* that they didn't use those lounges. Two gave less ambivalent answers:

> I've never been to the faculty house and I feel *un*comfortable in the faculty lounge. Well, because there's a white male bastion. I've heard other, not just black,—women—say that. And, they stop talking when you walk in.

> This university campus is racist, and I think the racism is something that is so subtle....There's an in-group. And it would never occur to me to walk into that house up there and sit down and talk. And that's not so much racist as it is there's a clique; there are bunches of cliques. There are people who have been here for 27 years, which I'll call the old-line. There are people who have known each other and knew each other's whatevers and this and that. And, I don't consider that as much racist as I do that I don't feel a part of that. And, I think...if I was going to be here another twenty years, maybe I could feel a part. I don't think so....I don't want to have that go down as my assuming that to be racist.

On the other hand, one respondent said he felt so uncomfortable in the faculty lounge that his nervousness caused him to find it difficult to express himself verbally. This man also sensed that his political views were unacceptable to those gathered in the faculty lounge.

The counterpart of white insecurity is the insecurity found among blacks as a result of the real or perceived attitudes of whites. This university's Dean of Student Life, himself African American, said that some black faculty chose to leave the university because they felt they had to be "on guard" with white colleagues (Albrecht 1989b, p. 6). Blacks, according to Staples (1984, p. 4), must depend more on a non-threatening personality or superior performance to achieve the same employment outcomes as white males.

When asked if they felt they needed to be cautious in interacting with whites, two-thirds of the people in the sample indicated that they felt they did.

> To some extent, but it's a universal caution that I've had about whites in general, just growing up black in America.
>
> I certainly think that there's not a day that goes by when there's not a situation to remind me that I'm black .... I have students who still refer to black people as colored. That's a reminder. And so, in that regard, in order to correct and work with students who are like that, I have to be very careful.

That caution was not limited to associations with whites.

> Around my own faculty, no ... around other faculty on campus, yeah; you have to be a little careful. Because you're not sure how some of the other faculty will take you, even around some of the blacks you have to be careful because some blacks may take what you say as being an Uncle Tom attitude that you have.

On the other hand, one woman said:

> I'm not the type, and I've never been the type to tread water, so to speak. I'm real open, and I try to be real honest. I don't try to hurt people's feelings, but I try to be open and honest.

Another facet of white insecurity might be found in their degree of willingness to accept blacks into their ranks on a permanent basis. That is, how willing are they to grant tenure to blacks? Willie (1985) suggests that in a competitive society the affluent may try to hoard some of that which is scarce. Keeping scarce goods, such as career success, from a subdominant group may be easier and more socially acceptable. Certainly the value of high rank (associate professor or professor) diminishes as the percent of colleagues holding that rank increases.

In response to Moore and Wagstaff's (1974) questionnaires returned by 2174 black professors in four-year colleges and universities, 54% believed their chances for promotion were equal to those of whites. However, only 43.1% of blacks in higher education hold the rank of associate professor or professor, a percent well below that of whites. Only one-fifth of the blacks in senior institutions hold tenure. This proportion seems to be even lower for men than for women (Alali et al. 1990).

In a study of black social work faculty in a predominantly white school Davis, Freeman, Carter, and Cartwright (1983) found that 48 percent felt their chances for tenure and promotion were not as good

as were the chances of whites. Reasons included "racism" and the "old boy" system. Fifty-five percent felt that "existing criteria for tenure was [sic] discriminatory toward them" (Davis et al. 1983, p. 20).

This sample was asked how they thought their chances were for permanent employment and advancement within the institution. All but two responded with optimism. One felt she was at great risk of not being tenured, and another felt it unlikely that employment would be offered her next year. Their responses certainly did not coincide with the reality found in previous research.

Support for the notion that white faculty have some reluctance to accept blacks as colleagues comes from the experience of a woman in a nearby community college. This woman's evaluations were better than those of some of her colleagues who were given tenure, but she was initially denied tenure. She suspected that her problem came from tenure letters written by her departmental colleagues (Hershberg 1991b).

As long as the primary networks—those in which tenure questions are first discussed—are white male, women and other minorities may be held at a distance. These informal evaluation networks certainly determine the collegiality rating of the candidate, and probably much more (Exum et al. 1984). This social exclusion would seem to increase the frustration and erode self-confidence of the black candidate.

SPONSORED MOBILITY

For white professors sponsored mobility may take three forms. First, the closest administrative level, the department head, makes the requirements for tenure and promotion very clear. The department head also has the power to put obstacles in the way or help to remove obstacles to tenure and promotion. Second, departmental colleagues can offer help and psychological support, with the strongest assistance coming from a mentor relationship. Third, departmental colleagues can help get the novice started on the road to publication by collaborating with the new faculty member on papers and books.

Clearly defined formal criteria for tenure and promotion probably rank first in the list of requirements for success of the black faculty. Ambiguous criteria or ignorance of criteria open the door for favoritism. One of the consequences of the lack of those standards

may be the loss of self-esteem on the part of the new faculty member (Exum et al. 1984).

All but one of the black faculty in this sample declared their department heads to be very supportive. They used many superlatives in describing the extra effort made for them by their department heads. Many seemed to feel they were the only blacks getting that kind of support. For example:

> It depends so much on your chair. You know the problem is I have a more favorable view of [the university] because of [chair].... He has just been wonderful.... I don't think that any other blacks have had that kind of support from their chair so your view of [the university] depends on your department and your departmental chair. Oh, [chair]'s been wonderful.... I just hope I have tenure before he leaves. But he is absolutely wonderful. And as far as women and minorities, too.

Department heads can wield a lot of power through the use of load reductions and sabbatical leaves. Most of the sample fared reasonably well with load reductions. One tenured faculty member had had none, and one with multiple years of service had had only one. None of the women had had a sabbatical, but two of the men had.

There was near unanimity of agreement among this group of blacks that guidelines for tenure and promotion were very clear and specific. One man added, "I knew what kinds of things others were doing who got tenure."

These people also declared satisfaction, with two exceptions, with their relations with departmental colleagues. They also spoke positively about the academic environment in general.

> I love it....I've been very pleased I've been able to teach the things that I like and am also qualified to teach as well as develop things which have helped me to grow....I was saying, "I can't wait for school to open."

> The environment in which I operate has been positive, has been good, met a lot of good people, have a lot of good friends. I value the associations that I've made, and the persons that I've met, the ability to have a great deal of freedom in what I do, and the freedom for what we teach in the classroom. And persons who are willing to help you at several different levels, that's from administration to housekeeping staff, but persons at *all* levels who are willing to help you in one thing or another. We've got tremendous amounts of resources here in the persons as well as the physical plant of the university, which could be used in a variety of ways.

When asked if they were satisfied with their professional growth, many of the respondents were much less enthusiastic. Several voiced concern that they were not as productive as they should be, but they placed all the blame for that on themselves.

The concept of mentoring has been widely discussed for only the past decade. Blacks who have been in academe for some time would not be likely to have had that experience. Slightly fewer than half of the black faculty at this institution said they had had a mentor. One pointed out that "I didn't really feel comfortable revealing any sufficient weakness that I needed one." Another, however, said:

> I've got, I think, close ties with a good number of people in the department.... I've got a real good relationship, I think, with the department head. That would probably be close to that because he's always looking out for me.

One department automatically assigned two mentors to each new faculty member. The black in that department, as well as the new white, both seemed well pleased with the process.

The lack of a mentor, nevertheless, was part of the discomfort felt by one faculty member.

> I really wasn't getting any kind of professional tutelage or guidance on the professional level as far as what's expected or we want you to do and just a kind of nurturing, I guess, that you would expect any gardner to do if they were trying to grow something.

Moore and Wagstaff (1974) pointed out that the majority of black faculty have not had requests from colleagues to co-author. None of this sample had co-authored with white faculty. None has another black in his/her discipline or subdiscipline (in the one case where there are two blacks in a large department).

Some accounting needs to be made of the blacks who have left this university, a list whose number exceeds that of those currently employed here. As reported in the school newspaper (Stone 1986), in 1982 the university had seven black faculty members. Between 1982 and 1986 nine more black faculty were hired, and seven left. Only two of the former black faculty were retired. Two were denied tenure and one was denied continuance under circumstances which were not totally clear to them. A fourth was denied a tenure-track appointment, because he lacked a terminal degree, before the current

Junior Black Faculty arrangement was inaugurated. One was uncomfortable with classroom teaching and went to a position in which she would not have to lecture. One had been funded with soft money, but there seemed to be little effort to keep him when the grant ran out. The rest left for more prestigious positions accompanied, in most cases, by considerably better pay. One black faculty member told the reporter for the student newspaper that he/she was using this school to get started but would look for something "bigger and better" within five years. He/she did not want to make a home in this city because of its small size and antiquated attitudes (Stone 1986, p. 1).

If one were to look only at the self-reported satisfaction of the faculty, there would not appear to be a significant lack of sponsored mobility for black faculty. The evidence of faculty leaving, the absence of load reductions for research for some, and the lack of collaboration and mentoring, however, suggest some problems in this area.

CONCLUSION

If what has been learned from the 15 black faculty at this traditionally white regional university is representative, the situation for black faculty is improving but has considerable room for additional improvement.

The problem of social distance between blacks and whites is decreasing, but enough remains so that some blacks prefer to spend more of their leisure time among blacks. Community education is needed to remove the last vestiges of discriminatory behavior on the parts of such people as real estate agents, salespeople, and country club members. The presence of two Klan klaverns is probably beyond reasonable bounds of community education, but one could hope that the Klan presence represents nonconformity rather than conformity.

Although it is understood that state incentive money may be needed to help finance the Junior Black Faculty Program, it might be functional to return a part of that money to departments as incentives for recruiting and retaining African American faculty members at least until they are tenured. The kinds of things for which the department could spend money could encourage faculty to go beyond being pleasant: offer office space, offer help and advice, invite

the new faculty member to collaborate on research, and help her or him to get research published.

Blacks, too, have a role in decreasing social distance. Occasional visits to the faculty house or faculty lounges might help both blacks and whites to recognize that they have more similarities than differences.

There is not much the university can do to increase the pool of black dating partners. This will probably continue to be a handicap to both recruitment and retention of black faculty. The presence of more black faculty and staff would be some help.

Whites will continue to experience cognitive dissonance in the acceptance of blacks as academic equals as long as they see so little of black scholarship. There is no way that whites can know how much of the scholarly work they read in journals is written by blacks. Many white faculty have no encounter with black faculty. Most black faculty are quite young and have had little opportunity to publish their research findings.

If whites would make an effort to collaborate with blacks on research, both would gain new insights. Perhaps more important, though, is giving black faculty more time to do research. One possibility would be to give an administrative load reduction to faculty who participate in a "program" of mentoring and counseling of black students. This would institutionalize some of the work that is currently consuming so much black faculty time.

If, indeed, a pool of black professors is necessary so that whites can see more of black scholarship, then some drastic efforts may be needed to build the initial base. The most likely candidates for remaining in the regional university may be those with ties to the area. The Junior Black Faculty Program would permit an institution to help educated blacks with ties take that further step to get doctoral degrees.

Even though a program that gives financial support and released time to the doctoral student may involve considerable financial outlay by the university, it may afford the highest potential for black retention. A larger economic committment to an individual who is more likely to stay may even be less costly than multiple incentives to a quantity of black faculty who will move on as soon as opportunity permits. In the end those local blacks may increase the number of black faculty to the point—a point unknown at present—that blacks without community ties will feel comfortable enough to stay.

Whether the white professor's need for power and dominance is real or perceived is not known. However, it is possible that the highly educated white is looking at college classmates in business and industry who are much better off economically. This might cause the white college professor, like the unemployed or underemployed white laborer at the other end of the continuum, to look for a scapegoat for the sad state of things.

Given the far greater service component in the lives of black faculty, it would seem that administrators might use more discretion in appointing blacks to committees and task forces. Certainly, some committees have greater need for minority representation than do others, and some attention should be given to the interests of the individual African American faculty members.

There is, however, another possible view of this service component. In academe the black faculty member is just a little fish in a big pond. (Of course this is true of white faculty as well.) That feeling of insignificance can be diminished when one is "invited" to offer expertise as a committee member working on a problem of importance to the university or community. The fact that this activity produces a certain amount of satisfaction makes it easier to rationalize that the service demands made on one's time force one to spend less time on research. If, indeed, this is so, those blacks who have won recognition for research and creative activity should be engaging in less community service. This was not the case in this sample because blacks who were productive, in terms of research and creative activity, did no less community service than did the others.

Conversely, the black community has put pressure on blacks who have achieved to "come back" and help out the rest. Feelings of guilt for having "made it" may spur some educated blacks to do as much as possible for the black community.

Upward mobility (tenure and promotion) for black faculty might be enhanced through more realistic criteria for tenure and promotion as well as through mentoring. In general, however, it seems that relations with both department heads and colleagues are generally good. Knowledge of the criteria for tenure and promotion left no room for ambiguity among those presently employed. It may have been a problem in the past.

In summary, this university seemed to be doing many of the right things to retain black faculty. The effort represented in the Junior Black Faculty Program seemed to be sincere. Some of the problem

areas, (community discrimination, a chance to let one's hair down among a group of other educated blacks, more middle-class black classmates for children, and availability of dating partners) fall outside the purview of the university. A workload that demands no more from blacks than from whites, however, is something the university can work toward.

Perhaps a part of the problem lies in setting standards for black faculty too high, looking far beyond adequacy. To the detriment of society this excludes blacks unnecessarily (Willie 1981b).

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RACE, CLASS, AND OCCUPATION:
AN ANALYSIS OF BLACK AND WHITE EARNING DIFFERENCES FOR PROFESSIONAL AND NON-PROFESSIONAL MALES, 1940-1990

Melvin E. Thomas

ABSTRACT

This paper analyses the earnings of black and white professional and non-professional males at ten year intervals from 1940 to 1990. Using data from the Current Population Survey's Annual Demographic File (March) for 1990 and the United States Microdata Extract File, 1940-1980: The Demographics of Aging, multiple regression and MCA analyses were used to determine the degree of "racial progress" for blacks in professional occupations versus blacks in non-professional occupations net of relevant socio-demographic characteristics.

Major findings include: (1) evidence of a modest convergence of black and white predicted earnings from 1940 to 1990; (2) compared to similar whites, black professionals were worse off than non-

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professional blacks; and (3) the earnings of black professionals and non-professionals did not change significantly from each other relative to whites over the time period of this study. Explanations are offered for the findings.

One of the most significant changes in the black community over the past 50 years has been the emergence and growth of the black middle class. Farley and Allen (1987), Smith and Welch (1986), and Jaynes and Williams (1989) document the significant and substantial decline in the racial gap in socioeconomic status since the 1940s, the continuing disparity that still exists in the 1980s, and the emergence of a significant black middle-class. Smith and Welch (1986, pp. vii-ix) found that: (1) there has been a steady improvement in blacks male wages relative to white male wages from 1948 to 1980; (2) black wages improved relative to white wages at all income, educational and age levels; (3) young blacks gained more than older blacks compared to similarly aged whites; (4) college educated blacks made larger wage gains than less educated blacks relative to similarly educated whites; and (5) despite the relative improvement in black wages, they remained substantially below white wages in 1980. In regard to the improving situation of higher status blacks, Smith and Welch (1986, p. ix) conclude that "the real story of the last forty years has been the emergence of the black middle-class, whose income gains have been real and substantial."

Several scholars (e.g., Wattenberg and Scammon 1983; Freeman 1976; Wilson 1978, 1980) have argued that the growth of the black middle-class is evidence that racism no longer plays the role it once did in society. Wattenberg and Scammon (1983) claim that as blacks have gained in educational attainment, they have moved into better paying occupations and have incomes very close to their white counterparts. They have also claimed that the majority of blacks are now middle-class.

Freeman (1976) argues that since the mid-1970s, there has been no earning difference between college-educated black and white males entering the labor force. This represents a "dramatic collapse in traditional discriminatory patterns in the market for highly qualified black Americans" (1976, p. xx).

Wilson (1978, 1980) takes this argument further, contending that the growth of the black middle-class is evidence that class has

superseded race as the most important factor explaining the situation of blacks in America. He contended that in the modern industrial period, economic growth and state intervention in the form of civil rights legislation, administrative action to improve civil rights, and the implementation of affirmative action policies have created a large black middle class which experiences the same labor force processes as whites with little or no residual race effect. This middle class grew primarily through the creation of job opportunities and the removal of racial barriers in education and in government and corporate employment.

Few scholars question the significance of the growth in the number of blacks in professional occupations in recent years, however, a growing number of scholars have questioned the idea that this growth is evidence of declining discrimination (e.g., Landry 1987; Work 1984; Cotton 1989, 1990; Thomas 1993; Thomas and Horton 1992; Thomas, Herring, and Horton 1995). This body of research focuses on how well middle class blacks are doing when compared to similar whites. These empirical studies generally conclude that race plays a significant and negative role in the labor force experiences of even middle class blacks. Some (e.g., Cotton 1990; Thomas 1992; Thomas and Horton 1992) have even claimed racial discrimination negatively impacts higher status blacks more than it does lower status blacks. In regard to racial differences in personal income, Thomas (1992, p. 23) concludes:

> Blacks who were more educated and had attained higher occupational status were worse off than less educated, lower status blacks when compared to similar whites. Therefore, middle-class blacks, in terms of personal income, represent a "truly disadvantaged" group when compared to middle-class whites.

Similarly, Cotton (1990, pp. 355-36) states:

> The results call into question the view that middle class blacks, those who hold these upper level jobs, have somehow overcome much of the discriminatory treatment that still plagues lower-income blacks. Contrary to the suggestion in the title of black sociologist William Julius Wilson's book, race does still appear to be a significant determinant of economic differences even among blacks who, to paraphrase Wilson's latest work, might be considered the "truly advantaged."

To shed light on this important subject, this paper analyzes the earnings of black and white professional and nonprofessional males at 10 year intervals from 1940 to 1990. This allows for comparisons of the degree of "racial progress" for blacks in professional occupations versus blacks in nonprofessional occupations. It also allows for comparisons between black and white professionals and black and white nonprofessionals. Specifically, because of the multivariate design, this study reveals the effect of "being black" and professional in contrast to "being black" and non-professional on personal earnings unmediated by the sociodemographic variables in this analysis. Therefore, this study addresses the following empirical questions:

1. To what extent have racial differences in earnings changed over the last 5 decades.
2. Are racial differences in earnings smaller for those in professional occupations?
3. Are black professionals closing the gap in earnings more rapidly than non-professional blacks compared to similar whites?

DATA AND METHODS

The data for this study come from two sources: the United States Microdata Extract File, 1940-1980: The Demographics of Aging and a 10 percent sample of the Current Population Survey's Annual Demographic File (March) for 1990.[1] This study includes only those male respondents between the ages of 20 and 69 who were in the labor force and worked for money the previous year.[2] The above criteria resulted a sample size of 16,258 valid cases (10,735 whites and 5,523 blacks).[3] Individuals were classified as "professional" (coded 1) if they held jobs in the professional, managerial, technical, or proprietary occupational categories according to the U.S. Bureau of the Census. All other occupational categories were classified as "nonprofessional" (coded 0).

The dependent variable in this study is personal earnings in the previous year. Earnings for all years will be presented in 1989 dollars. Independent variables in the analysis include: "year" (coded 0 for 1940, 1 for 1950, 2 for 1960, 3 for 1970, 4 for 1980, and 5 for 1990),

"black" (coded 1 for blacks and 0 for whites), "age" (coded in actual number of years), "age-squared," "collgrad" (coded 1 if the respondent has 16 years or more of education and 0 if not), "south" (coded 1 for south and 0 for nonsouth), "hourswrk" (average hours worked per week last year), and "weekswrk" (weeks worked last year).

For the multiple regression part of this analysis, in addition to the independent variables listed above, the black x professional, black x year, professional x year, and the black x professional x year interaction terms will be included in the analysis.[4] One of the primary concerns when including interaction terms in regression models is the problem of multicollinearity (Althauser 1971; Blalock 1979). Jaccard et al. (1990) recommend centering continuous variables (i.e., subtracting the mean from each score of the variable in question) prior to creating interaction terms. This technique was used in this analysis to reduce the level of multicollinearity.[5]

Three regression equations will be calculated. Model I will include all main factors in the equation. Model II will include all main factors and the interaction terms. Model III will include only those independent variables statistically significant at the .05 level. Model III will provide the basis for an analysis of the trend in the racial disparity in earnings for professional and non-professional males over the 1940 to 1990 time period.

In the second part of this study, separate analyses for each year will be done using the regression-based Multiple Classification Analysis (MCA) statistical procedure also using earnings as the dependent variable (Andrews, Morgan, Sonquist and Klem 1973). MCA will be used to compute the adjusted mean earnings of black and white professional and non-professional males controlling for the independent variables in this study. This was accomplished by creating a single categorical variable which had one category for each combination of race and the professional status. Thus, the race-professional status variable had separate categories for white professionals, black professionals, white non-professionals, and black non-professionals, respectively.

The adjusted means can be interpreted as the expected mean earnings if blacks and whites in professional or non-professional occupations were identical on all of the independent variables which were used as covariates.[6] The adjusted mean earnings are essentially similar to the predicted (Y) earnings in the regression analysis.

FINDINGS

Regression Analysis

As can be seen in Table 2, Model I, all independent variables are significantly associated with personal earnings at the .05 level. Being "black" was negatively associated with personal earnings (Beta = −.11). This indicates that race detrimentally affects earnings for black males regardless of whether they have finished college or attained professional occupational status and regardless of their status in regard to the other independent variables in Model I. Of the other independent variables, Year had the strongest association with earnings (Beta = .26), followed by Prof (Beta = .19), Collgrad (Beta = .17) and Weekswrk (Beta = .17). The positive effect of year indicates an improvement in "real" earnings net of inflation.

Model II introduces the interaction terms into the analysis. Being black and professional had a modest but significant negative association with earnings (Beta = −.06). However, the Black x Year interaction was positive (Beta = .04) indicating a modest improvement of black male earnings relative to white male earnings from 1940 to 1990. The Prof x Year interaction was weakly associated with earnings, but statistically significant (Beta = .03) indicating slightly more rapidly rising wage for professionals than for non-professionals. The Black x Prof x Year interaction, indicates whether earnings for black professionals increased or decreased over time at a rate significantly different from those of black non-professionals. It, however, was not significant statistically. This means that the earnings of black professionals and non-professionals did not change at a rate significantly different from each other relative to whites over the time period of this study.

Model III presents all of the main factors and interaction terms except for the Black x Prof x Year interaction term which was not significantly associated with earnings. The addition of the interaction terms in the regression analyses in Models II and III did not change the betas for the main factors or the *R*-squares very much. However, they do indicate modest relative improvement in black earnings and a disadvantage in earnings for black professionals compared to white professionals. Also important is that the variable black remained negatively related to earnings (Beta = −.13) in both Model II and III.

Table 1. Mean, Standard Deviations, And Correlations For All Variables in the Analysis

Variables	Mean* (Std. Dev)	Variables													
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
1. Earnings	$12170.52 (15460.26)	—	-.31*	.40*	.41*	-.03*	-.17*	-.18*	.30*	.16*	.39*	-.12*	.00*	.14*	-.24*
2. Black	.34 (.47)		—	-.22*	-.26*	.06*	.00	.32*	-.12*	-.10*	-.19*	-.19*	-.19*	.02*	.21*
3. Professional	.21 (.40)			—	.16*	-.03*	.05*	-.08*	.10*	.16*	.49*	-.38*	.02*	.23*	-.27*
4. Year	2.58 (1.71)				—	-.15*	-.02*	-.09*	.15*	-.05*	.26*	.03*	-.10*	.00*	-.25*
5. Age	45.77 (12.13)					—	-.04	.01*	-.05*	-.08*	-.06*	-.06*	-.06	-.06*	.06*
6. Age-Squared	147.04 (154.77)						—	.02	-.08*	-.09*	-.04*	-.03*	.00	-.02*	.03*
7. South	.37 (.48)							—	-.07*	-.01	-.06*	-.09*	-.16*	.03*	.09*
8. Weekswrk	47.69 (8.90)								—	.22*	.09*	-.01	.02*	-.02*	-.06*
9. Hourswrk	43.29 (11.49)									—	.06*	-.03*	-.02*	.01	.00*
10. Collgrad	.14 (.34)										—	-.17*	-.05*	.23	-.22*
11. Black x Professional	-.04 (.16)											—	.15*	-.23*	.12*
12. Black x Year	-.21 (.76)												—	-.19*	-.18*
13. Professional x Year	.11 (.69)													—	.12*
14. Black x Year x Professional	.01 (.28)														—

Note: *Uncentered variables. All main factors were centered before being included in the regression analysis and before high order interaction terms were computed. All centered variables have a mean of zero.

Table 2. Regression Analysis of Earnings for Black and White Males, 1940-1990

	Model I		*Model II*		*Model III*	
Variable	*b*	*Beta*	*b*	*Beta*	*b*	*Beta*
Black	-4438.03	-.11***	-5047.33	-.13***	-4977.98	-.13***
Prof	9094.04	.19***	7407.99	16***	7423.10	.16***
Collgrad	8996.45	.17***	8953.38	.17***	8956.99	.17***
Weekswrk	363.97	.17***	363.25	.17***	363.03	.17***
Hourswrk	113.76	.06***	116.74	.07***	116.76	.07***
Age	55.17	.04***	51.67	.03***	51.90	.03***
Age-Squared	-16.00	-.13***	-15.90	-.13***	--15.90	-.13***
South	-3817.01	-.10***	-3787.12	-.10***	-3784.36	-.10***
Year	2891.76	.26***	2200.15	.27***	3013..17	.27***
Black x Prof			-6998.92	-.06***	-6745.01	-.06***
Black x Year			1226.67	.04***	1137.36	.04***
Prof x Year			783.20	.03**	612.62	.02**
Black x Prof x Year			768.95	.01		
Constant	25133.25		24942.66		24960.15	
Adj. *R*-square	.38		.39		.39	

Notes: * $p \leq .05$
** $p \leq .01$
*** $p \leq .001$

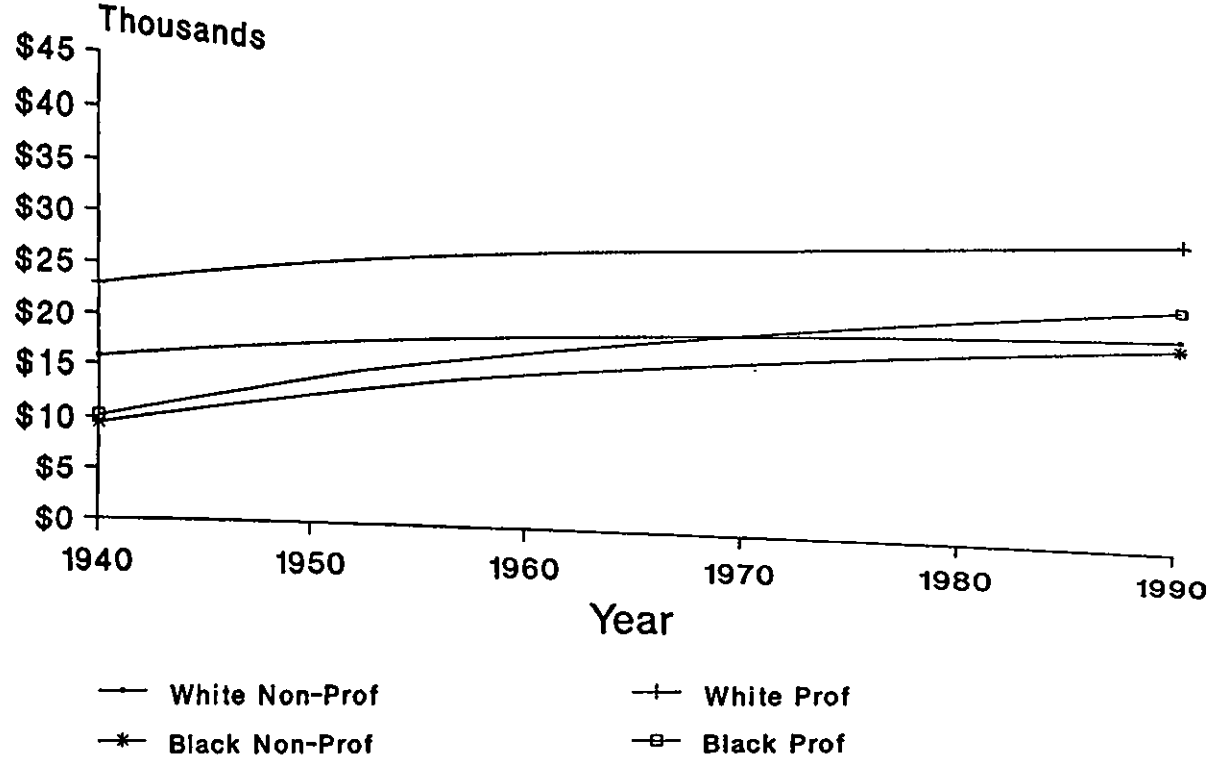

Figure 1. Regression Analysis of Earnings of Black and White Professional and Non-Professional Men, 1940-1990

Figure 1 graphically depicts wage differences for black and white professionals and non-professionals 1940-1990, based on Model III. It assumes that black and whites are "average" in terms of the variables (e.g., age, weeks worked, hours worked, etc.) in this analysis. The racial differences are, therefore, the "net" racial differences unmediated by the other independent variables in the analysis. Figure 1 displays the modest converging trend in black and white earnings from 1940 to 1990. In 1940, the predicted earnings for both professional and non-professional white males were higher than those of both professional and non-professional black males. However, after 1970, the predicted earnings for black professionals exceeds those of white non-professional. Despite the improvement overall in predicted black earnings relative to white earnings, the racial disparity in earnings was greater for professionals than for non-professionals.

MCA Analysis

While the regression analysis provides a general linear estimate of race x year x professional status interaction, the MCA analysis examines year by year variations in the predicted earnings of black and white professional and non-professional males. Table 3 presents the black and white adjusted mean earnings for professional and non-professional males for each year in the analysis. Figure 2 graphically depicts black percent of white adjusted mean earnings for professional and non-professional males also for each year in the analysis. As can be seen in Table 3 and Figure 2, while generally the adjusted mean earnings of both professional and non-professional black males improved relative to their white counterparts, the greatest decade of improvement for both groups occurred between 1940 and 1950. Also, in each year examined, the adjusted mean earnings of black non-professionals was closer to their white counterparts than black professionals. For example, in 1990 the adjusted mean earnings of black non-professionals was 89.4 percent of their white counterparts while the adjusted mean earnings of professional blacks was only 76. 3 percent of their white counterparts. Also, highlighted by these results was the relative lack of improvement in predicted earnings of black professionals compared to their white counterparts between 1980 and 1990.

Figure 3 graphically depicts the adjusted mean earnings of black and white professional and non-professional males for each year from

Table 3. Black and White Adjusted Mean Earnings
For Professional and Non-Professional Males, 1940-1990

	1940	*1950*	*1960*	*1970*	*1980*	*1990*
Non-Prof. Whites	$11,214	$15,552	$21.069	$28,174	$30,788	$27,833
Non-Prof. Blacks	$6,696	$11,247	$14,793	$21,899	$25,684	$24,882
Black percent of White	59.7	72.3	70.2	77.7	83.4	89.4
Prof. Whites	$19,048	$22,611	$30,875	$40,058	$39,953	$37,527
Non-Prof. Blacks	$6,383	$11,627	$16,672	$26,897	$30,156	$28,635
Black percent of White	33.5	51.4	54.0	67.1	75.5	76.3

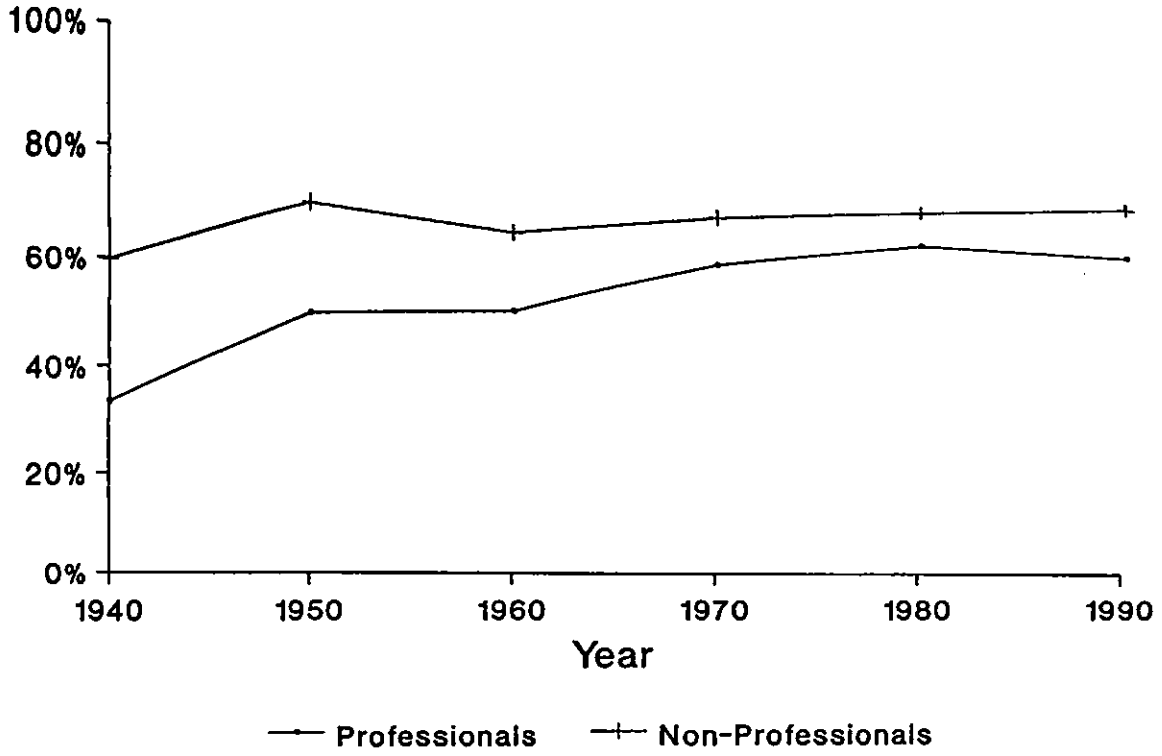

Figure 2. Black Percent of White Adjusted Mean Earnings For Professional and Non-Professional Men, 1940-1990

1940 to 1990 at 10 year intervals. As can be seen in Figure 3, in both 1940 and 1950, being in a professional occupational category did not significantly affect earnings for blacks. Both groups of blacks had similar earnings that were below those of both groups of whites. On the other hand, white professionals in every year had substantially higher adjusted mean earnings than white non-professionals. However, from 1960 onward, the adjusted mean earnings of blacks in professional occupations diverged from those of black non-professionals. By 1970 the adjusted mean earnings of black professionals had risen to become similar to those of white non-professionals—still substantially lower than those of white professionals. This was also true in 1980 and 1990. Although the adjusted mean earnings of black professionals rose more rapidly than black non-professionals between 1950 and 1970, after 1970 this trend ceased and the gap between the adjusted mean the earnings of black professionals and non-professionals narrowed again. This explains why the race x year x professional status interaction in the regression analysis, while positive, was not statistically significant.

Confirming the results of the regression analysis, black non-professionals were closer to their white counterparts than were black professionals in each year examined. However, contrary to the findings of the regression analysis, the rate of improvement of the earnings of blacks was not linear. The adjusted mean earnings of black professionals did not substantially surpass those of white non-professionals as suggested by the regression analysis, but rather became roughly equivalent in 1980 and 1990. In fact, the overall improvement of earnings was not constant over the years examined as suggested by the regression analysis because the rate of increase in adjusted mean earnings slowed or reversed between 1970 and 1990. This means that these earnings (adjusted or inflation) did not keep pace with inflation during this time.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This paper has provided an analysis of the earnings of black and white professional and non-professional males at 10 year intervals from 1940 to 1990 to determine the degree of "racial progress" for blacks in professional occupations versus blacks in non-professional occupations. Major findings include: (1) evidence of a modest

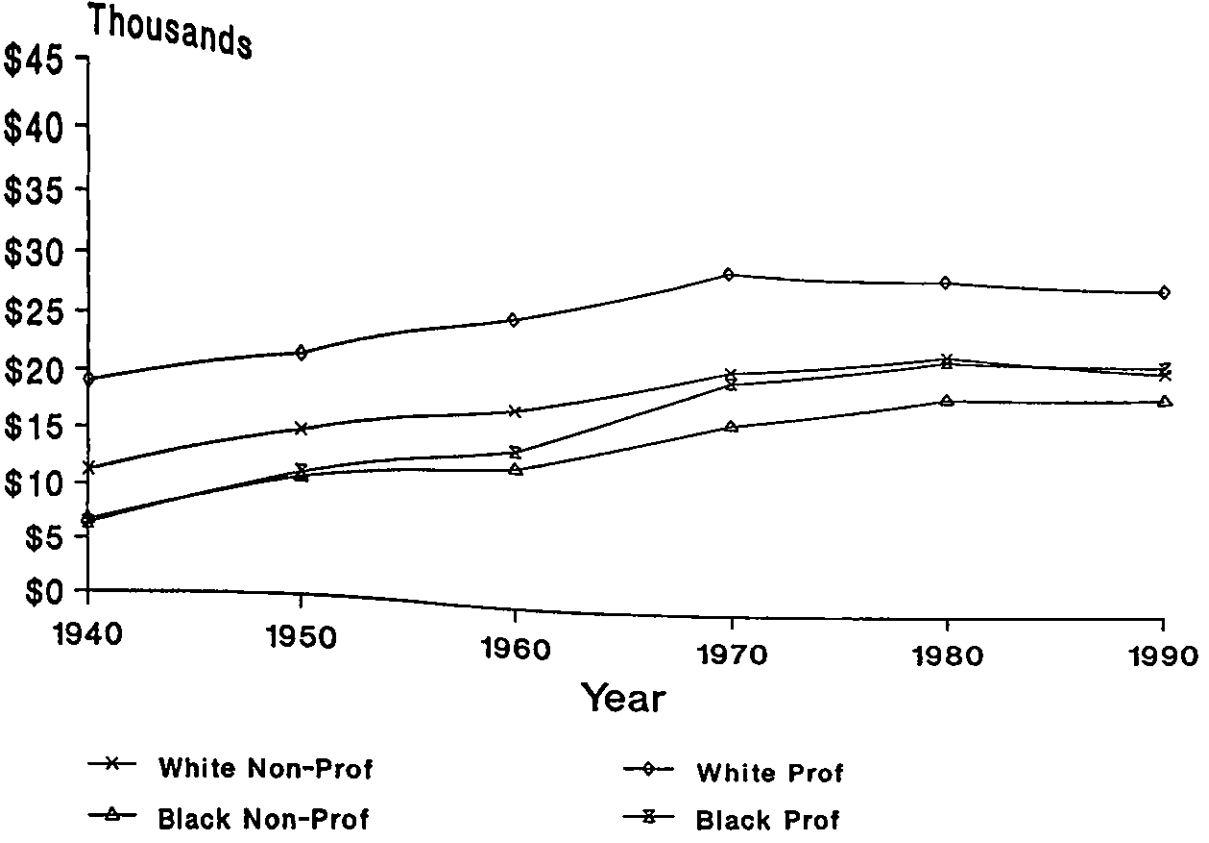

Figure 3. Adjusted Mean Earnings of Black and White Professional and Non-Professional Men, 1940-1990

convergence of black and white predicted mean earnings from 1940 to 1990; (2) black professionals were worse off compared to professional whites than non-professional blacks were compared to non-professional whites in each year examined; (3) professional occupational status did not substantially affect black earnings in 1940 or 1950; (4) the earnings of black professionals rose more rapidly than those of black non-professionals between 1950 and 1970, but stagnated afterward; and (5) the predicted earnings of black professionals were essentially similar to the earnings of white non-professionals from 1970 onward.

The modest convergence in predicted earnings provides some confirmation of the observation of Smith and Welch (1986, p. vii) of "significant and quantitatively large improvement in the relative economic status of black men" between 1940 and 1980. The convergence between black and white earnings was significant and reflects real improvement in the economic status of black men. However, the improvement generally was not as "quantitatively large" as Smith and Welch (1986) suggest. Moreover, these results confirm the observations of Jaynes and Williams (1989) and Farley and Allen (1987) concerning the stagnation in black earnings after 1970. Jaynes and Williams (1989, p. 13) argues that "while the economic status of black Americans relative to whites improved during the period 1940-1970, since the early 1970s, the average economic status of blacks relative to whites has stagnated or deteriorated." Additionally, Farley and Allen (1987, p. 353) state:

> In the early 1980s this trend toward a racial convergence was reversed. The earnings penalty associated with having a black skin increased as racial differences in rates of return became larger among black men.

This study suggests that the lack of substantial improvement in black wages was particularly a problem for black professionals between 1980 and 1990.

The particular race-class interaction found in this study contradicts those scholars who claim that racial discrimination has little or no impact on the black middle class. Despite the overall reduction in the racial effects on earnings, professional blacks do not appear to be receiving comparable financial rewards that professional whites receive. This may be at least partially explained by the inability of blacks with high levels of education and occupational attainment to

translate these "assets" into income due to discrimination in the labor force. Whites, who are untouched by these discriminatory barriers, can more easily convert these sources of "human capital" into income (Thomas 1993).

These finding can possibly be explained by Work's (1984) study of racism in internal labor markets in corporate America. He (1984, p. 5) contends "that the internal labor market mechanisms, which control career directions and rates of mobility, remain significantly influenced by an institutional racism that not only limits access to higher organizational levels but also to certain occupational groups." Perhaps, blacks in professional occupations are limited in their upward advancement within the organizations in which they work—being kept from positions that lead to power and high salaries. This could be what is reflected in the earning differences between the otherwise similar black and white professionals found in this study.

Perhaps the most troubling finding of this study is the lack of "progress" for black professionals between 1980 and 1990 which bodes ill for the future. Some scholars (e.g., Collins 1983) have linked the growth of the black middle class directly to Federal government policies of the 1960s and 1970s. This situation makes the black middle class "vulnerable" to shifts in government policies such as those that occurred during the Administrations of Ronald Reagan and George Bush. As Collins (1983, p. 381) states:

> Since 1980, the Republican administration is altering policies that assisted blacks to rise. Those policies having a direct impact on black middle class opportunities, such as affirmative action in hiring and promotions, appear to be leaning more on good faith than on legal sanctions for enforcement. Similarly, those programs which directly assisted black middle class advancement, such as social service expansion, are being reduced.

This shift in government policies could possibly account for the lack of recent progress in the relative earnings of the black professionals in this study. However, if this is true, the Democratic Administration of Bill Clinton may reverse the trend of the 1980s and the relative earnings of black professionals may rise again in the 1990s.

NOTES

1. A 10 percent sample of the 1990 CPS was used make the sample size from 1990 roughly equivalent to the sample sizes of the 1940-1980 years.

2. Because levels of labor force participation among black males tend to be lower than those for white males, an analysis based only on labor force participants (who presumably have higher earnings than non-participants) will provide a conservative estimate of the black-white earnings disparity.

3. Blacks were over-sampled in the United States Microdata Extract File, 1940-1980: The Demographics of Aging Study.

4. The interaction terms were created by multiplying the centered predictors. For example, the interaction term black x professional created by multiplying the centered variable "black" with the centered variable "professional."

5. See Jaccard et al. (1990) for a thorough discussion of this procedure.

6. The adjusted mean "indicates what the mean would have been if the group had been exactly like the total population with respect to its distribution over all the other predictor classifications" (Andrews et al. 1973, p. 7).

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PART II

THE MIDDLE CLASS AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

A SOCIO-HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF THE BLACK MIDDLE CLASS:

THE UNIQUE CASE OF BUXTON, IOWA

Phyllis Gray-Ray and Joseph Hraba

ABSTRACT

This study is a socio-historical analysis of the Black Middle Class in the early 1900s. Before the great migration North, the black middle class in the South was confined by a racial caste system. This racial caste system also developed in the North following the migration. One exception to this rule is found in the local history of Buxton, Iowa, from 1900 to 1915. In Buxton, a black middle class developed which served not only blacks but whites as well, and it achieved local prominence. The purpose of this study was to contrast this local history of blacks in Buxton with the national history of blacks at the turn of the Century. The data used to reconstruct the history of Buxton included Iowa State Census of 1895, 1905, 1915, U.S. Bureau of the Census of 1900 and 1910, interviews of former Buxton residents, and

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other sources. Blacks experienced the same life chances as whites in Buxton and no racial caste system existed. By 1920 however, Buxton had become almost a ghost town.

INTRODUCTION

The black middle class has grown in recent decades, and their life chances have increasingly diverged from those of the black poor (Hout 1984; Lemann 1991; Wilson 1978, 1987, 1991). By the same token, the black middle class is still worse off than their white class counterparts (Landry 1987). In 1940, most of the black middle class were teachers, self-employed or clergy. In 1980, most of the middle class were salaried managers in both private firms and public agencies, as well as teachers (Jaynes and Williams 1989). That is, the new black middle class is no longer a product of segregation and racial exclusion, but a result of increased inclusion into the larger society.

Before the great migration North, 1910-1970, the black middle class in the South was certainly confined by a racial caste system. There were exceptions to this rule, however, including the black middle class in Buxton, Iowa, from 1900 to 1915. After we briefly review black history in the nineteenth century, with an emphasis on the black middle class, we will turn to the local history of Buxton at the turn of the century. In Buxton, a black middle class developed which served not only blacks but whites as well, and it achieved local prominence.

THE END OF RECONSTRUCTION

There were plans and possibilities after the Civil War for including ex-slaves as well as formerly freed blacks into the larger American society. There was the possibility of their resettlement in the North or the West as either industrial workers or homesteaders. There was also a plan for land redistribution in the South, so that ex-slaves could become independent farmers and property owners in the region with "forty acres and a mule." None of these plans saw fruition, however, in the past century.

The potential for African Americans after emancipation is illustrated by the Reconstruction Era. During this short period,

blacks experienced significant gains. Black men could vote in southern states after 1867, and they were the majority of registered voters in several ex-confederate states by the next year (McPherson 1990). Three years later, black men were 15 percent of the public officeholders, including U.S. senators, in the South. This political power was reflected in economic betterment for blacks in the South. For example, slaves in the seven cotton states of the lower south had received in the form of food, clothing and shelter only 22 percent of the income produced by the plantations on which they worked. This jumped to 56 percent after freedom. Averaged per capita income for African Americans in southern agriculture increased between 1857 and 1879 by 46 percent, from 23 to 52 percent of white income by 1880 (McPherson 1990). These changes are symbolized by some historians calling the Civil War the second American Revolution.

This revolution was short-lived, however, and by the 1880s a counter-revolution in the South had reversed many of these gains for blacks. A racial caste system was put into place, a system that was based on tenancy, the crop-lien system, debt peonage, and legal restrictions on the civil and political rights of African Americans. In short, the racial caste system meant economic dependency and legal exclusion for African Americans.

Nearly 90 percent of the nation's black labor force up to 1900 was locked into tenancy or domestic service at the bottom of the southern labor hierarchy. Black tenants did move from plantation to plantation; it is estimated that one-third moved each year either voluntarily or because of eviction (Mandle 1978). They moved from tenancy on one plantation to tenancy on another, rather than moving out of tenancy and into other opportunities. Very few blacks became independent farmers, owning and farming their own land. Very few became skilled workers in southern industry and urban trades. Very few migrated to the North and the industrial jobs there, which were being filled by European immigrants; and fewer still went west as homesteaders. In the South where they remained, African Americans also faced Jim Crow laws buttressing economic dependency.

With the passage of "Jim Crow legislation" in the 1880s and 1890s blacks were disfranchised in southern states, segregated in public accommodations and on common carriers, and curtailed in their access to due process of law. With the Plessy vs. Ferguson decision of the U.S. Supreme Court in 1896, they were also segregated in public education (Miller 1967). Disfranchisement was accomplished

in a number of ways. There were poll taxes, excluding poor blacks from voting; grandfather clauses as a voting requirement, limiting the vote to only those whose grandfathers had the vote prior to the 14th and 15th Constitutional Amendments giving voting rights to blacks; and literacy and understanding requirements, meaning that voters had to interpret passages of the Constitution to the satisfaction of southern election officials before being allowed to vote. Black Codes in southern states restricted the entry of blacks into jobs other than tenancy and domestic service. For example, black artisans were prohibited from travelling town to town by vagrancy laws. Labor recruiters from the North were restricted from recruiting southern blacks by false-pretense and anti-enticement laws (Mandle 1978). Blacks were made powerless, in a word, and set up as targets for white hostility, which also helped keep in check any black challenge to the racial caste system.

Moreover, the Southern economy stagnated after the Civil War, and thus black tenants were trapped in poverty. Per capita income in the South was 50 percent of that in the North in 1900 (Ransom and Sutch 1977). Between 1880 and 1900 per capita income in the Cotton South grew at less than 1 percent per year. Up to 1920 labor productivity in cotton was less than one-half that in wheat and 60 percent that in corn. The South was poor and black tenants in particular were the poorest. Sharecropping meant little incentive to make productive improvements in farming, for the landowners had to make all the investments but share one-half of the profits with their tenants. Moreover, the South did not diversify its economy with industrialization, as did the North in this era.

The racial caste system meant also educational deprivation for blacks, especially in the South. The majority of Black Americans were illiterate in the past century, and the rates of illiteracy among blacks far exceeded those of whites. Only 31 percent of blacks 5 through 20 years of age were enrolled in school in 1900, compared to 54 percent of the country's white population. About 15 percent of the education budget in southern states went to black schools (Henri 1976).

It was in this context that a small black middle class existed in the nineteenth Century South. Middle-class black men were concentrated in the clergy or were entrepreneurs and skilled workers who served an almost exclusively black clientele. Black ministers served black congregations and Black businesses had only black

clients, epitomized by the black undertaker. The women worked as teachers and dressmakers, and their making a livelihood was also confined by Jim Crow.

E. Franklin Frazier (1957) characterized the southern black middle class at this time as mainly mulattoes, who maintained a rigid social distance between themselves and the black masses. Forcibly segregated from whites and voluntarily separated from other blacks, this class lived in a genteel isolation, proud of its refined manners and ways. By the same token, the black middle class were community leaders. The black community included a wide network of interlocking institutions-benevolent societies, fraternal associations, burial societies, cultural groups, and, most importantly, churches and schools. After Emancipation, black people established a network of colleges, including Fisk, Howard, and Tuskegee, which has trained the bulk of the black middle class well into the present century (Sowell 1975). Black scholars in this era made important technical and cultural contributions to American life, achievements which are often personified by George Washington Carver.

The thrust of Booker T. Washington's general political and social philosophy was "the promotion of progress among the many, and the special culture of the few." He stated that "political activity alone" could not save blacks, for "back of the ballot he must have property, industry, skill, economy, intelligence, and character." From the beginning, he expressed his desire that "all privileges of the law be ours," that there be "universal free suffrage," and that the law be applied "with absolute honesty...to both races alike" (Washington et al. 1965, p. 79).

In private, Washington supported and financed federal court disputes pertaining to Jim Crow Laws. From behind these scenes, he favorably encouraged political decisions affecting blacks (Sowell 1978). However, his major concern was education for economic advancement and character development among the black people. He did not consider this goal as the ultimate limit of black aspirations, but as a necessary historical stage that would "prepare the way for successful lawyers, Congressmen, and music teachers" (Washington et al. 1965, p. 78).

While Booker T. Washington's aim was primarily adapted to the condition of the black masses, another leader W.E.B. DuBois arrived on the scene in the early twentieth century as a spokesman for what he called "the talented tenth." A descendent of free mulattoes, he was

raised in Massachusetts among educated whites, and was the first black man to receive a doctorate degree from Harvard University. As one of the founders of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), his educational emphasis was on liberal arts, and his political emphasis was that of unrelenting public pressure for full civil rights as soon as possible (Frazier 1949; Myrdal 1962; Sowell 1974).

Even though Washington and DuBois served their people in two different ways, both recognized the needs of the black masses. These needs were to learn the discipline and the skills necessary to succeed in a modern complex economy (DuBois 1973). However, some thought of Washington as the leader for the lower classes, who were descendants of slave field hands (Birmingham 1977). The NAACP, of which DuBois was a founder, was initially for the black elite, and some lower-class blacks thought of it as "the national association for the advancement of certain people" (Birmingham 1977, p. 15).

At the turn of the century, northern blacks had access to the voting booth, to public accommodations, and more generally, to a wider societal role. In Philadelphia, middle class blacks were among the city's leading caterers (DuBois 1967). Black dentists and physicians had predominantly white clients in the Detroit (Katzman 1975). In Chicago, business we well as social relations between blacks and whites were accepted and even interracial marriages were allowed (Drake and Cayton 1970). The criteria for membership in the black middle class and the upper class varied from city to city and from community to community (Meier 1963). Most of the middle-class individuals were self-made men and women who followed the philosophy of Booker T. Washington (Meier 1963). In the North, this class of blacks had a background of a stable family life, a good education, and an adequate income for a respectable way of life. They struggled to escape from lower-class blacks by moving into middle-class residential areas (Frazier 1949).

By 1900, blacks in the South were confined by a racial caste system which included economic dependency and legal exclusion. The black middle class of the region was also limited by these same barriers, and turned inward to make a living in the black community bound by Jim Crow. In Northern cities, the black middle class had more opportunity, but this would change early in the twentieth century with the great black migration to the North and the corresponding rise

in racial prejudice and discrimination. On the Iowa frontier at the turn of the century was Buxton.

BUXTON

Were black Americans locked into a racial caste everywhere in the country at the turn of the century? Was the black middle class in particular confined everywhere by racial exclusion? We already know that blacks were doing better in the North than the South, and this included the black middle class. Let us look at one local history of black people around the turn of the century, for we see in it another exception to the racial caste system.

The data used to reconstruct the history of Buxton included Iowa State Census of 1895, 1905, 1915, U.S. Bureau of the Census of 1900 and 1910 and interviews of former Buxton residents (Schwieder, Hraba, and Schwieder 1987). The *Iowa State Bystander* was a black newspaper that ran a weekly news column on Buxton, and information was compiled from these columns. Photos were collected from former Buxton residents, duplicated and used in reconstructing life there. Other data sources included excerpts from the Olin Papers, articles written on Buxton, and the *Memoirs* of Reubin Gaines, Jr., which are autobiographical accounts of his life in Buxton. All of these data sources were combined to provide a thorough study of black life in Buxton.

This local history took place in south central Iowa, between 1880 and 1915 (Schwieder, Hraba and Schwieder 1987). This part of Iowa was rich in coal deposits and thus dotted with coal mining communities. Two of these communities were managed and operated by the Consolidation Coal Company, a subsidiary of the Chicago and Northwestern Railroad. Their names were Muchakinock and Buxton, and these camps mined coal for the railroad. Muchakinock was the first community and Buxton was the second, founded in 1900 after the demise of Muchakinock. In 1881 the Consolidation Coal Company brought black people from Virginia, primarily from Charlottesville and Staunton, to break a strike by white miners in Muchakinock. The company continued to recruit blacks as miners, and blacks were between 37 and 66 percent of Muchakinock's population between 1881 and 1900.

In 1900 the Company moved its mining operation further south and west to Buxton, and Muchakinock's black population moved as well. The class structure of Buxton was the Company manager at the top, followed by business and professional people, skilled workers, mine foremen and miners. Except for company managers, who were always white, blacks were proportionately represented in all these economic classes. The black population of Buxton ranged over time from 55 percent in 1905 to 40.4 percent in 1915. About one-half of the town's doctors and lawyers were black, one-half of its school teachers were black, and one-half of the miners were black. The richest man in Buxton was black, and he owned meat stores, farms and was a mule buyer for the Company. In the mines, blacks and whites worked side by side, and were paid equal wages. In short, there was no segmented or split labor market by race, and this distinguished Buxton not only from the South but also Northern industrial towns in this era (Bodnar 1977).

Because mining was considered a skilled occupation, nearly 80 percent of the black workers in Buxton were in skilled occupations, as compared to about 3 percent in the larger American society. Blacks were paid the same wages as whites in the mines. The policy of both the United Mine Workers of America and the Consolidation Coal Company was to pay coal production workers the same wages regardless of their race or ethnicity. The only wage differentials permitted were by occupational category. Most former residents recalled that the Company treated blacks as fairly as whites and no wage discrimination by race was found in Census records (Schwieder, Hraba and Schwieder 1987).

Furthermore, the Company assigned housing to blacks and whites on a first come first served basis, and thus within Buxton there was no residential segregation by race. Outside of Buxton, however, there was racial segregation, for the Swedes there tended to live apart from others. There was no segregation in Buxton's schools; public services, such as stores, hotels and restaurants; and on common barriers. For example, a miner's train took miners each morning from Buxton to the mines, and white and black miners were evenly dispersed on the cars of this train. That is, there was no Jim Crow. Black Americans did not experience harsh and violent treatment from whites in Buxton, although the Ku Klux Klan operated in nearby towns. While in Buxton, however, blacks were not intimidated (Schwieder, Hraba and Schwieder 1987).

Within Buxton itself, the power structure was based on an alliance between two elite families—the Buxton's and the Armstrong's. Ben E. Buxton served as Consolidation Coal Company's general superintendent, and Hobert A. Armstrong was Buxton's most prominent black citizen. Together they controlled the affairs of Buxton (Schwieder, Hraba and Schwieder 1987). Armstrong recruited black labor for Buxton's father to work the mines in Muchakinock and for the son to work the Buxton mines. Initial recruitment of blacks was to break a strike by white miners. The Company allowed in turn, its employees to make purchases at Armstrong's markets on credit to be taken out of their pay by the Company. Armstrong also owned farms and a packing house. He and Ben Buxton implemented a policy in the Buxton community to insure that blacks were treated as fairly as whites and both in their own ways relied on black miners (Schwieder, Hraba and Schwieder 1987).

About 95 percent of the black workers in Buxton were miners and miners were well paid. Because of this narrow occupational structure, the white workers could not get the upper hand in the job market. No split-labor market existed between blacks and whites. The policy of the Company and the union allowed blacks to remain in the mines. The Company also allowed for blacks in Buxton to have equal access to the educational system, and there was no segregation in public accommodations, such as hotels, restaurants and theaters.

A black middle-class emerged in Buxton. Blacks developed an elaborate community, composed of eight churches, and 40 lodges, clubs, musical groups, political associations and sports teams. Moreover, the Company built in Buxton the country's largest black YMCA complete with tennis courts and a swimming pool (Schwieder, Hraba and Schwieder 1987). Members of Buxton's black middle-class served both blacks and whites in the professions such as medicine, law and education, as black businesses served both black and white customers. In short, the black middle class in Buxton was not confined by a racial caste system.

DISCUSSION

At the turn of the century, life chances for black Americans were restricted. A split-labor market existed between blacks and whites,

with blacks concentrated at the bottom, although a black middle class was doing much better in Northern cities than in the South. Blacks in the South were confined by a racial caste system, enforced by Jim Crow laws and violence against blacks. After the great migration of blacks to the North after 1910, a racial caste system then developed in the North, one which lasted at least to the civil rights era.

The purpose of this study of Buxton was to contrast this local history of blacks in Buxton with the national history of blacks at the turn of the century. In the larger society, black Americans experienced economic dependency, deprivation and systematic legal barriers to their participation in the larger American society. In contrast, blacks in Buxton had equal access to the town's opportunities, and there was no enforced segregation. Blacks had access to all public accommodations in Buxton. They were not segregated in the movies, restaurants, nor in stores. There was no Jim Crow law and no race-etiquette. Although groups such as the Ku Klux Klan existed right outside of Buxton, no violence or intimidation took place within Buxton. Blacks in Buxton could also vote, and often exercised this right in elections.

Blacks were experiencing the same life chances as whites in Buxton. Although most of the black workers were miners, they were well paid and experienced middle-class lifestyles. There were also black professional and business people, such as Attorney George Woodson, Dr. Edward Carter, pharmacist Benjamin F. Cooper, school teachers; such as Minnie B. London and Lola Reeves, and businessman Hobert A. Armstrong, who was the wealthiest man in Buxton (Schwieder, Hraba and Schwieder 1987).

Several reasons lie behind this story of Buxton. The Consolidation Coal Company, through the Chicago headquarters, engaged in welfare capitalism in Buxton. Brandes (1976, pp. 5-6) defined Welfare Capitalism as "any service provided for the comfort or improvement of employees which was neither a necessity of the industry nor required by law." These services in Buxton were medical care, housing, and recreation. By way of illustration, the Consolidation Coal Company built the nation's largest black YMCA in Buxton. The YMCA takes us to a second reason. The Company manager in Buxton in alliance with Armstrong also made certain that black employees experienced life chances equal to that of whites. It was a mutually beneficial relationship involving the Company, Armstrong, and black residents. The Company hired Armstrong to

recruit blacks from the South to break a strike and blacks worked the mines. With their wages, black miners and their families consumed goods from the Company Store and from Armstrong's meat market. Moreover, the Company provided blacks with good housing and blacks paid them rent. Therefore, the more blacks recruited, the more goods they consumed, and the more money the Company and Armstrong made. Blacks in Buxton in turn, had the protection of the Company in a controlled environment.

Because of welfare capitalism from headquarters in Chicago and the local alliance between Hobe Armstrong and Ben Buxton, no caste system developed in Buxton and even black miners experienced a middle-class lifestyle. In addition, a black professional and business class developed, serving blacks and whites. Around 1914, however, a change in the power structure of Buxton took place. Buxton got a new superintendent and the Buxton/Armstrong alliance deteriorated. Also, the mines were being worked out, and whites were displacing blacks in the mines. At first, black professionals increased while the numbers of white professionals declined, but ultimately Buxton was abandoned.

By 1920, Buxton had become almost a ghost town. After leaving Buxton, former black residents were to experience the racial caste system in the larger society, including the racial exclusion that was developing in Northern cities.

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THE MIDDLE-CLASS AFRICAN AMERICAN MALE AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Wornie L. Reed

The economic and social status of African American males has received substantial attention in the last decade. This paper will examine the economic status of African American males in the context of the role that middle class African American males play in black communities. The approach used here assumes that African American males in general and middle-class African American males in particular are critical components in the building, maintenance, and sustenance of the infrastructures of African American communities.

African American communities are beset with a number of social problems, many of which could be alleviated to some degree if the communities were stronger social and economic entities. In this paper I will briefly examine the relationship between the status of the middle-class African American male and the strength of the community infrastructure, trends in the growth of middle-class African American males, and factors that inhibit their development.

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SELF HELP

There has been considerable debate about the relative merits of self-help and government aid as viable strategies for improving the social and economic conditions of African American communities. The question of self-improvement has faced African Americans consistently from the days of slavery to the present. In fact, less than three decades after Emancipation, Du Bois (1908) noted, "It is often asked, 'What is the Negro doing to help himself after a quarter century of outside aid?'"

Du Bois conducted a large-scale survey of black self-help organizations to provide an empirical base for an 1898 Atlanta conference on the topic "Some Efforts of American Negroes for Their Own Social Betterment." The research findings and proceedings of that gathering were published as the third volume in the Atlanta University Publication Series. This monograph revealed that the African American community has a distinguished tradition of self-help, especially among free blacks in the North and South, during and after 250 years of slavery.

According to some analysts, nongovernment support systems serve as "mediating structures" to help individuals and families cope with and counteract adverse social forces and social policies. These mediating structures include both formal organizations (such as churches, private schools, and voluntary associations) and information subsystems (such as social clubs, neighborhood groups, peers, friends, and extended family networks). The social and economic status of members of the community is crucial to the success of such self-help. And, as will be discussed below, the social and economic status of African American communities is highly correlated with the presence of middle-class African American men.

ECONOMIC TRENDS

Contrary to popular opinion the proportion of African American families in the middle class declined in the 1970s and 1980s (see Table 1). Although the proportion of African Americans in the upper income bracket nearly doubled between 1970 and 1990, going from 8.9 percent to 16.2 percent, they constitute less than 17 percent of black families. Below the $50,000 income level, different dynamics

Table 1. Black Family Income, 1970 and 1986

Income	*1970*	*1980*	*1990*
$10,000	21.9	23.0	24.7
$10,000-$24,999	37.7	34.8	30.0
$25,000-$49,999	31.5	29.6	29.3
$50,000+	8.9	12.5	16.2

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census (1993), *Statistical Abstract of the United States: 1993*, (113th ed.) Washington, DC.

occurred: the proportion of low-income families increased and the proportion of middle-income families *decreased*. Although the actual number of black middle-class families increased during this period, it did not increase as fast as the number of low-income families.

Rather than a closing of the black-white income gap, the two decades of the 1970s and 1980s produced a widening of the gap. By 1991, the ratio of black-to-white family income had fallen to 57 percent, one of the lowest levels since the 1960s. Historically, African American families have had a higher proportion of two-earners than white families. However, during the 1970s and 1980s there was a reversal of this pattern; while the proportion of black families with two or more earners fell from 56 percent to 46 percent between 1969 and 1992, the proportion of white families with two or more earners rose from 54 percent to 59 percent (Hill 1993; U.S. Bureau of the Census 1993).

One of the significant factors in the worsening economic position of black families has been the increase in female-headed households.[1] Between 1970 and 1992, the proportion of African American families headed by women jumped from 28 percent to 46 percent (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1993).

The decline in black two-parent families is not the result of some mystical cultural trend, that is, black matriarchy. Rather it is the result of multiple forces, not the least of which is the economic alienation of African American men. There is a strong correlation between the black male unemployment rate and the increase in black female-headed families (see Table 2). As the black male unemployment rate increased between the mid-1960s and the mid-1980s and as more black males dropped out of the labor force altogether (stopped looking for work), the percent of black female-headed families rose. Table 3 shows the same strong effect of family structure on social class.

Table 2. Black Male Unemployment, Labor Force Participation, and Black Female-Headed Families, 1960 to 1992

Year	*Male Unemployment Rate (%)*	*Unemployed Plus Out of Labor Force (in millions)*	*Female-Headed Families (%)*
1960	10.7	1.3	20.0
1965	7.4	1.5	n.a.
1970	7.3	1.8	33.0
1975	13.6	2.8	44.0
1980	14.5	3.2	49.0
1983	20.3	3.7	n.a.
1987	12.7	3.6	55.3
1990	11.3	3.7	51.0
1992	15.3	4.0[b]	52.5

Notes: [a] Among all black families with children
[b] Males 16-64 years of age, calculated from data in Horner (1994)
n.a. Not Available

Sources: Center for the Study of Social Policy. (1986). The Flip-Side of Black Families Headed by Women: The Economic Status of Black Men. In R. Staples (Ed.), *The Black Family: Essays and Studies.* Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, Inc.; Horton, C.P. and Smith, J.C. (Eds.). (1990). *Statistical Record of Black America.* Detroit: Gale Research, Inc.; Horner, L.L. (1994) *Black Americans: A Statistical Sourcebook.* Palo Alto, CA: Information Publications.

African American males, in comparison to white males and black females, are failing to gain ground in middle-class status. Between 1973 and 1991 the proportion of all males who were in the broad middle class maintained a 2 to 1 advantage over black males (Landry 1987; U.S. Bureau of the Census 1993).

Traditionally, more black women than black men have made it into the middle class, which is just the opposite of the case among the whites. Between 1973 and 1992 women, both black and white, won more of the new jobs in the broad middle class. The result was that by 1992 white women outnumbered white men in the broad middle class by 4.5 million workers (but, of course, not in the higher status middle-class jobs). African American women enlarged their lead over black men, mostly through an increase in clerical jobs (Swinton 1993; U.S. Bureau of the Census 1993). Such male-female class differences contribute to the "marriage squeeze" presented by the excess of black women to black men of marriageable age (Spanier and Glick 1986).

INCOME VERSUS WEALTH

It may be useful here to distinguish between income and wealth. All too often the economic situation of African Americans is evaluated

Table 3. Black Family Structure and Social Class, 1986

Class	*Married Couple (%)*	*Single Parent (%)*	*Working Wife (%)*
Upper class	96	4	50
Middle clas	83	17	78
Working class (nonpoor)	60	40	45
Working class (poor)	33	67	33
Under class (nonworking poor)	25	75	25

Source: Horton and Smith (19990).

by comparing black income to white income, which can be a mistake because there is a much greater disparity between blacks and whites in wealth than in income.

In 1988, the median net worth of an African American household was $4,164, while that of a white family was more than 10 times as much, at $43,279 (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1993). In other words, for every $1 in wealth held by a white family, a comparable black family had 9 cents in wealth. For those families with incomes under $11,000 (the "official" poverty population), white families had 96 times greater net worth than blacks. White families with incomes between $11,000 and $48,000 (the very broad middle class, in 1984 dollars) had 3 to 7 times more wealth than their black counterparts. White families with incomes in excess of $48,000 had twice the wealth of blacks in that category (Darity 1993).

The breakdown of family type shows that white married-couple families had four times more wealth than black married-couple families; and white female-headed families had nearly 34 times more wealth than black female-headed families. In fact, white female-headed families on average had greater net worth than black married-couple families (Darity 1993).

In addition to the *extent* of asset ownership blacks and whites also diverge when it comes to the *composition* of asset ownership. According to a census study, "compared with white householders, black householders held a greater percentage of their net worth in durable goods such as housing (65 percent versus 41 percent) and motor vehicles (11 percent versus 6 percent), and a lower percentage in financial assets such as stocks and mutual funds shares (1 percent versus 7 percent) and deposits at financial institutions (7 percent versus 15 percent)" (Darity 1993). These data may explain the difficulty that African Americans have in raising even small amounts

of capital for small business ventures or in passing their middle-class status on to their children.

SOME FACTORS LIMITING THE AFRICAN AMERICAN MALE

Between 1940 and 1975 job opportunities within manufacturing were a major means for African American families to move up into the middle-income, if not middle-class, bracket. Manufacturing has traditionally provided high-wage jobs to workers with low levels of skills. However, the shift from a manufacturing economy to a service economy is having an adverse effect on current and future prospects for African American workers. African Americans are not well represented in the occupations that are expected to grow the fastest over the next decade. Also, the manufacturing sector has been declining, and predictably, black employment fell considerably faster during the 1980s than overall employment in most of these declining industries (Simms 1988).

The African American middle class is in a precarious economic situation; it is highly vulnerable to economic downturns and government budget cuts. During the 1970s the proportion of African American workers in the public sector increased from 21 to 27 percent, while government employment for whites was decreasing to 16 percent. The African American middle class is also vulnerable to changes in affirmative action policy: to the extent that affirmative action policy becomes weaker, the number of African Americans moving into the middle class becomes smaller. These economic realities mean that the African American middle class does not have resources equal to that of the white middle class for transmitting its favored class position to its children.

Education

In examining factors that potentially affect the growth and development of the middle-class African American male, education must be considered, as it is a major factor in social mobility in American society. A pattern emerging in American higher education threatens access to education and therefore to social mobility for African Americans. Since 1960 there has been a definite and

significant attainment of educational opportunity as a result of the desegregation movement. For almost two decades colleges and universities were opening admission to substantial numbers of minority students. However, in the 1980s there was a reversal: previous gains in education were eroded. Though the factors influencing this development are mostly systemic (due to demographic, social, economic, and policy trends) the consequence had a differential racial impact.

After coming to near parity in 1975 the gap between the rates at which black and white students go on to college began to gradually widen. By 1982 the gap was accelerating in size, creating an ever widening "access gap" between black and white students. Between 1975 and 1985, the high-school graduation rate of black students rose from 71.6 to 79.0 percent, while the college-going rate of those graduates fell from 31.5 to 26 percent. Conversely, the high-school drop-out rate decreased (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1993).

The decline in the rate of college enrollment of African American youth was occurring in the face of rising college entrance test efficiency by black students. Although the SAT (Scholastic Aptitude Test) scores for white students were decreasing slightly between 1970 and 1990 the SAT scores of African American students were increasing. Blacks were graduating from high school in record numbers, and improving their SAT scores, but proportionately fewer of them were gaining access to colleges, thus placing limitations on the social mobility of young African Americans (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1993).

Although in recent years there has been a reversal of the decline in the college enrollment rates of African American high school graduates, the enrollment rates have not yet reached the levels of the mid-1970s. On the other hand, the rates for whites is steadily increasing such that in 1991 the rates for white students was over 40 percent greater than the rates for African American students.

One of the primary reasons for the decrease in African American college enrollment in the 1980s was the decreasing availability of grants (Garibaldi 1991). Cuts in financial aid grants during the early 1980s adversely affected all races of students, but the impact was greatest on black students as significantly more of them depended on financial aid. The aid programs changed from an emphasis on grants to an emphasis on loans. Since fewer African American families could secure the loans, college attendance among the children in these families suffered.

Earnings Disparity

As African American men move into middle-class occupations, the occupations they enter are returning less and less money in earnings. The disparity in the earnings of blacks and whites in upper-level white-collar occupations is greater than that between their counterparts in blue-collar occupations. There has been growth in the proportion of the black male work force that is in white-collar occupations. In fact, between 1959 and 1987 the proportion nearly doubled, from 15.2 percent to 28.6 percent. However, in 1979 black males in upper-level white-collar occupations earned less on average relative to white males than did their blue-collar counterparts. The black male/white male earnings ratio was .71 among white-collar occupations and .79 among blue-collar occupations. These differences persist when educational level is controlled. For example, among executives and administrators in 1979 the black male/white male earnings ratio for individuals with a four-year college was .62. This means that for every dollar in earnings of a white male executive, a similarly placed black male earned 62 cents (Cotton 1990).

Black Dependence on the Public Sector

Another development in the black work force is the increasing dependence on the public sector. Over 50 percent of all college-educated U.S. blacks are employed in the public sector. Twenty-six percent of all black families depend to some degree on public services and transfer payments. Therefore, both the middle class and the lower class have a vested interest in a non-shrinking government.

THE ROLE OF THE MIDDLE-CLASS AFRICAN AMERICAN MALE IN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

The potential effects of the growth and development of middle-class African American males in particular and the African American middle class in general may be seen in at least two different ways, one positive and one negative. The negative perception considers class structure and the social stratification of the community, where middle and lower classes may be pitted against each other, bringing class-linked disunity. On the other hand, the positive perception considers the potential for community development as a result of the activities

of middle-class males. Their economic status affects familial situations which in turn affect the general community infrastructure.

Some observers (Green and Pryde 1990) argue that African American community development should be accomplished by a kind of updated entrepreneurial approach, an effort that could be developed from new or revitalized voluntary associations within black communities that would have specific orientations toward business development. An assumption is that increases in the numbers of middle-class males in African American communities, participating in its organizations and institutions, will have the effect of generating positive community development.

CONCLUSION

I have attempted to show that many of the problems that African American communities confront are related to the declining economic status of African American men. Their economic status affects familial situations as well as the general community infrastructure. Perhaps some of the attention that is paid to problems of the increasing numbers of female-headed households should be given to increasing the numbers of middle-class African American males, which could have the effect of slowing the increasing rate of such households as well as affecting the quality of life in urban black communities.

Some observers may question how an increase in the number of middle-class males, and therefore middle-class families, could be the route to improving black communities, especially those in urban areas, as middle-class African Americans are moving to the suburbs—away from such communities. Evidence indicates, however, that the residential segregation of African Americans is increasing and that they live increasingly in mostly black neighborhoods. Between 1950 and 1970, blacks in neighborhoods in 20 large cities where they represented three-fourths of the population increased from 30 percent to 51 percent, while the proportion of blacks in mixed neighborhoods with 25 percent or less declined from 25 to 16 percent. Further, the overall national black segregation index—the degree of racially segregated housing in the United States—decreased only minutely between 1940 and 1980, from 85.2 to 81.0. Thus, the majority of African Americans still live in mostly

black neighborhoods. Consequently, a strengthening of the African American middle class would inevitably strengthen black communities.

NOTE

1. Female-headed household is defined as female householder with no spouse present.

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PART III

CLASS, LANGUAGE, LITERATURE, AND RELIGION

ROLE OF THE HAITIAN MIDDLE CLASS AND THE SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS IN FORGING THE LINGUISTIC FUTURE OF HAITI

Flore Zéphir

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF THE LINGUISTIC SITUATION OF HAITI

The notion of "broad diglossia" advanced by Fasold (1984, p. 53) to describe the reservation of a "high" language for situations viewed as more formal and guarded, and the reservation of a "low" language for situations viewed as more informal and intimate can apply to the present linguistic situation of Haiti. Indeed, the two languages in presence, French and Haitian Creole, are in a diglossic relationship in the sense that they are not perceived by their speakers to be on equal footing, and each seems to have a definite role to play.[1] This perception is a direct legacy of colonialism. Since colonial times, there

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has always existed a dichotomy between French and Creole in Haiti. Generally speaking, French was the high language, the language of the dominant and privileged class composed of the French colonists, and Creole was the low language, the language of the subjugated and oppressed masses constituted of African slaves. Therefore, French was the language used in all the formal domains of the colonial establishment, and Creole mostly the language of the plantations. Moreover, the division of labor established by the colonists created a hierarchical structure even among the slave population: The slaves directly brought from Africa, known as the *bossal* slaves, were assigned to the plantations. Those born from slave parents in the colony, known as the *Creole* slaves, worked in the masters' residences as servants or domestics. In general, the Creole slaves enjoyed a better treatment than the *bossal* slaves. In addition, from close contact with the master, many servants learned to speak his language, and some even learned to read and write it. In addition, many of the female Creole slaves bore their French colonists children, thus given birth to a mulatto offspring who was perceived to be in a more favorable condition. Depending on the generosity of the father, the mulatto child was free, and the males were usually sent to France for their education. Class stratification and language distribution in colonial Saint-Domingue led to the belief that French is the symbol of the ruling class, freedom, political and economic strength, and social advantages, and Creole that of slavery, domination, oppression, and backwardness. This explains why the Founding Fathers, at the birth of the nation on January 1, 1804, wrote the Declaration of Independence and the Haitian Constitution in French. They thought that only through the French language, which already enjoyed international stature, could Haiti rise to the rank of a civilized country worthy of external recognition. By eliminating the French, the revolutionary leaders did not eliminate the French language. The conception or "misconception" of language engendered by colonialism persisted, and Haiti as a newly-created nation maintained the language of the former French colony of Saint-Domingue. As Hoffmann (1984, p. 60) remarks, it is therefore not surprising that the Haitian motto which is engraved in front of most of the administrative buildings is still the same as the French revolutionary motto: *Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité.*

For almost two centuries, French has been endowed with high prestige in Haiti. It is the language spoken by the elite, the language

through which it is believed that knowledge should be imparted, and the language deemed fit for formal affairs. Creole, on the contrary, was considered simply a vernacular unfit for formal situations, since used by the monolingual masses. In Haiti, viewed as a macro-linguistic community, there exists a status of inequality between French and Creole: The former is the dominant language spoken by the educated elite and the growing middle class which use it to reinforce their social, economic and political privileges, and the latter is the subordinate language spoken by the underprivileged class composed of the impoverished peasantry and urban proletariat. Creole is indeed the sole means of communication for the monolingual masses which constitute the most numerous (roughly 90 percent) and the poorest segment of the population. Therefore, it comes as no surprise that it has been considered the language of social isolation and failure; and has served to denote lower social class origin, ignorance and illiteracy on the part of its speakers. French, on the other hand, because it is spoken by the dominant group which enjoys authority, power and high economic status (even though this group constitutes only 10 percent of the population) has come to be associated with knowledge, cultural refinement, and higher social class origin. This explains why it is still considered the language of social mobility and social success, and "a symbol of the refined and cultivated aspects of Haitian life" (Stafford 1987, p. 204).

It is important to note that the U.S. occupation of Haiti for 19 years (1915-1934) gave rise to a nationalist ideology which advocated a return to African values. It forced a redefinition of "Haitianness" traditionally based on European values (which included language). That period witnessed a revival of interest in Africa, and many writers such as Price-Mars began to emphasize the significance of the African heritage (Nicholls 1979, pp. 142-164).[2] These developments led to the indigenist movement which "recognized the need to study peasantry, to make an inventory of its practices, and to take into account the African roots of Haitian culture" (Trouillot 1990, p. 131). With the growth of Haitian nationalism and "indigenism" during the twentieth century came "an increased recognition of the necessity of using the majority language as the major medium of communication" (Stafford 1987, p. 204). However, the emergence of indigenism and even the *négritude* movement, which is in essence the literary revival of indigenous practices and traditions, and the celebration of Africa, the mother land, failed to promote the use of Haitian Creole in literary

domains. Africa and the peasants' way of life were celebrated in French. The focus of the celebration may have changed from a European orientation to a more nationalist one, but the vehicle of that celebration was the same. Creole was still considered inappropriate for intellectual pursuits, and furthermore was not given official status. At best, its use in the administrative arena was "permitted and even recommended to safeguard the material and moral interests of citizens who do not sufficiently know the French language".[3]

TOWARD THE RESOLUTION OF THE LINGUISTIC CONFLICT

Haiti is a perfect example of a community where a linguistic conflict exists because of the dominant/subordinate relationship between French and Creole. As was suggested by the Catalan sociolinguists who have dealt with this notion of linguistic conflict, this situation can be resolved in two ways: by *assimilation* or by *normalization*.[4] In the first case (assimilation), the dominant language becomes accessible to and used by everyone. This would, therefore, lead to the elimination of the subordinate language, causing linguistic shift. In the second case (normalization), the subordinate language is valorized (i.e. no longer associated with lower status), and its use is generalized and not restricted only to informal situations, but introduced in domains that can generate prestige. The assimilationist alternative presents several problems for Haiti: On the ideological level, it goes against Haitian nationalism, and the desire to promote a Haitian cultural identity not based on European models, but which reflects a valorized African heritage. On the practical level, it is impossible to replace a language that is spoken by an entire population by one that is spoken only by a minority. The second alternative, because it is more consistent with Haitian ideals and appears more realistic, has been chosen. Indeed, the new constitution of March 1987, written in both French and Creole and which recognizes for the first time the official status of Creole, is a tangible effort on the part of the government to valorize the vernacular language. Article 5 of the constitution reads in French:

> Tous les Haïtiens sont unis par une langue commune: Le Créole. Le Créole et le Français sont les langues officielles de la République.

and in Creole:

> Sèl lang ki simante tout Ayisyen nèt ansanm, se kreyòl la. Kreyòl ak Franse se lang ofisyèl Repiblik Ayiti.[5]

Furthermore, several measures in linguistic planning have been taken toward the valorization of Creole. Among these measures can be mentioned the elaboration of a stable orthography. Dejean (1975, 1987, and 1980) focuses on the problem of orthographic codification and the introduction of Creole as a vehicle of instruction in the schools. He stresses the urgency of the school problem and the necessity to work for the masses kept thus far in ignorance. In 1980, under the leadership of Joseph C. Bernard, the then Minister of Education, the spelling system developed by the National Pedagogical Institute (IPN) was recognized as the official, standard orthography.[6] Another step toward upgrading the status of Creole is instrumentalization. Valdman (1976, 1980, 1982) focuses on this issue, and he argues repeatedly that the standardization or normalization of Creole would lead to its valorization, and that the prestige of a language cannot be enhanced without normalizing its use.

Paulo Freire, the well known Brazilian educator, whose work has made a profound impact not only in the field of education but also in the overall struggle for national development, writes in his book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970, p. 31) that the oppressed tends to internalize the image of the oppressor and adopt his guidelines. This is quite true for Haiti where the social behavior, the values and the language of the dominant group represent the targeted ideal and the normative model in the eyes of the dominated masses. This phenomenon of norm internalization is very salient in the reactions of the masses to the educational reform that was attempted several years ago. In 1979, a presidential decree stated explicitly that Creole could be used as an educational vehicle and object of instruction in the primary schools. The use of Creole as a medium of instruction for the first four years of schooling was one of several aspects of a reform of the education system launched in 1980 by the Ministry of Education in order to address the central problem of failure on the part of the students. To implement this new program, a process of experimentation was started in several schools throughout the country. According to Chaudenson and Vernet (1983), and Locher,

Malan and Pierre-Jacques (1987), the reform was not well received by the general public because, from all of its aspects, the use of Creole was the main focus of attention. Locher, Malan and Pierre-Jacques (1987, p. 37) reports that the opposition to the reform came from the various social groups. The privileged social classes and the advocates of the traditional system of education saw in it an attempt to eliminate the use of French and the advantages associated with its use. The underprivileged masses, who were thought to be the real benefactors of such a proposal, believed that it was an attempt to create "un enseignement au rabais" (second-rate teaching) intended to isolate them in a "linguistic ghetto" by depriving them of the possibility of learning French, the perceived means of social promotion. If in Haiti, the monolingual masses want to be provided with schooling in French, it is not because of the inherent superiority of French as a vehicle of instruction, but rather because of its symbolic power for social mobility; it is by anticipation of social progress that this choice is made. Given this situation, one can begin to see how the middle class has a tremendous responsibility toward the struggle for national development and social equality.

Forging the linguistic future of Haiti will unavoidably mean the promotion and the valorization of Haitian Creole which constitutes both the link to a valorized African heritage and the vestige of a glorious past, that of the revolution which led the Haitian people to the road to freedom. In order for Haitian Creole to be normalized, it needs to be introduced in every facet of Haitian society and life without stigmatization and regardless of social class. Since Haitian Creole is the only language that all Haitians share, it becomes imperative that it be promoted in order to facilitate social integration and to provide access to opportunities that have been denied for too long. In the following pages, the language attitudes, practices and values of Haitian society will be looked at as well as the institutional efforts undertaken to resolve the language conflict in Haiti.

LANGUAGE PRACTICES AND ATTITUDES

In order to analyze the language practices and attitudes in Haiti, it is necessary to take into account the roles that French and Creole play for the major segments of the population, namely the monolingual oppressed masses and the bilingual dominant middle class.

The Oppressed Masses

Languages exist to meet the needs of human beings and serve many functions. According to Valdman (1980, 1988), who adapted Gobard's (1976) tetraglossic model, four major language functions can be identified: the vernacular, which refers to everyday communication needs with intimates; the vehicular, which refers to broader communication (outside the intimate groups) with the outer, formal community (administration, schools, media and the like); the referential, which describes the transmission of the cultural heritage of a society (literature-songs-folklore); and the religious which concerns the need for people to worship. For the oppressed masses, all these functions are expressed exclusively in Creole which constitutes for them "the sole linguistic element, serving all their mental, intellectual, psychological, social and individual activities."[7] However, it is worth mentioning that the oppressed in Haiti have some limited access to the formal outer community which comprises the government, the administration, the media channels and the educational system, but have absolutely no input in the functioning of these institutions. Therefore, it is not erroneous to claim that social integration in all domains must be achieved before any linguistic conflict can be resolved effectively. The irony and paradox of Haitian society is that the oppressed, too often, have tended to attribute their social exclusion to their inability to speak the most prestigious language, French, which for them has become the symbol of power and upward mobility. This false belief, reinforced by the middle class and the social institutions, is so deeply ingrained in their consciousness that it surfaced in their refusal to fully endorse Creole as a means of instruction as one of the several components of the educational reform discussed earlier. If on the one hand, people react against the excess of importance attached to French by lamenting that *"pale franse pa vle di lespri"* (to speak French does not mean to be intelligent), on the other, they recognize its social advantages since *"pale franse bay lajan"* (to speak French brings in money) (Fattier-Thomas 1987, p. 119). Ans (1987, p. 310), who has tried to explain the ambiguities and dualities of Haitian culture and society, notes the dilemma of Haiti:

> où la langue 'indigène', présentée comme étant le siège de l'identité collective, connote indiscutablement pour l'immense majorité de ceux qui ne parlent que

> cette langue-là leur infériorité raciale, culturelle, sociale, économique; tandis que la langue 'officielle' reste perçue par eux comme une langue étrangère, alors même qu'elle connote la richesse, l'aisance, 'la classe', le prestige social et le pouvoir politique.[8]

The dominated majority's partial negative attitudes toward Creole is more due to the fact that they do not see tangible advantages associated with it. As Wardhaugh (1987, p. 17) aptly remarks "a language flourishes when it appears to convey advantages on those who learn it; it decays when it seems to offer only disadvantages." This situation is also true for the other French-Creole diglossic communities of the Caribbean, such as Réunion, Martinique and Guadeloupe. Indeed, research conducted in these regions highlight very well the link that exists between social-economic-political status and linguistic status. Moreover, they suggest that the linguistic problem is first a social and political one (Saint-Pierre 1972; Bebel-Gisler 1976; Prudent 1980; Kremnitz 1983). The major implication of such findings is that the middle class and the socio-political establishment have the responsibility to orchestrate profound changes that will ensure social integration and inclusion to every single stratum of Haitian society.

The Dominant Middle Class

The last 15 years have witnessed several changes in the traditional subordinate role to which Haitian Creole has been relegated. We mentioned earlier that in 1980, the Ministry of National Education adopted a standard orthography for Creole, and orchestrated a reform in the educational system which allowed the use of Creole as a medium of instruction. The political events that took place in Haiti in 1986 when Jean Claude Duvalier—the then President for Life—was ousted have undoubtedly contributed to the acceptance of Creole in the media, notably radio and television broadcasts which were domains traditionally reserved for French. Indeed, many political and weather reports are conducted in Creole. Some television and radio interviews and speeches by political leaders are delivered in Creole, and many commercial advertisements are also in Creole.[9] The emergence of Jean-Bertrand Aristide on the political scene certainly triggered an increased use of Creole in the media and in public functions. The new constitution of March 1987 promotes

Creole to the rank of official language, making it "equal" to French. In the wake of modifications in the linguistic status quo, it is appropriate to ask what role the bilingual middle class will have to play in the forging of the linguistic future of the country. The answer to this question rests largely on the linguistic behavior, values and attitudes that this group manifests toward the two languages.

In order to adequately analyze the linguistic behavior of the Haitian bilingual community, a study was conducted by Zéphir (1990). Her study revealed that, although French and Creole are both the official languages of the country, they cannot be used interchangeably at the discretion of a particular speaker. There exist specific rules that govern language choice and these, as defined by the bilingual speakers interviewed, can be summarized as follows: (1) It is more appropriate to use French with children, and in the presence of children. Similarly, children are expected to use French with adults. (2) It is preferable to use French with older people to show respect. This category may include parents, relatives and friends. (3) It is preferable to use French when they are strangers around and with strangers. (4) It is preferable to use French with women, especially if they are not friends. (5) It is more appropriate to use French to conduct formal affairs such as professional meetings, interviews, appointments with superiors and the like, and to conduct business transactions in administrative places such as courthouses, banks and public offices. (6) Both French and Creole can be used when speaking to intimates about informal matters. This category includes spouse, relatives, friends, and colleagues at work. Priority to any specific language is determined by the degree of familiarity, the topic of conversation, the location of the speech event and the personal characteristics of the interlocutors. The more socially relaxed the conditions, the greater the use of Creole. Indeed, Creole is used for banter and jokes. Inversely, the more socially rigid the conditions, the greater the use of French. Exclusive use of Creole is reserved when conversing with monolingual speakers.[10]

Furthermore, a careful analysis of the responses given by Zéphir's informants shows that the bilingual speakers have mixed or ambivalent feelings toward the two languages. No speaker expressed opinions that can be labelled "anti-Creole." The reservations made were mostly based on practical considerations and on the advantages that a knowledge of French can offer. However, at the same time, through the same responses, it was hard to detect a complete

endorsement for French because to be a champion of the "French cause" could be perceived as denying one's membership in the Haitian community in the broad sense. For the bilingual speaker, there exists a constant conflict which is due to the status of inequality between the two languages and to the complementary use of languages that he/she makes or is forced to make because of the social reality. The Haitian bilingual speakers' conflicting attitudes can be seen in the fact that 83 percent of the informants interviewed by Zéphir admit that, in certain situations, societal pressures and norms require the use of one or the other language while, at the same time, more than half of them claim that there is no context where the use of Creole is improper. This seems to suggest that there is a double standard at play: One that is applied to individual speakers and one that is applied to "others" or to the Haitian nation as a whole. These two standards are contradictory: the individual must respect the tacit norms, whereas "others" or the nation at large, are free to discard them in order to preserve a true, genuine and perhaps abstract notion of national identity. Only in terms of that double standard can these conflicting attitudes be understood. The Haitian bilingual speakers can be conceived as being two different entities. One is the individual who does not belong to the nation, and the other is the member of this nation. In the context of everyday life, more often than not, it is the individual who is acting, not the member of the nation. When people say they use French at the bank, at the doctor's office, with their superiors or with strangers, it is the individual who is speaking. But, when they say that Creole can be used anywhere, it is the member of the nation who is speaking. Somehow, this nation has become anonymous composed of individuals other than themselves. The existence of conflicting attitudes stems from the fact that there is a constant tension between Haitian nationalism, a central component of which is Creole, and the bilingual's communicative competence which is diglossic and requires the use of French for reasons ranging from the fear of being relegated to a lower social group to the urge of being socially mobile. In other words, this tension is between national linguistic ideology and the individual's desire to advance socially. Individuals feel that they must protect themselves and that they must be on the safe side by conforming to socially linguistic practices. They do not want to run the risk of being socially misplaced and misjudged by defending what they believe (strongly or mildly) on the abstract level can be a factor of national identity. On the social

and economic levels, can one rightly assume that Creole, which is intended to weave a strong national unity, is the equalizer of chances of social advancement?

Where Do We Go From There?

It is completely utopian to believe that the monolingual masses, who are deprived of all political and economic power and who aspire to leave the "Creole linguistic ghetto," can launch a linguistic revolution whose objective will be to establish equality between the two Haitian languages, French and Creole. The responsibility for forging linguistic unity in Haiti, in all likelihood, will have to come from the top, and will have to be taken by the bilingual middle class. Let's not forget that in Haiti, the bilingual middle class represents the socio-cultural ideal in the eyes of the dominated monolingual masses. However, the bilingual community, because of its ambivalent feelings, contributes, perhaps indirectly, to maintaining Creole in his subordinate rank and to reinforcing the belief so deeply rooted in Haitian mentality that only the acquisition of French can guarantee a certain degree of social success. In order for a linguistic revolution to take place, the social group at the top must recognize the need to establish a value system different from that which is presently in place, and the need to rethink its old, conservative linguistic convictions, beliefs and practices. Then, these new and progressive values will be able to filter down to the masses at the very bottom of the social ladder, thus weaving a "true" linguistic unity and solidarity in Haiti. Only a collective will and effort can shake the existing social conditions, overturn the decaying structures and erect new ones.

Perhaps more than the individuals, the social institutions and a well-intentioned and concerned government will have to fight vigorously to eradicate the prejudices and depreciatory attitudes toward Creole that they have instituted in the first place by keeping it out of their spheres. These institutions will have to demonstrate through concrete actions that Creole is perfectly fit to handle formal affairs. For instance, the lack of enthusiasm on the part of the monolinguals toward the educational reform is partly due to the way the Ministry of National Education approached this notion of reform. As Locher, Malan and Pierre-Jacques wrote in their report (1987, pp. 34-38), the reform (with its proposed use of Creole) was

introduced first in these so-called reform schools which comprised *solely* selected public schools. It is worth mentioning that in Haiti public schools cater almost entirely to the poor and the underclass. The private schools were under no obligation to "experiment" with the reform, and they were totally free to continue to dispense their instruction as they have always done, in French. As a result of this unfortunate selection, the monolinguals saw in the reform "a disguised attempt to create a parallel system of education intended to deprive students from the working class and the peasantry access to quality education, mistaken for education in French" (Locher, Malan, and Pierre-Jacques 1987, p. 37).[11] These negative reactions would have been avoided if at the level of the government, that is, the Ministry of Education, an attempt was made to reduce the gap between private and public sectors (the haves and the have-nots) by including some private schools in the chosen group of reform schools. In this regard, the efforts of a very small number of reputable Catholic schools, such as the Institution of *les Frères de Saint-Louis de Gonzague* (an all boy prestigious Catholic school) deserve mention. They have begun to use Creole, although not as a vehicle of instruction, but as "une langue de culture générale" (Locher, Malan, and Pierre-Jacques 1987, p. 127). This is certainly a big step toward valorizing Creole, and recognizing that it has its rightful place in the school curriculum.[12]

The valorization of Creole, which has a key role to play in the linguistic and social future of Haiti, must become one of the priorities of all the social institutions, through which certain vehicular and referential functions of Haitian society are channeled. It is encouraging to note that, with respect to the media, Creole has joined French in radio broadcasts, newspapers and television. Because of the existing political climate, and the general availability of small transistor radios throughout the territory, many of the radio programs are delivered in Creole.[13] Along with the national newspapers written in French, there exist a few periodicals and political pamphlets written in Creole. It is also stimulating to witness the infiltration of Creole in the literary domains. Indeed, some of the most creative writers have adopted Creole and have exemplified eloquently the use of the vernacular in poetry and prose. In addition, several classic French plays, such as Molière's Tartuffe have been adapted in Creole.[14] All of these efforts have certainly been welcomed by all segments of the population, monolinguals and bilinguals alike,

and they have undoubtedly contributed to enhancing Haitian society's appreciation for its cultural heritage of which Creole is a central attribute. Furthermore, these efforts suggest that Creole is a perfectly legitimate language worthy of utilization in prestigious domains, such as media and literature.

Haitian Creole is undeniably undergoing a process of spreading in the sense that there is a marked increase in the proportion of communication networks that adopt it. However, spreading must reach every aspect of Haitian communicative needs before complete normalization and valorization can be achieved. The degree to which Haitians adopt their vernacular language will ultimately determine the extent of valorization. This is the crux of the problem. It is not because Creole has been instrumentalized and endowed with a stable orthography that its prestige will be enhanced. As Valdman (1984, p. 98) judiciously remarks the promotion of Creole must be accompanied by "profound social transformations and a political evolution that will change the factors that have spawned these attitudes in the first place". The government must move forward with its campaign of rehabilitation of Creole by advocating its use in its institutions and agencies. For example, government publications, official documents (birth certificates, passports, etc.) and mottos engraved in front of administrative buildings need to be written in Creole as well. Government officials and high-ranking administrators could certainly contribute to this endeavor by employing the vernacular language in the performance of their duties. The goal of this campaign will be to convince Haitians that the use of their common language is not an indication of membership in the uneducated underclass, but rather an irrefutable proof of membership in the Haitian nation irrespective of socio-economic differences. After all, the Creole language is perhaps after race the country's unifying theme for nationhood.[15] All Haitians whether mulatto or darked-skinned, poor or rich, educated or illiterate, city-dweller or country folk are Creole speakers.

CONCLUSION

In the struggle for social justice, national development and Haitian nationalism, the de-stigmatization or valorization of Creole is of utmost importance because it is the only medium which can fully

serve the needs of *all* Haitians. In present-day Haitian context, the utilization of French in government institutions and agencies can only serve to reinforce social boundaries and statuses, since it is not the national and shared language of the Haitian people. It is spoken only by a small privileged segment of the society. In order for a language to stop being a social marker, it needs to be accessible to the whole society. Given the social, political and economic conditions of Haiti, the spreading of French, with the ultimate goal of its mastery by every single Haitian, is not realistic. Therefore, the spreading of Creole (of which every Haitian has mastery) in every facet of Haitian life is the only practical solution. However, for this solution to be effective, the negative connotations associated with its use and its users must be overturned. Individuals as well as institutions must continue to work fervently toward generalizing the admission of Creole in the formal arena with the endorsement of responsible policy makers and concerned government officials. More than anything else, this type of effort will necessarily entail behavioral modifications. This is the *sine qua non* condition for the success of the resolution of the linguistic conflict in Haiti. In conclusion, I would like to formulate the wish that once the linguistic walls fall, the social and economic walls will also begin to crumble. The return of populist President Aristide augurs well in this direction.

NOTES

1. The term "diglossia" was first introduced by Ferguson (1959) to describe the fact that in many speech communities two languages, or two language varieties of unequal status are used by some speakers under different conditions. He further notes that these languages "exist side by side through the community with each having a definite role to play."

2. For more information on the U.S. occupation of Haiti, and Haitian nationalism, see Nicholls (1979), Dupuy (1989), and Trouillot (1990).

3. This is stipulated in Article 35 of the 1964 constitution, and reproduced in Stafford (1987, p. 204).

4. The Catalan sociolinguistics who have introduced these terms are Aracil (1965), Niyoles (1969), and Vallverdú (1980). For more details and a complete reference for these works, see Kremnitz (1983), and Valdman (1986).

5. All Haitians are united by a common language: Creole. Creole and French are the official languages of the Republic.

6. Prior to the official IPN orthography, two different spelling systems were previously developed: The McConnell-Laubach in the early forties, and the Pressoir in the late forties. For more on this issue, see Valdman (1984).

7. Dejean (1978), as quoted in Valdman (1982, p. 141).

8. "Where the indigenous language, conceived as the locus of collective identity, indisputably represents racial, cultural, social, and economic inferiority for the majority of those who speak only that language; whereas the official language [French] is perceived by them as a foreign language, even though it connotes wealth, material well-being, 'status', social prestige, and political power."

9. Some of these advertisements are reproduced in Fattier-Thomas (1984, pp. 46-50).

10. For a detailed discussion of the rules of language choice and the norms of language use, consult Zéphir (1990, chap. 4).

11. This is so true that members of the working class will make every effort possible to send their children to affordable private schools (lay or religious) in the hope that they will receive a better "French" education.

12. The teaching of Creole in some Catholic schools can be seen as a major change, particularly when one keeps in mind that traditionally the use of Creole on school grounds used to be strictly prohibited. Any student caught speaking Creole was reprimanded, and often punished.

13. The return of President Jean-Bertrand has again given a voice to the silent masses, and particular effort is made to reach them in their language.

14. For more information about Creole writers, see Zéphir (1990, pp. 25-26).

15. For more information about the issue of race and nationhood, see Nicholls (1979), and Charles (1990).

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THE POLITICS OF REPRESENTATION:
BLACK MIDDLE CLASS IDENTITY IN THE NOVELS OF TONI MORRISON

Marilyn Sanders Mobley

Race is inextricably linked with the class exploitation; in a racist-capitalist power structure, capitalist exploitation and race oppression are complementary, the removal of one ensures the removal of the other.
—Kwame Nkrumah, *Class Struggle in Africa* (1970)

Black families are more often measured against the white ideal than the white reality. They should be measured against neither, of course, but against their own reality that is created out of their own history.
—Joyce Ladner, *Tomorrow's Tomorrow: The Black Woman* (1971)

Having become less isolated and thus more exposed to the contempt and hostility of the white world, but at the same time cherishing the values of the white world, the new black bourgeoisie with more money at their disposal, have sought compensations in the things that money can buy.
—E. Franklin Frazier, *Black Bourgeoisie: The Rise of a New Middle Class in the United States* (1957)

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Own things. And let the things you own own other things. Then you'll own yourself and other people too.

—Toni Morrison, *Song of Solomon* (1977)[1]

The issue of class identity is difficult to ignore in the writing of 1993 Nobel Laureate Toni Morrison. From her first novel *The Bluest Eye* (1970) to her most recent novel *Jazz* (1992), it is clear that while she may subjugate class to issues of race and gender, Morrison is acutely aware that classism, racism, and sexism form interlocking systems of oppression that have shaped the lives of people of African descent in the United States and around the world. While class issues are an intrinsic dimension of her texts, scholars have focused on race and gender rather than class in Morrison's novels. Indeed, Racism and sexism account for much of the interracial and intraracial tension that emerges in each of her books. But beneath the texts and within the contexts of all six Morrison novels to date, there are class issues that demand greater attention. In the only study to focus on class in any detail, *Toni Morrison's Developing Class Consciousness* (1991), Doreatha Drummond Mbalia suggests that a concern with class forms an "evolutionary pattern" that can be traced throughout Morrison's literary production.[2] While this essay does not seek to delineate the contours of this pattern in all six novels, I do believe an examination of *Song of Solomon* and *Tar Baby* illustrates the ways in which Morrison's representation of middle class identity reveals her own desire to bring class analysis into her portrayal of African American life and culture. Ultimately, to bring class analysis to bear on these two texts is to foreground the complexity of black middle class identity formation after Reconstruction and to expose the ways in which the black community is a site of contestation as to what constitutes authenticity, progress, and success.

Although one of the customary critical apparatuses for examining issues of class identity formation has been through sociology, the interdisciplinary nature of African American Studies has always created a space for discovering the context out of which any cultural or social phenomena have developed. In other words, the study of black literary texts, for example, has always been grounded in the historical, political, economic, cultural and sociological realities that produced those texts. Even when the scholarship has focused more on textual matters of language and style, it has been difficult to

overlook the context out of which the text emerged. In recent years, the development of cultural studies has given greater visibility, if not validation, to the critical thrust initiated by African American studies since its inception. Indeed, it is now popular and even commonplace to acknowledge that literary studies has become cultural studies. As bell hooks remarks in *Outlaw Culture: Resisting Representations* (1994), "Everything changed when white male academics in the United States 'discovered' cultural studies. Suddenly, much that had once been illegitimate became the rage" (p. 3). Nevertheless, it behooves the literary scholar of a black text to situate her analysis in an interdisciplinary framework if she is to do justice to the text. Having said this, I seek in this essay to examine two Toni Morrison novels—*Song of Solomon* and *Tar Baby*—by answering three questions: (1) How is black middle class identity represented? (2) How does black middle class identity, as it is represented in these novels, affect black family life? and (3) What do these representations of black middle class identity signify about the black community and its ongoing resistance to various forms of oppression in the United States and in the African diaspora? To put this third question another way, how do Morrison's representations of black middle class life comment on the historical and cultural moment from which the novels were produced? In foregrounding class, I do not seek to equate class and race, for I know, as Paul Gilroy has succinctly stated in *'There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack'* (1987) that "the processes of 'race' and class formation are not identical" (p. 40). Instead, this study interrogates how class issues figure into Morrison's texts as an integral part of her representation of African American life and culture.

SONG OF SOLOMON

Song of Solomon, which won the 1978 National Book Critics Circle Award for Fiction, was published in 1977. The plot weaves an intricate and complex texture that tells the story of an individual black man, Milkman Dead, at the same time that it tells the story of his family and ancestors and the collective story of people of African descent on American soil. In brief, the novel is divided into two parts. In Part I, the protagonist, Macon Dead III, is, in 1931, the first black baby ever born in Mercy Hospital, a hospital the black

community has appropriately renamed No Mercy Hospital. He is born the day after Mr. Smith, an insurance agent, attempts to "fly from Mercy to the other side of Lake Superior" (p. 3). He acquires the name Milkman when it is learned that his mother is still nursing him long past the time it is considered normal or respectable to do so. His father, Macon Dead II, is a cold, insensitive, materially defined man who uses his position and authority as a wealthy "propertied" man, not only to intimidate his tenants, who regard him as a slum landlord, but his wife, Ruth, his daughters Lena and First Corinthians, and even Milkman. Macon forbids Milkman to visit his Aunt Pilate because he is embarrassed by her eccentric ways, her unkempt appearance, and her stubborn persistence in making bootleg wine. In nearly every conceivable way, Macon's sister's existence is in direct opposition to the middle class life and values he has adopted for himself and his family. Thus, in an effort to justify his stance against her to his son, he tells Milkman:

> Pilate can't teach you a thing you can use in this world. Maybe the next, but not this one. Let me tell you right now the one important thing you'll ever need to know: Own things. And let the things you own own other things. Then you'll own yourself and other people too (p. 55).

Frustrated with his loveless, emotionally and spiritually "dead" family, bored with his unfulfilling sex life with Hagar, his cousin, and fundamentally dissatisfied with life in general, he gives up his middle-class comforts and heads south in search of the gold inheritance his father has told him about.

Part II traces Milkman's journey through the South, a journey transformed from a search for gold to a quest to learn the meaning of a song he had heard Pilate sing at home in Michigan. He learns that the song encodes his family history, including the story of Solomon, his paternal great-grandfather, who, according to the story in the song, flew away from slavery back to Africa. Milkman's quest also includes forays into communal storytelling; a visit to Circe, the midwife who delivered his father and aunt; and the male ritual of hunting. Upon discovering that the alleged bag of gold he sought is actually a sack containing the bones of his grandfather, he escorts Pilate to the South and helps her give her father a proper burial. As she dies in his arms, he sings the song he had her sing so often when he was a child, the song he had regarded as a nonsense nursery

rhyme, and he discovers that like his flying ancestor, he too has the power of flight. In the final words of the novel he learns that "[i]f you surrendered to the air, you could *ride* it" (p. 337).[3]

It is customary for critics and scholars to discuss *Song of Solomon* in the context of the quest for heritage and community. What often gets overlooked in such lines of analysis is the extent to which Milkman's early acceptance of his middle-class identity is deeply rooted in the complex history of not just his father, but his African ancestors on American soil. Moreover, it is this blind, unquestioning acceptance of this identity that makes his quest so difficult. What this synopsis cannot account for are all the intricate ways in which Morrison indicates the class issues that insinuate themselves into the identity of the Dead family. Class distinctions get represented very early on in the text in subtle and not so subtle ways. In fact, readers unfamiliar with Morrison's nuanced representation of black class distinctions, racial and cultural history, will undoubtedly miss some of the indications of class distinctions. For example, the novel opens with the suicide note of insurance agent Robert Smith who promises to "fly" from the roof of Mercy Hospital (p. 3). The fact that he is an agent for North Carolina Mutual Life Insurance might seem insignificant, but because the company was one of the first black-owned insurance companies, it represents one of the early signs of black entrance into middle-class status. The next significant sign of black middle-class status is the reference to the town's only "Negro doctor," who the reader later learns is the father of Ruth, Milkman's mother (p. 5). Although his status as a black professional means little to the white community ("only two of his patients were ever admitted to Mercy, both white"), it does matter to Macon Dead when he marries Ruth Foster, that he is marrying the daughter of the "most important Negro in the city" (p. 22). Moreover, the only reason Macon is able to approach Dr. Foster and express his intentions to marry Ruth is his own newly acquired middle class status. After an unpleasant exchange about overdue rent with one of his tenants, Mrs. Bains, who complains that "a nigger in business is a terrible thing to see," the text describes through a reverie, Macon's Dead's early status in the town (p. 22):

> ...Macon Dead went back to the pages of his accounts book, running his fingertips over the figures and thinking with the unoccupied part of his mind about the first time he called on Ruth Foster's father. He had only two keys

> in his pocket then... It was because of those keys that he could dare to walk over to that part of Not Doctor Street (it was still Doctor Street then) and approach the most important Negro in the city. To lift the lion's paw knocker, to entertain thoughts of marrying the doctor's daughter was possible because each key represented a house which he owned at the time. Without those keys he would have floated away at the doctor's first word... Instead he was able to say he had been introduced to his daughter... and would appreciate having the doctor's permission to keep her company now and then. That his intentions were honorable and that he himself was certainly worthy of the doctor's consideration as a gentleman friend of Miss Foster since, at twenty-five, he was already a colored man of property (pp. 22-23).

As the novel progresses, the reader learns that Macon's status has improved tremendously over time as he acquires more and more property. He has more than two keys, and he constantly reassures himself by digging in his pocket to touch them, to let "their bunchy solidity calm him" (p. 17). In the words of the text:

> They were the keys to all the doors of his houses (only four true houses; the rest were really shacks), and he fondled them from time to time as he walked down Not Doctor Street to his office (p. 17).

Thus, the keys and the property that go with them are important symbols for Macon Dead and his understanding of his identity. The fact that the keys represent "solidity" and that they "calm" him, suggests he equates ownership and propriety with security. In *Souls of Black Folk* (1903) W.E.B. Du Bois contends we know that one of the alleged intentions of the Freedman's Bureau (from 1868 to 1874) was to grant "forty acres and a mule" to the formerly enslaved Africans.[4] The failure of the bureau to make its expressed vision a reality is not the point here, however. What I am suggesting is that the desire to own one's own land, to be economically self-reliant, became an integral part of African American consciousness after the period of enslavement. The impediments to that self-reliance, and the ability of African Americans to achieve it in the face of class and race oppression, are dimensions that account for the complex representation of middle-class identity in *Song of Solomon.* But the novel also enacts the sociological and psychological consequences of trying to establish one's identity in the context of a system and set of values that are not of one's own creation.

In addition to his status as a property owner, there are other ways that Macon Dead's middle class identity gets represented in the novel.

He drives a wide green Packard and takes his family for rides every Sunday afternoon down the streets of the property he owns. But the rides "become rituals and much too important for Macon to enjoy. For him it was a way to satisfy himself that he indeed was a successful man" (p. 31). The description of these family outings in the Packard not only encode more information about Macon and his attitude toward his car, but it represents class distinctions between him and other members of the black community:

> Macon Dead's Packard rolled slowly down Not Doctor Street, through the rough part of town (later known as the Blood Bank because blood flowed so freely there), over the bypass downtown, and headed for the wealthy white neighborhoods. Some of the black people who saw the car passing by sighed with good-humored envy at the classiness, the dignity of it. In 1936 there were very few among them who lived as well as Macon Dead. Others watched the family gliding by with a tiny bit of jealously and whole lot of amusement, for Macon's wide green Packard belied what they thought a car was for. He never went over twenty miles an hour, never gunned is engine, never stayed in first gear for a block or two to give pedestrians a thrill... He never had a blown tire, never ran out of gas and needed twelve grinning raggle-tailed boys to help him push it up a hill or over a curb... Other than the bright and roving eyes of Magdelene called Lena and First Corinthians, the Packard had no real lived life at all. So they called it Macon Dead's hearse (pp. 32-33).

Macon's car symbolizes his own sense of importance, his status in relation to other black people, and his access to a lifestyle and opportunities that his neighbors and disadvantaged tenants can only dream about or envy. Yet underneath the envy is a judgment of Macon and his family that gets revealed in their sense that there is "no real lived life" in the Packard, and by extension for the members of the dead family. Thus, Macon's success as a middle-class man separates him from the very community upon which his success is based. That he does not lament this situation, but thrives on it, has implications for his wife and family and the ways in which they are regarded.

In Macon's treatment of his wife, we find the ways in which middle class identity and gender are connected. We have already established the terms of his marriage to Ruth Foster. What is significant once she becomes his wife is that his sense of propriety extends to her and his children. They are his property, to be handled as he sees fit. Perhaps no passage reveals the dynamics of the domestic sphere of this black middle class family better than this description of a typical end of the workday for Macon:

> Solid, rumbling, likely to erupt without prior notice, Macon kept each member of his family awkward with fear. His hatred of his wife glittered and sparked in every word he spoke to her. The disappointment he felt in his daughters sifted down on them like ash, dulling their buttery complexions and choking the lilt out of what should have been girlish voices. Under the frozen heat of his glance they tripped over doorsills and dropped the salt cellar into the yolks of their poached eggs. The way he mangled their grace, wit, and self-esteem was the single excitement of their days. Without the tension and drama he ignited, they might not have known what to do with themselves. In his absence his daughters....waited eagerly for any hint of him, and his wife, Ruth, began her days stunned into stillness by her husband's contempt and ended them wholly animated by it (p. 11).

The relationship Macon establishes with his son is very different from the one he has with his daughters. On one hand is Milkman's own inferiority complex over having one leg that is shorter than the other, and his sense that his father "had no imperfection" whatsoever (p. 63):

> Milkman feared his father, respected him, but knew, because of the leg, that he could never emulate him. So he differed from him as much as he dared. Macon was clean-shaven; Milkman was desperate for a mustache. Macon wore bow ties; Milkman wore four-in-hands. Macon didn't part his hair; Milkman had a part shaved into his. Macon hated tobacco; Milkman tried to put a cigarette in his mouth every fifteen minutes. Macon hoarded his money; Milkman gave his away. But he couldn't help sharing with Macon his love of good shoes and fine thin socks. And he did try, as his father's employee, to do the work the way Macon wanted it done.

On the other hand, at the same time, Milkman attempts to differentiate himself from his father, he gradually takes on his middle-class values and lifestyle.

Becoming his father's employee, however, enhances not only his own identity, but his father's status as a businessman:

> Macon was delighted. His son belonged to him now and not to Ruth, and he was relieved at not having to walk all over town like a peddler collecting rents. It made his business more dignified, and he had time to think, to plan, to visit the bank men, to read the public notices, auctions, to find out what plots were going for taxes, unclaimed heirs property, where roads were being built, what supermarkets, schools; and who was trying to sell what to the government for the housing projects that were going to be built...He knew as a Negro he wasn't going to get a big slice of the pie. But there were properties nobody wanted yet, or little edges of property somebody didn't want Jews to have, or Catholics to have, or properties nobody knew were of any value yet (p. 63).

Macon is so convinced that the world of making money takes priority over all others that he virtually discourages his son from attending college. To his way of thinking,

> college was time spent in idleness, far away from the business of life, which was learning to own things. He was eager for his daughters to go to college—where they could have found suitable husbands...But it was pointless for Milkman, particularly since his son's presence was a real help to him in the office. So much so that he had been able to get his bank friends to speak to some of their friends and get his son moved out of I-A draft classification and into 'necessary to support family' status (p. 69).

The consequences of buying into his father's middle-class values and priorities are obvious. As a result of accepting his father's agenda for his life and of not creating an agenda of his own, Milkman enters adulthood a confused man. Following a dinner table altercation, in which Macon slaps Ruth for what he deems her haughtiness, and in which Milkman comes to his mother's defense by knocking down his father, Milkman rushes to his bedroom to regroup. Once inside his room, he looks at his reflection in the mirror and realizes that his face, though reasonably attractive, reflected the confusion of which the altercation was merely a symptom. Regarding his face, he thinks:

> Taken apart, it looked all right. Even better than all right. But it lacked coherence, a coming together of the features into a total self. It was all very tentative, the way he looked, like a man peeping around a corner of someplace he is not supposed to be, trying to make up his mind whether to go forward or to turn back. The decision he made would be extremely important, but the way in which he made the decision would be careless, haphazard, and uninformed (p. 70).

Although the book focuses on the process by which he becomes informed about his ancestors, his family history, and his place in that history, his relationships with others and the community's response to him expand our understanding of him as a middle-class black man.

In his relationship with Hagar, he begins to regard the "whole business of 'going with'" her a chore (p. 91). A woman he never took anywhere, Hagar was "considered his private honey pot, not a real or legitimate girl friend—not someone be might marry" (p. 91). In the words of the text, to Milkman, Hagar

> was the third beer. Not the first one, which the throat receives with almost tearful gratitude; nor the second, that confirms and extends the pleasure of the first. But the third, the one you drink because its there, because it can't hurt, and because what difference does it make? (p. 91)

The status he enjoys as the 31 year old son of the most "propertied" man in town, not only excuses his disregard for his girlfriend, but it also colors his interactions with others. For example, when he goes into the barbershop, one of the most important cultural sites of information, storytelling, and exchange in the black community, Milkman has difficulty trying "to focus on the crisscrossed conversations" among the other patrons (p. 80). As they speculate about the murder of Emmet Till, Milkman is an indifferent outsider, who does not bother to understand the specific incident or its larger racial consequences for black people. Thus, through this representation of him, Morrison suggests the ways in which his status has shielded him from both his own history, the history of his people, and the meaning of their experiences. He is essentially in the community, but not of it.

Once he makes the decision to go south, ostensibly to find the gold his father believes is his inheritance, he undergoes a male rite of initiation of sorts when a group of black men invite him to join them on a hunt in the woods of the Blue Ridge mountains. At one point on the hunt, he finds himself utterly alone, with no trace of the men who brought him with them. When he tries to figure out how he got himself involved into this situation, he assumes it was his "ignorance...and vanity" (p. 276) that got him there. On one hand, he enjoys the fact that he continues to encounter people who know his father, who know his people. On the other hand, what he cannot figure out is whether they view him with admiration, curiosity or contempt because he never allows anyone to get to know him. Moreover, when he encounters mistreatment by those who mistrust his apparent class difference, he feels he does not deserve their mistreatment. The experience of finding himself alone in the middle of nowhere, nevertheless, offers him the first opportunity in his life to examine the self-centered man he had become:

> So the thoughts came, unobstructed by other people, by things, even by the sight of himself. There was nothing here to help him—not his money, his car, his father's reputation, his suit, or his shoes. In fact they hampered him. Except for his broken watch, and his wallet with about two hundred dollars, all he had started out with on his journey was gone: his suitcase with the Scotch,

> the shirts, and the space for the bags of gold; his snap-brim hat, his tie, his shirt, his three-piece suit, his socks, his shoes. His watch and his two hundred dollars would be of no help out here, where all a man had was what he was born with, or had learned to use. And endurance... (p. 277).

What Morrison achieves in this novel, then, is a questioning of black middle—class identity as it was constructed in the 1970s, especially the late 1970s. As Milkman learns from his friend, Guitar, "wanna fly, you got to give up the shit that weighs you down" (p. 179). The fact that Milkman must be stripped of all the accoutrements of his middle-class identity to find himself, to learn the history of his ancestors and his family is significant for how the text operates. It intervenes in a historical moment that Morrison perceived to be characterized by a kind of cultural amnesia brought on by the excesses of upward mobility and status-seeking gone rampant in the black community. She suggests that these excesses produce Milkman Deads—men who, because they do not know or understand their history, have no regard for themselves or others, and who measure themselves by their possessions. Only after this journey to his southern roots does he come to terms with the story of his great grandfather, Solomon, the flying African, who flew back to Africa to escape from slavery in America.

Yet Morrison makes the issue of class identity even more complex than this through the complicated history of Milkman's father. Although the novel calls Macon's middle-class mores into question because of the ways in which he treats his tenants, his wife, and even his sister, it nevertheless historicizes his desire to forge an identity based on ownership, based on his attempt to make capitalism work for him. Morrison deftly achieves this through the convoluted tale of how Macon Dead gets his name. As the story goes, the name is the result of a newly freed slave's inability to read. As Macon says, "Everything bad that ever happened to him [his father, Macon Dead I] happened because he couldn't read" (p. 53). Macon explains that "[w]hen freedom came. All the colored people in the state had to register with the Freedmen's Bureau" (p. 53). He then proceeds to explain to Milkman the specific circumstances of his father's 1869 trip to register with the Freedmen's Bureau:

> Papa was in his teens and went to sign up, but the man behind the desk was drunk. He asked Papa where he was born. Papa said Macon. Then he asked

> him who his father was. Papa said, 'He's dead.' Asked him who owned him, Papa said, 'I'm free." Well, the Yankee wrote it all down, but in the wrong spaces. Had him born in Dunfrie, wherever the hell that is, and in the space for his name the fool wrote, 'Dead' comma 'Macon." But Papa couldn't read so he never found out what he was registered as till Mama told him... Mama liked it... Liked the name. Said it was new and would wipe out the past. Wipe it all out (p. 54).

What gets encoded in this story are complex layers of racial and economic history. If the period of enslavement meant that a man could not own his own body, and if freedom from enslavement did not guarantee that one could own one's own name, then freedom was indeed precarious. It is not surprising, therefore, that one of the ways in which black people attempted to achieve a sense of autonomy and authority over their own lives was through owning property. Given the material conditions of their lives, it is not surprising that they attempted to make capitalism work for them. Owning property, therefore, became the one sign of freedom that would directly negate the experience of having been property. Indeed, as Macon explains to Milkman, his father "died protecting his property" (p. 51). The property, a 150 acre farm he named "Lincoln's Heaven," is land that he loses when white men took advantage of the fact that he could not read or even sign his name and tricked him out of his land, by telling "him they owned his property" (p. 53).

Morrison's incorporation of these complex layers of history compel the reader not to judge Macon in a vacuum. We grow to respect his obsession with ownership as a consequence of being a descendent of a people whose history meant they could not own their own bodies, their names, or land developed by their labor. *Song of Solomon* invites us to remember the expensive price of freedom and the struggle the descendents of enslaved Africans have had to wage to obtain what racial identity had once denied. Nevertheless, the novel also illustrates the excesses to which this desire to claim one's manhood can go. While the novel does not suggest that middle-class identity is problematic in and of itself, it does suggest that that identity, as it was being constructed and represented in the 1970s, in particular, was predicated on forms of excess and erasure that would handicap an entire generation of young people. In Morrison's next novel, *Tar Baby,* she deepens and expands her critique of capitalism and the havoc it wreaks on cultural identity.

TAR BABY

Tar Baby was published in 1981, just four years after *Song of Solomon*. A novel even more densely textured than *Song of Solomon*, Morrison foregrounds white people for the first time in this book. In her other novels, where she foregrounds the experiences of African Americans almost to the extent that white people are an understood, but invisible presence, in her fourth novel, Morrison makes her white characters highly visible. She shifts from familiar representations of neighborhoods and communities where black people struggle, regardless of their class status, to eke out a living despite the negative ways in which oppression on the basis of race, class, or gender, have shaped their lives, to an island in the Caribbean, where black people and white people are brought into close proximity as if in preparation for study. Indeed, it could be argued that Morrison has chosen this setting to study and to interrogate, in a microcosm, the forces that shape identity and that are themselves produced by various differences in identity. It is not surprising that this is her most polemical and controversial novel. I argue that it too operates as a form of cultural intervention. This novel is not so much exposing what the consequences of capitalistic excess and erasure are for middle-class identity, as it is exposing how these forces operate in the first place, especially among black people. To achieve this end, Morrison chooses, to use the words of Fredric Jameson, "to defamiliarize and restructure our experience of our own *present*" to reveal the insidious processes that have brought us to this historical moment.[5] As I argue elsewhere, *Tar Baby* "can be interpreted as a modern cautionary tale in which Morrison draws on the African American narrative tradition to expose the pitfalls for a black woman with white middle-class aspirations."[6]

The basic plot of the novel revolves around the protagonist Jadine Childs, who has returned in the Isle des Chevaliers, where her Aunt Ondine and Uncle Sydney work as servants at the mansion of her white benefactors, Valerian and Margaret Street. Jadine, a Sorbonne educated art historian and model, has returned to the Caribbean island to sort through her thoughts after her white boyfriend's marriage proposal has made her question whether she should continue their interracial relationship. In the midst of her reunion with her aunt and uncle, her only family since she was orphaned as a young child, and their employers, who had paid the tuition for her

European education, an intruder, Son, comes into the household, disrupts all of their lives, and falls in love with Jadine, only to flee in the end into the hills where, 300 years earlier, slaves had run to escape to freedom.

To tell this cautionary tale of two lovers, Son and Jadine, who are diametrically opposed in terms of upbringing, socioeconomic status, values, beliefs, and experiences, Morrison draws on the African American folktale of Tar Baby, who suggests the ways in which each alternately entraps the other. Although there have been various versions of this folktale circulating in American and African American culture, the basic story of each version is consistent. According to the popular version, the farmer Brer Fox decides to make a tar baby, a contraption covered with tar, designed to lure and entrap whatever creature has been destroying his crop. When Brer Rabbit gets caught in the contraption, he outsmarts the Brer Fox by begging him to punish him in any way at all except by putting him in the hated briar patch. Brer Fox, wanting to punish the intruder on his property once and for all, and not knowing that the briar patch is the very place with which Brer Rabbit is most familiar, tosses him in the briar patch, thereby enabling him to escape. In answering questions about her use of this folktale, Morrison explains: "I found that there is a tar baby in African mythology. I started thinking about tar. At one time, a tar pit was a holy place, at least an important place, because tar was used to build things. It came naturally out of the earth; it held things together... For me, the tar baby came to mean the black woman who can hold things together."[7] Yet in her novel, although Jadine lures Son to her by her attractiveness, Morrison portrays her as a black woman who "has forgotten her ancient properties" (p. 305). Moreover, through her characterization of Son, she illustrates the ways in which his down-home country ways appeal to Jadine in ways she could not anticipate.

Yet to argue that the novel *Tar Baby* is an example of how Morrison deepens her interest in class analysis requires that we look at how and where the complexities of class and race are encoded in her portrayal of Son and Jadine. If Jadine represents black middle-class identity, Son represents anything but that. Like most of the characters on the island, he is in exile. When Jadine first sees him, he has gotten into her bedroom. All she seems to notice about him is that "his hair looked overpowering—physically overpowering, like bundles of long whips or lashes that could grab her and beat her to jelly. And would. Wild,

aggressive, vicious hair that needed to be put in jail. Uncivilized, reform-school hair. Mau Mau, Attica, chain-gang hair" (p. 113). His description of himself to Ondine, who questions why he didn't "come to the door decent-like" (p. 160), rather than breaking in, reveals just how different a life he has been leading. He says: "...I'm, like, an outlaw. I jumped ship. I couldn't take a chance and I stayed too hungry to think. I was in a little trouble back in the States too. I'm, you know, just out here trying to hang in" (p. 160).

Not only is Ondine upset with Son and his intrusion in their island paradise, but her husband Sydney is as well. Though they are servants, the life he and Ondine are leading on this island, places them in a middle-class status compared to the indigenous black people who perform menial labor in and around the Street's mansion. Sydney ha a visceral reaction to Son that reflects his own obsessions with class. He says:

> You the kind of man that does worry me. You had a job, you chucked it. You got in some trouble, you say, so you just ran off. You hide, you live in secret, underground, surface when you caught. I know you, but you don't know me. I am a Phil-a-delphia Negro mentioned in the book of the very same name. My people owned drugstores and taught school while yours were still cutting their faces open so as to be able to tell one of you from the other. And if you looking to lounge here and live off the fat of the land, and if you think I'm going to wait on you, think twice! (p. 163)

The irony of Sydney's reaction to Son is that it effaces no self-reflexivity, no apparent consciousness of how different his life on the island is from the black people he associates himself with to distinguish himself from Son.

The novel's greater irony, however, is that both Jadine and Son believe they can rescue the other from their class status. If Son represents outlaw culture, then Jadine represents the culture of black middle-class assimilation. Nowhere is her assimilation into the European cultural values more clear than in her exchange with Valerian and Margaret's son, Michael, a "thirty year-old Socialist" (p. 144). Reminiscing about that exchange to Valerian, Jadine explains,

> I knew the life I was leaving. It wasn't like what he thought: all grits and natural grace. But he did make me want to apologize for what I was doing, what I felt. For liking 'Ave Maria' better than gospel music, I suppose... Picasso *is* better than an Itumba mask. The fact that he was intrigued by them is proof of *his* genius, not the mask-makers.' I wish it weren't so, but... (p. 74).

What emerges from the characterization of Jadine is a black woman who has consciously chosen to construct her identity by eschewing those elements of black culture that did not mesh with her sense of herself as a woman of class and sophistication.

Ultimately, in Son's desire to acquaint Jadine with his southern roots in Eloe, Florida, and with Jadine's desire to acculturate him into the cosmopolitan sophistication and class of New York and Paris, each was attempting to resue the other. As the text explains:

> This rescue was not going well. She thought she was rescuing him from the night women who wanted him for themselves, wanted him feeling superior in a cradle, deferring to him; wanted her to settle for wifely competence when she could be almighty, to settle for fertility rather than originality, nurturing instead of building. He thought he was rescuing her from Valerian, meaning *them*, the aliens, the people who in a mere three hundred years had killed a world millions of years old... Each knew the world as it was meant or ought to be. One had a past, the other a future and each one bore the culture to save the race in his hands. Mama-spoiled black man, will you mature with me? Culture-bearing black woman, whose culture are you bearing? (p. 269)

On one hand, this relationship represents the dialectic between class-consciousness that has historically been a dynamic of intraracial relations within the African American community. This dialectic gets played out in the binary oppositions of rich and poor, middle-class and working class, south and north, light-skinned and dark-skinned, city and country, and so on. On the other hand, their eventual deep mistrust of the others' motives and essential orientation, not only is a sign that their romantic relationship is doomed, but it is also a sign of the deeper class analysis with which the novel is engaged. Indeed, while Son's presence disrupts the household, it exposes the untruths and deeper tensions that lie within the Street household, which, in many ways, is a metaphor for colonialism and late capitalism, and the ways in which they have shaped late twentieth-century life and culture.

The pivotal revelation in the novel is that Margaret abused her son, Michael, when he was a child. Though Ondine knows of this abuse, she has never uttered a word of it until the Christmas dinner in which Son's presence precipitates a telling of untold stories and the sharing of long-held secrets. The stories that get told however, not only reveal the consequences of patriarchy and the silences it routinely tolerates to maintain a veneer of normalcy, but they also

reveal the intense pain that it wreaks across the boundaries of race, gender and class. Thus, Jadine's middle-class identity and that of her aunt and uncle gets contextualized and represented through the hierarchy within the Street household and through Morrison's larger analysis of how the Streets acquired their position on the island in the first place.

Nowhere is the class hierarchy of the household more apparent than in the living and sleeping arrangements. While Sydney and Ondine sleep down below in the servants' quarters, their niece, Jadine sleeps upstairs in a guest room connected to Margaret's room. Margaret's husband, Valerian, sleeps in a separate room apart from his wife. These arrangements not only emphasize the real power relations—that is, the separate, almost hidden control of the white man whose money is responsible for the household, the separate quarters of his wife, who ostensibly shares power with him, but who actually defers to him and exercises very little real power, and the lesser power afforded to the black woman who is, by virtue of the fact that she has accepted the education and values the patriarch's money could buy, his "daughter." Ironically, Sydney and Ondine's "down below" quarters also suggest that the power they wield as servants subverts yet maintains the position Valerian holds as "master" of this household. Valerian's benign neglect of the inner workings of the household are illustrated by the fact he claims not to have known his wife abused his son when he was young:

> He...had watched his son grow and talk but also about whom he had known nothing. And there was something so foul in that, something in the crime of innocence so revolting it paralyzed him. He had not known because he had not taken the trouble to know. He was satisfied with what he did know. Knowing more was inconvenient and frightening (p. 242).

Moreover, his retreat to the greenhouse of the mansion, where he spends most if his days, not only emphasizes that he is living a regal life of leisure and retirement, but also that the empire that is the source of his wealth, has secured his position and his power and endowed him with the luxury of not having to know *how* the empire was working. He simply knew it was *was* working.

The notion of empire, how it operates, and the implications of the class divisions it sets in motion, are very much at the center of *Tar Baby*. It is no accident that Chapter 1 of the novel begins with how

colonialism transformed the Isle des Chevalier from a paradise into a plantation and back into a paradise where whites could come to retire and be waited on by the indigenous black people of the island who became the laborers, the wheels within the machine, so to speak. Morrison describes the process by describing how the men wreaked havoc on the land:

> The end of the world, as it turned out, was nothing more than a collection of magnificent winter houses on Isle des Chevaliers. When laborers imported from Haiti came to clear the land, clouds and fish were convinced that the world was over, that the sea-green of the sea and the sky-blue sky of the sky was no longer permanent... The men had already folded the earth where there had been no fold and hollowed her where there had been no hollow, which explains what happened to the river. It crested, then lost its course, and finally its head. Evicted from the place where it had lived, and forced into unknown turf, it could not form its pools or waterfalls, and ran every which way (p. 9).

The text then describes the mansions that were built on the island and the ways in which special effort was taken to make Valerian's house, L'Arbe de la Croix, not looked "designed" (p. 11).

Perhaps the implications of the empire Valerian has constructed are most clearly articulated in Son's analysis of them. He observes Valerian at the dinner table and thinks about how he got to the island life of comfort and ease through the labor of others:

> Son's mouth went dry as he watched Valerian chewing a piece of ham, his head-of-a-coin profile content, approving even of the flavor in his mouth although he had been able to dismiss with a flutter of fingers the people whose sugar and cocoa had allowed him to grow old in real comfort; although he had taken the sugar and cocoa and paid for it as though it had no value, as though the cutting of cane and picking of beans was child's play and had no value; but he turned it into candy, the invention of which really was child's play... and made a fortune in order to move near, but not in the midst of, the jungle where the sugar came from and build a palace with more of their labor and then hire them to do more of the work he was not capable of and pay them again according to some scale of value that would outrage Satan himself...

In this hostile assessment of how colonialism operates, Morrison encodes a larger cultural critique of the class distinctions it creates. Jadine is able to receive a European education and enjoy the benefits of middle-class ease and comfort because of the money Valerian has made on the backs of black people who do not enjoy her middle-class

status. The tensions that circulate both within the household and on the island between and among the wealthy whites and the indigenous people get played out in the representation of Jadine and in her love affair with Son, who in many ways, represents indigenous people from the United States. Using the Caribbean island as the site of this novel, Morrison enables her reader to consider how class operates both on the mainland and in the African diaspora. In her representation of Valerian Street and his island empire, she illustrates the ways in which imperialism sets its machinery in motion and drops away.

Yet *Tar Baby* is not simplistically calling Jadine's education or good life in question. It does, however, invite us to interrogate the values she accepts as a result of that education. As Son says:

> The truth is that whatever you learned in those colleges that didn't include me ain't shit. What did they teach you about me? What tests did they give? Did they tell you what I was like, did they tell you what was on my mind? Did they describe me to you? Did they tell you what was in my heart? It they didn't teach you that, then they didn't teach you nothing, because until you know about me, you don't know nothing about yourself (p. 264).

At the end of *Tar Baby* the reader is left to ponder these questions about class, identity, progress, and success. Clearly, in some regard, Jadine is a successful black woman. But Sons' presence in the novel, the questions he asks, and the ways in which he compels all the members of the house that Valerian built to tell the stories they have refused to tell about their lives and how they arrived at the place they now occupy, invite us to ask difficult questions as well.

It could be argued that all of Toni Morrison's novels intervene in late twentieth-century culture to invite her readers to reconsider how identity, especially African American identity, is constructed and gets represented both within and outside the community. While race is always at the center of her critique, she is never oblivious to issues of class. Instead, her writing brilliantly and consistently interrogates the intersection of race, class, and gender to illustrate the ways in which it has created and is recreating our identities and how we represent ourselves to ourselves and to others. Ultimately, her novels offer not a roadmap for how we might transform our culture and the class divisions that separate us, but a "course that suggests where the dangers are and where the safety might be." As she says, she does not "want to bow out with easy answers to complex questions."[8] These novels tell us much about the value of not doing so.

NOTES

1. The epigraphs are taken from Kwame Nkrumah, *Class Struggle in Africa* (New York: International Publishers, 1970), 27 as quoted in Doreatha Drummond Mbalia, *Toni Morrison's Developing Class Consciousness* (Selingsgrove: Susquehanna University Press, 1991), 20; Joyce A. Ladner, *Tomorrow's Tomorrow: The Black Woman* (Garden City, New York: Anchor Books, 1971), 48; E. Franklin Frazier, *Black Bourgeoisie: The Rise of a New Middle Class in the United States* (New York: Collier Books, 1957), 126; and Toni Morrison, *Song of Solomon* (New York: Knopf, 1977), 55. All subsequent references to *Song of Solomon* are cited in the text parenthetically.

2. Doreatha Drummond Mbalia, *Toni Morrison's Developing Class Consciousness* (Selinsgrove: Susquehanna University Press, 1991), 9. Mbalia argues that "Morrison explores some aspect of and/or solution to the oppression afflicting African people" in each of her novels. "*The Bluest Eye* examines racism; *Sula*, gender oppression; *Song of Solomon*, the necessity of knowing one's family, community, and heritage; *Tar Baby*, the class contradictions that keep African people divided; and *Beloved*, the solution that will help solve the class exploitation and racial oppression of African people." While I agree that Morrison's concern with class evolves, I believe her awareness of its significance is acute in all six novels, though it gets articulated differently.

3. This synopsis of *Song of Solomon* appears in a previously published article in which I interrogate concepts of voice and community in the novel. See Marilyn Sanders Mobley, "Call and Response: Voice, Community, and Dialogic Structures in Toni Morrison's *Song of Solomon*," in Valerie Smith, ed. *New Essays on Song of Solomon* (The American Novel Series (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 49-50.

4. W.E.B. Du Bois, *Souls of Black Folk* (New York: New American Library, 1969), 54-78.

5. Fredric Jameson, "Progress Versus Utopia; or, Can We Imagine the Future?" *Science-Fiction Studies* 27 (July 1982): 151.

6. Marilyn Sanders Mobley, *Folk Roots and Mythic Wings in Sarah Orne Jewett and Toni Morrison: The Cultural Function of Narrative* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press 1991), 137.

7. Thomas LeClair, "The Language Must Not Sweat: A Conversation Toni Morrison," *New Republic* (March 2, 1981): 27.

8. Nellie McKay, "An Interview with Toni Morrison." *Contemporary Literature* XXIV (Winter, 1983): 420.

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MIDDLE CLASS AFRICAN-AMERICAN MORMONS

Jessie L. Embry and Cardell K. Jacobson

Black churches have always provided spiritual guidance to African Americans. They have also been the dominant institution in the black community and affected all aspects of African Americans' lives. According to Wade Clark Roof and William McKinney, "The black church emerged [early on] as an important institution; second only to the family, as a symbol and embodiment of racial solidarity and the quest for freedom and justice" (Roof and McKinney 1987, p. 90). The later passage of the civil right laws during the 1960s gave blacks greater options in education, housing, and employment. While some blacks had always been part of the middle class, more African Americans now had real access to that status and to locations that had been proscribed in the past. Black religious historian E. Franklin Frazier predicted as early as the 1950s that blacks' upward mobility would take them out of black churches into white ones, at least "partly... to confirm their new status." Frazier's predictions were not realized, however. Instead, according to historians of the black

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church C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya, the "black is beautiful" movement of the late 1960s kept most African Americans in black churches. The new middle class moved to "elite" congregations of historical black churches or supported commuter churches—driving from their homes in middle class suburbs to the inner city churches (Lincoln and Mamiya 1990, p. 159). So while a 1920 study found 88 percent of African Americans in black churches, in 1987 Roof and McKinney estimated that 85 percent still attended black denominations (Roof and McKinney 1987, pp. 140-141).

The remaining 15 percent are members of traditionally white churches. Some have always been in those churches where historically they have attended segregated congregations. Others have joined the rapidly growing proselyting churches which "strongly emphasized local evangelism, maintained a distinctive lifestyle and morality apart from mainstream culture, maintained a unitary set of beliefs, and de-emphasized social action and ecumenism" (Hoge and Roozen 1970, p. 323).

One of these rapidly growing churches is the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormon). Prior to 1978 the LDS Church excluded blacks from holding its lay priesthood. With the elimination of that policy and increased proselyting in African American neighborhoods, the Church's black American population has increased dramatically. The actual numbers are unknown; the Mormon Church, like other religious organizations, prides itself in not including race on its membership records. An educated guess suggests, however, there are now thousands of African American Mormons whereas prior to 1978 there were barely hundreds.

While the number of LDS African Americans is still small, a study of them shows that most are solidly based in the new black middle class. This paper will explore who these black converts are and the type of experiences they have in the Mormon Church. It is based on 226 oral history interviews with LDS African Americans and 201 respondents to a mailed survey selected through a "snowball" method. The LDS African Americans came from throughout the United States. They were old and young, married and single, and men and women. Understanding how well they have adapted to a historically-viewed white church can help in understanding how the black middle class fits into a white society.

THE MORMON CHURCH AND BLACKS

The Mormon Church started in 1830 as an utopian society (Foster 1984). However, rather than being a short-lived experiment with an idealized lifestyle, the Latter-day Saints adapted their beliefs to mainstream America. By the late twentieth century the Mormons were known for their strong Protestant work ethic and strong moral convictions that made Mormons an accepted part of American society. Their social status in society had risen, according to Roof and McKinney, from the lowest position on the bottom rank of the "status hierarchy of the denominations" in 1945 to the highest position of the middle rank by 1987 (Roof and McKinney 1987, p. 68).

Despite the "all-American" image of the Mormon Church, it still cling to a black doctrine established during the nineteenth century. While most Mormons did not hold slaves, they shared American views of the origins of blacks, arguing they were the "posterity of Canaan" and "the sons of Cain." Still, Joseph Smith ordained a few black men to the priesthood in the 1830s. Over the years the folk theology evolved that blacks were "the descendants of Ham" and "did not take an active part on either side" in a pre-earth life (Bringhurst 1981, p. 87). Because of this heritage, Mormon leaders declared blacks should not be priesthood holders. No other blacks were ordained after the 1840s although the previous ordinations were not rescinded (Bringhurst 1987, pp. 147-148). The policy of membership but not ordination remained the Church's policy until 1978.

Although there are historic examples of blacks who converted to Mormonism prior to the priesthood revelation, their numbers were few. Some blacks, no doubt, were repelled by the Church's policy of priesthood restriction. But in general the low numbers reflected the general and local practice of actively discouraging missionaries from working in black neighborhoods or teaching blacks. Given this policy of not teaching blacks, the few blacks who did join usually had to take the initiative in finding and accepting Mormonism. The official aloofness probably had many causes. Perhaps some Church leaders assumed that since they could not have the priesthood, blacks would not be interested. Others may have been concerned about how blacks would be accepted in the Church when the larger society did not accept blacks as equals. They might have also been ashamed to offer a gospel with such a clearly racial bias. Furthermore, many

Mormon leaders, missionaries, and members were, no doubt, prejudiced and simply did not want blacks to join.

The change in 1978 also relieved personal discomfort for many members, however. The priesthood revelation opened up new neighborhoods to missionaries who started proselyting there. Many missionaries felt that black Americans were more willing to discuss religion than some of the whites that they had been teaching. In the remainder of this paper, we document the reception these African Americans were given in the LDS Church.

THE SAMPLE

Information on the few blacks who joined the early Church is sketchy. Even less is known about a smaller number of blacks who joined during the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Stories of black members were highlighted when several LDS African Americans published autobiographies about their experiences as Mormons during the 1960s. In 1984 Alan Cherry, a black Latter-day Saint, convinced the Charles Redd Center for Western Studies at BYU that this lack of information about Mormon African Americans would continue unless the stories of current members were collected.

THE ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Based on his own experiences and his contacts with other black Mormons, Cherry developed an oral history interview outline, most of which concentrated on religious experiences. The interviews included open ended questions about early family life, previous church attendance, personal religiosity, conversion to the Mormon Church, and experiences as a Latter-day Saint. Many of the questions focused on the interviwees' interactions with white Mormons. Although Cherry followed the same general outline for each interview, the narrator was free to discuss any topics that came to mind.

While Cherry used a "snowball" technique to obtain the sample, he tried to talk to people from a variety of different walks of life—married and single, professionals and blue collar workers, and longtime members and fairly recent converts. From 1984 to 1988, Cherry interviewed 224 black Latter-day Saints from New York City

to Greenville, North Carolina and from Washington D.C. to Laie, Hawaii. As a black interviewer, Cherry was able to solicit information and attitudes that the black respondents would have only revealed to someone from their own cultural and racial background.

The open format worked very well for LDS African Americans, allowing them to share a wide variety of experiences. Most people were anxious to participate. In every area, except Hawaii—where there are very few blacks and even fewer black Mormons—Cherry had more potential interviewees than he could accommodate. Only in Charlotte, North Carolina—where there had been a high conversion but low retention rate—did people agree to be interviewed, then decline. Although Cherry was unable to make connections with some promising individuals, almost universally people were willing to share their experiences and accommodate Cherry's rushed schedule.

THE MAIL QUESTIONNAIRE

As Cherry conducted the interviews, he suggested that the Redd Center obtain a more exact profile on some issues. For example, gospel music was very important to some interviewees, but others did not mention it. He felt that a survey that asked, "Would you like to hear spirituals or gospel music in the LDS Church?" would help ascertain how many people felt that way. The amount of time spent by black members with whites, especially visiting in their homes, could also be measured with just a couple of questions in a survey. The same inquiries in an interview, however, could be perceived as leading questions. The same was true of queries about perceived prejudice in the Mormon Church, and uncomfortable encounters (e.g., people staring at them or comments about why they are black). Finding these answers required focused questions that did not fit the oral history format.

Eventually questions were developed in seven areas: (1) black Latter-day Saints interaction with non-black members at church functions, (2) self-initiated socializing with non-blacks outside of church meetings, (3) inclusion or exclusion with white Latter-day Saints because of cultural conditioning, (4) perceptions of racial prejudice—individually and collectively, (5) peer pressure from nonmember blacks, (6) ability of black Latter-day Saints and white

members to communicate and understand cultural language, and (7) finally, personal acceptance of black members by white Latter-day Saints. All were presented in a Likert-type format ("strongly agree" to "strongly disagree" or else "very often" to "never"). The survey also included religious commitment and practice and demographic questions.

Conducting the survey was difficult. There was, of course, no way to do a random sample. Once again, we collected names through the "snowball" method. We first contacted all of the interviewees and asked them for additional names. We asked the *Church News*, a Mormon insert to the Salt Lake City *Deseret News* which can be mailed separately throughout the United States, to discuss the project, and it ran an article asking for the names of black American Mormons. Anyone who responded was asked for the names of others. Over an approximately three year period we collected almost one thousand names. Unfortunately, because of budget constraints, the first survey had to be mailed bulk rate. The response was a disappointing 150 returned surveys. About a year later we mailed a first-class letter to everyone who had received the original survey. About a quarter came back as undeliverable. If the post office included a forwarding address, we sent the letter out again. Of those who requested the survey after receiving the second letter, 78.5 percent returned them. By our best estimates, we believe about five hundred people received the survey; 201 were completed and returned, for a response rate of 40 percent.

Since the survey was mailed to all the interviewees, the respondents to the survey and the interviewees overlap. However, a comparison of responses and interviews show that those responding to the survey were less likely to attend church than the interviewees. Because of the personal contact and the way in which the interviewees were selected, the oral histories represented mainly practicing Latter-day Saints and not those who have become inactive or lapsed Mormons. The surveys, on the other hand, elicited a higher degree of candor.

MIDDLE CLASS AFRICAN AMERICANS AND THE MORMON CHURCH

Most of the LDS converts who returned a survey came from denominational rather than fundamentalist backgrounds. Almost 60

percent of the interviewees and nearly 50 percent of the survey respondents had been Baptists. Only a small proportion—15 percent of the interviewees and 9 percent of the survey respondents—had been Catholics. Less than 5 percent in both the survey and the interviews were former black Methodist Episcopalians. However, 11.5 percent of those surveyed and 15.5 percent of those interviewed came from traditional white Methodist and Presbyterian churches.

More than two-thirds of both of the LDS samples were former members of black congregations, but for 65 percent their new LDS congregations were essentially all white and for over 80 percent the LDS congregations were mostly white. Black Latter-day Saints in both data sets had substantial contact with whites before joining the LDS Church. It is possible that their contact with whites in other settings may have made joining a majority white church a more comfortable process for them.

As converts, the LDS African Americans constituted what Roof and William McKinney have described as "streams" in the "circulation of the saints." The "upward movement" from one social and economic class to another is one of their streams (Roof and McKinney 1987, p. 162). As already pointed out, the Mormon Church, itself, moved from the bottom of the lowest scale in the 1940s, based on education, family income, occupational prestige, and perceived social class, to the highest in the middle category by the 1980s. Black mainline churches, on the other hand, have remained in the lower half of the bottom rank. According to Roof and McKinney, only 41 percent of U.S. blacks in the 1980s had incomes over $10,000. Over 77 percent of Mormons had incomes above that level. In determining economic classes of various denominations, Roof and McKinney examined the "mean occupational prestige." These rating were first determined in the 1960s by the National Opinion Research Center and updated in 1989 by the General Social Survey. The mean score for black Protestants was 30.9; the mean for Mormons was 38.8. The index also places 69 percent of black Protestant in the lower/working class with 31 percent as middle/upper class. In comparison 52 percent of Mormons are lower/working class and 48 percent are middle/upper (Roof and McKinney 1987, pp. 112-113).

The data suggest that LDS African Americans may be part of Roof and McKinney's upward stream. Indeed, the profile of LDS African Americans more closely resembled that of other Mormons than it

did other black Americans. Of those responding to the survey, 72 percent had incomes of over $10,000. Using the same prestige scale to look at the LDS Afro-American interviewees, we found that these black Mormons had a prestige score of 47 compared to a national black rating of 32 as measured by the 1982 and 1987 General Social Surveys. At least part of the reason black American Mormons' score higher than Mormons in general results from the "snowball" method used to pinpoint active, middle-class Mormons rather than less-active African American Mormons who may have been from lower classes. For example, 55 year old Reginald Allen, active in a drug prevention program in New York City when he was interviewed in 1986 and a former federal government employee, told Alan Cherry that when he was a ward mission leader, he and the missionaries "would discuss the fact that many of our black brothers and sisters who were converts were of higher caliber than the whites. Most of them were better employed and had more education. They presented themselves as being more sincere and more spiritually guided" (Allen 1986, p. 20). Allen implied, and we agree that African Americans who join the Mormon Church and remain active are usually middle class and well educated. They have had significant contact with whites at work and in school and feel at ease in an integrated setting.

A cross-check on class comes from a self rating made by those responding to the survey: 22.4 percent classified themselves as lower/working class; 66.2 percent were middle/upper; 1.5 percent rated themselves upper class. Our analysis of the interviews found that most were middle-class as well (1.5 percent, upper; 23.4 percent, upper middle; 51.5 percent, lower middle; 35.1 percent, working class). These ratings, once again, were closer to Mormons in general than to other black Americans.

Black Latter-day Saints, like other Latter-day Saints, also were more educated than other blacks and religious Americans as a whole. According to Roof and McKinney, 7 percent of black Protestants were college graduates; 18 percent of those Mormons surveyed had graduated (Roof and McKinney 1987, pp. 112-113). In 1984 Stan L. Albrecht and Tim B. Heaton found that over half of Mormon men (53.5 percent) had some post high school education as compared to 36.7 percent of American men in general; 44.3 percent of Mormon women had similar training, contrasting with only 27.7 percent of American women (Albrecht and Heaton 1984, p. 49).

Again, those participating in the LDS Afro-American Projects more closely resemble the Mormon profile than that of black Americans. Of those interviewed, almost a third (32.3 percent) were college graduates; including those who had some post high school training with those who completed a bachelor's, the figure jumped to 75.9 percent. The survey figures for college graduates were about the same; 34.9 percent had completed college, including 9 percent who had advance degrees. Almost three-fourths (72.7 percent) had post high school educations.

Sociologists have identified a variety of reasons why people leave one religious tradition to join another. Roof and McKinney identified three movements in their "circulation of the saints." The first pattern is the "upward movement" where, as people move up socially and economically, they also switch to a religion which more closely matches their new status. According to Roof and McKinney, upward "switchers" are usually over 45. The second pattern is a conservative movement in reaction to the secular trends in the society and religion. These people, usually younger, less educated, and of a lower social standing, take conservative positions on such social issues as abortion and gay rights. The third movement is away from church affiliation and usually consists of young people in their teens or twenties (Roof and McKinney 1987, pp. 162-177).

As we mentioned earlier, moving from black Protestant churches to the Mormon Church could be viewed as part of the upward movement. Those interviewed represented the upper mobility described by Roof and McKinney. While 60 percent grew up in working class homes, only 35 percent are in that category now. Though not wealthy, more than half are solidly middle class. Over 40 percent of the survey respondents classified their childhood homes as lower middle class. More than 70 percent now have white collar jobs.

Roof and McKinney also pointed out that converts that are upwardly mobile are typically over 45. The LDS African American converts were younger; respondents aged 20 to 40 were the largest age group in both the survey and the interview group. If they were part of this upward movement, other factors must be at play as well and characteristics of the target church must also be important. In a time of changing values, Mormonism's conservative doctrines, literal interpretation of the scriptures, and strict moral code may appeal to black converts. In addition, the Mormon Church strongly

emphasizes the importance of traditional family structure. Both of these factors probably influenced this stream but the stream may also be a separate one from the three identified by Roof and McKinney.

AFRICAN AMERICANS IN A WHITE CHURCH

Besides identifying black American Mormons and trying to determine reasons they might have joined, we wanted to examine how blacks were accepted in a largely white church. Were the African Americans well received when they came to church meetings and church-sponsored social activities? The survey included a variety of questions about the relationships black members had in their local congregations—referred to as wards—in the LDS Church. For example, the survey asked the respondents to respond to the statement "I feel like I am a regular part of my ward," and 65.2 percent said very often and 88.1 percent said very often or sometimes. Only 2 percent responded "never." Furthermore, in response to the statement, "I feel like an oddity in my ward," just over half (51.2 percent) said they "never" felt like an oddity in their ward; 17.9 percent said "seldom" or "very seldom." More than one-quarter, however, said they sometimes (16.9 percent) or very often (10 percent) felt like an oddity. In other words, while most of the respondents felt they were a "regular part" of their congregation, others sometimes felt estranged.

Other responses were also mixed. To the statement "I have found that the people in my ward are eager to be friends with me," more than half (53.7 percent) said they felt that way "very often" and almost an additional third (30.3 percent) said "sometimes." Over 80 percent, therefore, sensed ward members reached out to them. Only 4 percent felt ward members were not friendly. When asked if they felt "included in ward social activities," two-thirds (67 percent) responded yes, "very often" and just over a fifth (21 percent) said "sometimes." Thus, a total of 88.6 percent felt part of the activities at least some of the time. Only 3.5 percent said "never;" 7.5 percent said "seldom" or "very seldom." However, when asked if "ward members ... hesitate to include me at church functions," the responses were not as positive. More than half (50.7 percent) said they felt no reluctance by ward members to involve them. Just over a tenth (11.9 percent) said there was some caution, and slightly more (13.5 percent) said they were

"seldom" or "very seldom" included. The rest, over one-fifth (21.9 percent) felt some hesitation by church members to include them. More direct questions also led to divided answers. When asked whether "some non-blacks avoid me or are uncomfortable around me," almost one-third (31.3 percent) said "never." Slightly less (27.8 percent) said "seldom" or "very seldom." The rest (38.7 percent) felt some discomfort.

The surveys give bare numbers; the interviews give more details about experiences. They also show a mixed bag of experiences; they describe remarkable experiences of integration along with instances of prejudice and discrimination. For example, Johnnie McKoy, a brick contractor from Greensboro, North Carolina, said he was afraid he had forced whites to leave. When he went to an investigator's Sunday School class as a new member in 1980, there were a lot of people in the class. The next week they did not return. "I recognized then that I was the only black in the church. I felt like the people were not coming in the class because I had joined the Church and I had already run the people out of the Church. I had a guilty conscience about it." However, he asked the members and was told that they were mainly investigators who did not return for other reasons. "I gave a sigh of relief to know that I was not really experiencing what I thought it was" (McKoy 1986, p. 8).

Even though McKoy was very active, he still felt that people avoided him. As a leader in the stake (similar to a diocese), he recalled going to another congregation to speak on a monthly assignment. McKoy, who usually goes out of his way to greet people, was talking to ward members as he walked to the door. He noticed the lay bishop sliding around to another door so he could avoid shaking hands and talking with McKoy. While this was simply an unfortunate incident to McKoy, experiences like it led his wife to decide not to attend LDS church meetings. McKoy recalled just after they joined in 1980, he was asked to be the second counselor in the Sunday School, and his wife was asked to teach Junior Sunday School. "We were still new in the Church, and there was some tension there. My wife was beginning to be treated one way, and I was beginning to be treated another. They respected me and admired me for coming to church, but they seemed to try to push my wife out. They were saying some nasty things to her." He went on to explain, "They told her ... they were really giving her that [position] because they were the worst kids in the Church... [and] she was black." There were only three black

families attending, and "the [white] kids would start calling the kids 'niggers.'" As a result, "she woke up one Sunday morning and said she was not going back to church anymore. She said those people were not Christians" (McKoy 1986, pp. 9-10).

Sylvia V. Arnold, who was baptized in 1986 and lived in Richmond, Virginia, also experienced mixed messages. As a student and a single mother, she felt "loved" in the ward. "They just seem like they are trying to love no matter what race people are," but she also felt some confusion. "It was Sunday. I went to church. I needed a ride. A certain person I guess just didn't want to give me a ride. It might be something small, but to me it was confusing. I just felt like dying that day right in church, but I held it in. The woman was trying to avoid me asking for a ride home. I didn't quite understand that, and that kind of affected me. I think I should have been a little stronger and understanding about that. I didn't at that time, but I learned to understand it and to look at it that nobody's perfect" (Arnold 1986, p. 5).

Most of the survey respondents did not feel they experienced "outright" prejudice from non-black members. Only 4 percent said they experience prejudice "very often," and an additional 17.4 percent said "sometimes." On the other hand, 12.9 percent said they "seldom" experienced prejudice, and 20.9 percent said "very seldom." Nearly half, 43.3 percent, said that they "never" felt "outright" prejudice. Responses to the statement "I don't think prejudice is a serious problem among church members" were also split: 16.4 percent said this was true "very often," 26.9 percent "sometimes," 22.9 percent "seldom," 16.9 percent "very seldom," and 14.4 percent "never." Arthur Preston, a convert, was born in West Virginia and later moved to Chicago in 1959. He was looking for a religion when the LDS missionaries came, but when he was interviewed in 1988, he felt he had experienced prejudice during the year he had been a Mormon. He had remained active despite the negative reactions, but he criticized some Mormons. "Being a black Latter-day Saint, you have to have a strong spirit to be in that Church.... I am quite sure that there are some earnest people within the Church that are good, but overall, some of the people's hearts are not right. This is why I say you have to have a strong spirit. If you go in, you become quickly disillusioned." He went on to tell how his son "was going to church regularly. He came and told me that a boy in the church came up and told him, 'Hey, black boy, what are you doing in here?'" (Preston 1988, p. 5).

Defining the reasons for feeling prejudice is difficult for LDS Afro-Americans. When asked if other Latter-day Saints said "offensive things to black members on purpose," over a quarter (25.9 percent) were "not sure." Ten percent (1.5 percent "strongly agree; "8.5 percent "agree") said the comments were meant to hurt. Elizabeth Pulley, who grew up in the Church of God in Christ and joined the LDS church in 1977 after she married a black Latter-day Saint, felt she was often "overlooked or left out" in Relief Society when she first joined the Church. "It was always, 'Oh, I didn't see you' or 'I didn't mean to slight you in any way.'" She also thought some people who appeared to be friendly were only doing it for show. "I went through things where the sisters would take me and hug me and give me a little kiss. I can remember one sister who did it. She went into the rest room, and I went in, too. She didn't see me come in behind her. She was in there scrubbing her lips. The first thing that went through my mind was, 'Oh, okay. She just kissed me, and now she is running in here. She is really not sincere'" (Pulley 1985, pp. 10-11, 17). Nevertheless, most (63.1 percent) respondents "disagreed" or "strongly disagreed" that remarks by white Latter-day Saints were meant to hurt.

When asked if "non-black members often ignorantly say things which are offensive to black members," 36.8 percent agreed or strongly agreed, and nearly half (49.3 percent) disagreed or strongly disagreed. Samuella Brown, who was born in Knoxville, Tennessee in 1948 and lived in Columbus, Ohio where she had been a member since 1983, talked about the difference expressed in these two questions. "I've seen more ignorance than prejudice because Mormons from what I've picked up and from what I learned ... were always kind, caring, [and] considerate... , I perceive them as being a caring people, but just ignorant to certain things" (Brown 1988, p. 7).

ROLE OF AFRICAN AMERICANS' CLASS IN THE MORMON CHURCH

Did social class play a role in the types of experiences blacks have as Latter-day Saints? Since most are middle class, are they accepted better than lower working class members? Comparing social class and income with other survey questions show that these factors were

essentially unrelated in any systematic way to any of the series of questions. For example, subjective social class and income were unrelated to the racial composition of the respondent's initial church, type of church (e.g., fundamentalist, mainline Protestant, Catholic, etc.) or prior attendance. Some of the non-results may be related to the homogeneity of the sample. Few fundamentalists appeared in the sample and the respondents tended to be lower- or upper-middle class. Nevertheless, there was sufficient variation in the income levels and social class composition that a number of the cross tabulations should have been significant. Yet they were not.

Social class and income were also not related to the respondents' attendance at Sunday meetings in the LDS church, and the racial composition of the ward (LDS congregation). Social class and income were also unrelated in any systematic way to scales of religiosity developed for Mormons by Marie Cornwall and others (1986). These scales included several general measures of religiosity as well as particular ones developed about Mormon practices and beliefs. Research has shown the scales to work as well for black Mormons as they do for white Mormons (Jacobson and Embry 1992). But the social class and income levels of the respondents was not related to low or high scores on measures of religious orthodoxy (those who believe in Christ, in the Bible, in life after death, that Satan exists, etc.), or spiritual commitment (relationship with the Lord, Holy Ghost, love God, willing to do God's will, etc.). In fact, the black sample was more orthodox than a general sample of LDS members on these scales (Embry and Jacobson 1994, p. 98). Though they were less likely to endorse the LDS items than general items about Christianity, they were still more accepting than the general sample of the Mormon items. Social class and income levels of the black sample simply did not distinguish those who scored low or high on the religiosity items.

Finally, social class and income were also unrelated to the respondents' answers to a whole series of questions about their experiences in the LDS Church. Besides those questions already referred to, the survey included the following items:

- If there were more black members of the Church, I would be more active.
- I am afraid that in order to be a good member of the Church, to a large degree, I must give up my black identity.

- Ward members do not hesitate to include me at church functions.
- I feel that I have not been given as many opportunities for church service because of my race.
- I wish my ward consisted of only black members.
- In general, I feel closer to blacks than I do to most members of the Church.

Overall, the respondents answered 46 questions of this type. Differences by either social class or income occurred in only three of the possible 92 comparisons. And the responses were not always what might be expected. For example, the middle-class blacks were slightly more likely than the working-class blacks in the Church to say they would like to hear gospel hymns and spirituals in church services ($X^2 = 16.78$, $df = 8$, $p < .05$). And middle-class blacks were slightly more likely than working-class blacks to say that they felt closer to blacks than to most members of the Church ($X^2 = 16.80$, $df = 8$, $p < .05$). The middle-class blacks may feel more confident in saying these kinds of things because they have more social status and because they have the social skills to mix with both blacks and whites.

Ironically, however, those with higher incomes were less likely than those with lower incomes to say they had considered leaving the Church because of feelings that "blacks don't fit into the social or cultural experience of the Church" ($X^2 = 15.71$, $df = 8$, $p < .05$). Generally the Mormon Church is a middle-class church, and those who join and stay in the LDS Church are disproportionately middle class and somewhat upwardly mobile. Thus, the fact that the middle-class blacks in the LDS Church entertained thoughts of leaving the church less often than working class blacks is another indication that middle-class blacks are more likely to feel comfortable in an integrated, but traditionally white church.

The recruitment patterns also vary some by the age at which the respondents joined the LDS Church. Those who joined before the age of 20 tended to have lower incomes at the time they completed the questionnaires. The same was true of those who joined after the age of 50. Those who joined between the years of 20 and 50, and they were the bulk of those who joined, had the highest income levels at the time they were surveyed ($X^2 = 26.85$, $df = 8$, $p < .001$). The bulk (64 percent) of those who joined did so alone, without other

family members joining. Those who joined alone or with one other family member also tended to have the highest income levels in the sample. Those who joined with more than one other family member tended to be less well-off financially at the time they were surveyed. The implication is that those who have tended to join the predominantly white, previously exclusionary, LDS Church tend to be middle-aged, upwardly mobile, and self-confident. They also tend to be in professions that result in a lot of contact with whites in non-religious settings

The general lack of relationships between black income and social class and attitudes in this sample, however, is somewhat surprising. As explained above, part of the explanation for the lack of differences no doubt lies in the sampling procedure used to obtain the sample. They are clearly middle class and surprisingly homogenous. And they tend to be quite active in the LDS Church. They have joined and stayed and this may mean that they are different from other blacks who have joined the LDS Church.

Part of the explanation may also lie in how the LDS congregations are composed. In general they are drawn geographically and the result is that the wards, with regard to social class, are relatively homogenous, and without regard to race. This could result in more acceptance by white Mormons.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that while most blacks have remained in black churches, there has been some movement into white middle class churches. A small number have moved to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. With the abolishment of the policy of black priesthood restriction, the Mormons have sent missionaries to talk to blacks in the United States and throughout the world. The majority of African-Americans who have joined are probably middle class as defined broadly. In terms of educational background, occupations, and social class, they also resemble middle-class white Mormons.

They may be part of an "upward mobile" group of Americans who change religion as they change economic status. At the same time, they may be part of a new stream in the circulation of the saints, one that is moving quietly from traditional black churches to integrated white churches. If the latter is true, the black community

may be losing some of its most capable leaders. At the same, time, however, it would be an indication that one of the last bastions of segregation, the church, is weakening.

In joining a white church, they have experienced mixed responses. They feel accepted and discriminated against at the same time. However, their social class has not made a difference in how they feel they are accepted in the Mormon Church.

The survey and the interviews show black Americans have had positive and negative experiences interacting with white Mormons. The survey shows areas of concerns; the interviews clarify what some of the problems are. As Cherry, who conducted the interviews observed, LDS African Americans are experiencing phenomenal integration in the Church because they are not only worshipping with whites—in itself an unusual experience for black Americans, but they are also sharing financial resources through the payment of tithing and becoming part of an integrated community. At the same time these black American Mormons face cultural misunderstandings and they sometimes feel prejudice and discrimination. These dilemmas are a daily concern for most African Americans (Cherry, personal conversation).

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PART IV

CLASS AND THE LEGAL SYSTEM

MYTHS, MIGHT AND THE LEGAL STATUS OF THE BLACK MIDDLE CLASS

Willa M. Hemmons

INTRODUCTION

This paper explores the relationships between the sociological (demographic characteristics) and the law (legal issues). In particular, it examines whether or not there are meaningful differences in the manner in which society and the law operate upon African Americans of whatever income, educational and/or occupational positions.

The thesis here is that, following the tradition of Robert K. Merton (1954), deprivation is relative. In other words, the middle class African American can feel just as deprived in a relative sense as his or her non-middle ("lower") class African American counterpart. To carry this thesis further, it is hypothesized that the non-middle class African American is in a better position relatively vis-à-vis his or her non-middle (lower) class European American cohort than the middle class African American is in his or her position vis-à-vis other middle class Americans living in the United States.

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This discussion will assess the manner in which the legal system impacts upon African Americans from the middle classes and the "non-middle" classes particularly in the areas of politics and economics. The analysis will be done in the form of an overview comparing the two social classes through the use of legal examples and demographic statistics. For purposes here, the legal system will be defined not only as court decisions, but legislative enactments and executive, administrative orders at the federal, state and local levels. Currently, definitions of the middle class are so profuse and varying that it is difficult to lend them easily to a functional analysis from a *general* sociological or a *general* legal perspective. To select a particular definition is to select a particular perspective. For instance, some theorists would not differentiate between those who make certain salaries and those who make a lower amount. As long as a person works for someone else, they would be in the category, *working classes*. The latter view is best exemplified by that forwarded by writers such as Robert L. Allen (1970) and Manning Marable (1983).

According to Marable,

> [t]he first dilemma confronting the researcher who explores the dimensions of American poverty involves the definition of class. Traditionally, American bourgeois social scientists have defined one's class as function of annual earned income and not in terms of a function of one's relationship to the means of production (p. 54).

Hence, Marable maintains that it is an error to define an upperclass American as one who has a certain income of some arbitrarily selected number, for example, $200,000, rather than as ones "who own factories and the corporations, and who live without selling their labor power in the marketplace for a wage" (p. 54). To use simply the former definition as a class demarcation, then to Marable, is to miss an important dimension of the analysis. Income classifications, alone, could include everyone in the highest one, for example, from physicians to illegal drug dealers. An attempt will be made to consider that dimension in this discussion, nevertheless, because that dimension is the one of *power* and *power determinations*.

For a beginning point, this discussion of law and class in the Black community will adopt the class definitions of James E. Blackwell (1991). Blackwell defines *power* as

> ...the ability to monopolize economic, political, educational, and social resources within a given community or a society and to control the decision-making processes that determine the distribution of such resources among members of that society (p.19).

Our primary focus here, then. is to ascertain whether or not the ascension to middle class status gives African Americans any more *power* relative to their European American counterparts than their African American brethren of the "lower" classes have relative to their cohorts. To Blackwell, the fact that African Americans exhibit variance in terms of what he terms the "traditional" "SES variables of occupation, education, and income" (p. 167) is evidence of the "diversity" of the Black community and *ther*eby "*destroys the myth of the black population as a monolithic homogeneous unit*" (p. 185). In Blackwell's definition of the Black middle class, he uses a model of greater differentiation than that found in E. Franklin Frazier's *Black Bourgeoisie.* Blackwell separates out from middle class status attribution his typology of the "old and new upper classes" (p. 178). For him, the Black middle class is "tricotomized" into three classifications: Middle-Class Black Professionals, White Collar Clericals and Skilled Blue-Collar Workers. What Blackwell has done in his analysis is to have differentiated the Black middle classes on the basis of (1) how they make their income (e.g., their type of employment) and (2) why they make their income (e.g., college education versus craft training versus experience) Our problem here, of course, is to try to differentiate the various African American class statuses in terms of the meaningful ability to make, control and/or change one's destiny either within the legal system or any other social system to which one has access. For this exercise, another theorist's comments are useful—those of W.E.B. DuBois. Of particular guidance, is DuBois' prediction expressed in his 1903 book, *The Souls of Black Folk* the 'problem of the Twentieth Century is that of the color line.'

ANALYSIS

As stated above, there are two ways of comparing the relative legal strengths of the African American middle versus the non-middle (lower) classes. One is the legal strength of the non-middle classes versus that of the middle classes with each other. Another is the

relative strength within the law of those African American classes vis-à-vis their European American counterparts. In other words, the relative legal power of the Black middle classes vis-à-vis the White middle classes; compared with the relative legal power of the Black "lower" classes with that of the White "lower" classes.

In examining these comparisons, Robert Allen's comments are rather instructive. Allen states that

> Legally, black people were always at the mercy of whites. The Constitution decreed that slaves were not whole human beings, and a separate system of laws was relied upon in meting out "justice" to any unfortunate slave who provoked the ire of his master (p. 9).

For the purposes of this examination, then, the latter comparative perspective (the intra-class), between race comparison model will be utilized. This is because it is more useful in examining any advantage which middle class status gives, to look at how well off a middle class Black is compared to a middle class White person versus the well being of a middle class Black person compared to a "lower" class Black individual. In the former, one is really controlling for the impact of social class in order to identify the influence of racially-related variables.

Class is the United States is presumably a function of 'merit.' That is to say that supposedly more time, effort, energy, self sacrifice and discipline goes into being middle class than in being lower class. Underlying this presumption, also in the United States, is the assumption of 'equal opportunity.' If one exerts time, effort, energy, self sacrifice and discipline, *then* one can expect reward. *Unless*, of course, one is not among the 'fittest' (another part of the American Dream). *Then*, one's lack of success, despite one's diligence in pursuing one's goals, is because of one's inherent, *innate* qualities over which one has no control. Again, Robert Allen gives us some interesting insights into this set of presumptions and their impact upon African Americans

> In general the black community experiences little difficulty in seeing white so-called morality for the hypocrisy and cant that it is. Yet the black middle class,..., as the artificially created stepchildren of white society, acts as though it is driven to uphold that society's values and attitudes—even when whites fail to do so themselves (pp. 12, 13).

A useful paradigm for our comparisons therefore is in the context of some of the major social institutions which determine the quality of life for African Americans. Two of the most poignant social institutions which will help to exemplify the various aspects of our comparisons are those of the political and the economic. (Of course, there is some overlap because it is becoming increasingly political to get a job or housing, or, even to eat.)

Political Institution

In her book, *The Black Elite: Facing the Color Line in the Twilight of the Twentieth Century*, Lois Benjamin (1991) maintains that there are two strata in the Black community that are juxtaposed to each other: the new Black middle class versus the Underclass (Cf. Douglas G. Glasgow's (1981) book, *The Black Underclass: Poverty, Unemployment and the Entrapment of Ghetto Youth*). Benjamin, in *The Black Elite*, asserts that pursuant to DuBois prediction, the new Black middle class are both within and between two worlds. Because of this they express continuing pain and uncertainty. They resent their incomplete acceptance by the society at large and are constantly under self-inflicted as well as externally imposed pressure. To help sustain themselves they must maintain contact with their culture of origin—which, in turn, sometimes exacerbates their conflict. Although this conflict is problematic, even more problematic is the subjective aspects of "Institutional Racism" which operates despite any increased objective measurement of success. In explaining their reactions to institutional racism, Benjamin follows Joyce Ladner in concluding that the new Black middle class have 'highly refined coping skills.' Such skills are necessary as Benjamin points out because of the pervasive characteristics of institutional racism. For her definition of that term, she cites Stokely Carmichael and Charles V. Hamilton in stating that it is

> ...a pattern of racism that is embodied in the policies and practices of the folkways, mores, legal structures, and bureaucracies of social institutions that have an intentional and unintentional differential and negative impact on people of color (p. xxiv).

Importantly for this discussion, as a product of institutional racism, Benjamin surmises that race "is an important stratifying feature in

this society" (p. xxvii). She further notes that "Blacks experience racism across class boundaries" (p. xxvii). Further, she states that even though the exact manner in which racism might be experienced may be different, she still feels that it is tied to the function of racism in this society. The oppressor group implements a racist agenda, according to Benjamin, by employing violence and through the use of three devices: "power control, dominance and exploitation" (pp. xxviii-3). And, because of this cross-class, intra-racial oppression, the new Black middle class is somewhat deprived of expressing some of its otherwise class-oriented 'Americanisms' in terms of four criteria listed by Benjamin as values, behaviors, attitudes and lifestyles (p. 10).

Despite these problems, Robert Allen does not seem to have much sympathy for any 'new Black middle class.' Allen claims that "...the white corporate elite has found an ally in the black bourgeoisie, the new, militant black middle class which became a significant social force following World War II" (pp. 18, 19). Allen's objection to the new Black middle class came even though he writes that it supported black power (p. 19). Despite this announcement, and despite the fact that Allen acknowledges their sincerity, he doubts not just their ultimate motives but the breadth of their claims to the white ruling class. According to Allen, the new Black middle class

> ...spoke for themselves as a class, not for the vast majority of black people who are not middle class. In effect, this new elite told the power structure: "Give us a piece of the action and we will run the black communities and keep them quiet for you" (p. 19).

While this analysis is reminiscent of that of Frantz Fanon's (1963) *Wretched of the Earth*, it must be recognized that the new Black middle class did not retain any significant control over the central city. In fact, part of the problem of increased Black class isolation is the fact that the new Black middle class increasingly have fled the inner city for the suburbs.[1] An example of this comparative class isolation lies in the fact that 60 percent of the Black poor live in the central cities as opposed to 34 percent of the White poor.[2] Furthermore, once the Black middle class was there in the suburbs, it usually found itself, at least initially, in a politically attenuated situation. In other words, while they might have continued to vote diligently, they might have found that their vote was so diffuse that

it was a relatively weak power. This is particularly true because after the 1990 Census between a 5 percent undercount of Black people and the political process of gerrymandering, the Black vote was not only fragmented in many states, it was dispersed and underrepresentative of its actual numbers (e.g., taxation without representation).

With reference to the manifestation of relative political impotence in the criminal sector for example, Benjamin describes the plight of a Black middle class father whose son was stopped by the police in a predominantly White, upper-middle class neighborhood. The father immediately exerted his influence to save the situation for his son. The father's reaction is in stark contrast to that described from a "lower" class Black point of view from the annals of Claude Brown's *Manchild in the Promised Land.* The former situation demonstrates how education, social position and system access helped to offset the legal system's treatment of an African American male. Claude Brown's book illustrates the reaction of the family of a young Black man caught up in the criminal justice system. Such reaction includes terror, intimidation, lack of knowledge and a sense of helplessness. Robert K. Merton described this phenomena as an anomic reaction. Non-middle class Blacks may be more subject to this type of anomic reaction than middle class Blacks. The father's description of how his intervention and use of positioned resources which resulted in the legal system "backing off" illustrates a sense of empowerment which may not be present in the same manner among the Black "lower" classes. However, as Benjamin points out "...despite class or status, individual influence is precarious when it comes to blackness" (p. 36). This observation was vividly evidenced in the situation which occurred in September of 1992 at the State University of New York's College at Oneonta. The college's vice president of administration gave state police investigators a list of all 125 Black male students who were enrolled at the college. According to *The New York Times,* "The police wanted the list for their investigation of the assault of a 77-year-old Oneonta woman, who said she had been attacked by a black man" (September 18, 1992, p. A11).

In short, the fact of being African American and male was deemed to be in and of itself sufficient probable cause to seek the incrimination of anyone who fit that description. This incident shows that one does not have to be a Rodney King or a Mike Tyson to be subject to the criminal justice system. One can become subject, Constitutional protections notwithstanding, by virtue of being a

Black male. Class distinctions such as education, income or occupations had no bearing upon what the law enforcement officials—and, even more astoundingly, college officials apparently say to be the one overriding 'distinction'—that of being Black. Thus, the real loss to the middle class father is that but for his son's color, he would not have been captured by the Criminal Justice system in the first place. Blacks are approximately 12 percent of the U.S. population according to the 1990 Census. However, Blacks constitute 65-75 percent of the Criminal Justice system in most states. In other words, Blacks are extremely overrepresented (see again, though, their underrepresented status in terms of the franchise among other rights) in the most political of the political systems—the Criminal Justice system. They exist in numbers which are seven times their proportion in the general population. In fact, the United States leads the world, exceeding South Africa, in the proportion of its citizens who are incarcerated. Further that proportion, as previously explained, inordinately consists of Blacks.

To assess the relative protection from prosecution of middle class Blacks over "lower" class Blacks, one needs to look at the role and function of the Criminal Justice system as a political process itself. First of all, it must be understood that the Criminal Justice System is a part of the political institution. It exemplifies the workings of the political institution in that it implements power relationships on an on-going basis and hence is just as political as the electoral college. In truth, the Criminal Justice system, epitomizes the political institution from an operative point of view. As a political organization, its basic function is to preserve and promote the status quo. A foremost goal then, of the Criminal Justice system is to implement the directions of those in political power to further delegitimize and thereby incriminate those in the bottom classes. Emile Durkheim pointed out that the Criminal Justice system has several functions. A most salient one for this discussion was for it to solidify and increase unifying trends among "respectable" citizens. By further identifying and ostracizing outsiders, the morale and integration of the in-groups are further increased.

The way that the Criminal Justice system operates in the Black community, is to further discredit and disenfranchise those who are caught in its web. And, because such myths as "The War on Drugs" is so pervasive, even Black middle class households find themselves victims in the breakdown of Criminal Due Process protections based

in the U.S. Constitution. If not of the police, then of their neighbors (Cf. the fate of "hate crimes" and the U.S. Supreme Court in the case, *R.A.V.* v. *St. Paul* (1992), No. 90-7675). The *R.A.V.* ruling set off a rash of retrenchments by courts and colleges, for example, in protections designed to eliminate verbal and symbolic racial harassment. Such protections are being deemed to be a violation of dominant group "freedom of speech" as protected by the First Amendment.[3]

Significantly, the Criminal Justice web is designed primarily to catch "lower" class 'spiders.' The police are trained basically to identify street offenses which occur in the inner cities. Hence, the major reason that middle class African Americans are relatively more aloof from Criminal Justice interaction is because of what Donald Sutherland would term 'Differential Association.' In other words, the situations in which the middle class Black typically engage, as well as the locales of those engagements, help to further insulate them from Criminal Justice prosecution—unless, something untoward happens on a college campus, of course. Even though there are still large numbers of middle class Blacks who live in urban areas, they are likely to live in neighborhoods in which policing strategies are relatively less brutal and oppressive. Those Blacks who do live in predominately White neighborhoods are generally known to police; and, depending upon whether their presence is welcome, are either accepted as special exceptions or crucified until they are forced to leave.

For middle class Blacks who are more prominently visible in the political sector, the Criminal Justice System or its surrogate many times may be used to either remove them from office or undermine their credibility (cf. Marion Berry, Alcee Hastings, Julian Bond, Carl Stokes, etc.). This phenomenon also extends to any visible position, also compare Mike Tyson.

Thus, the power of middle class African Americans to protect themselves from the Criminal Justice system vis-à-vis middle class Whites is probably much less than that of a "lower" class Black's ability to do so vis-à-vis their White counterparts. This is because in this instance class is less of a protection absent situational buffers than color from criminal prosecution. Of course, "middle class" values, behaviors, attitudes and lifestyle serve as a strong deterrent to any group with regard to the commission of crime. The problem is that, despite those most laudable of factors, the influence of

institutional racism sometimes negates those factors despite their being held by a middle class person who is of African genesis. In terms of 'white collar' crime, the only reason that middle class Blacks have probably not begun to be widely prosecuted is because they do not have the access of an Ivan Boesky, Dennis Levine, Michael Milken or Leona Helmsley. It is also instructive to note that none of these aforementioned were White, Protestants. That fact might be an ominous one with reference to predicting a Black rate of corporate crime prosecution if Blacks ever achieve significant numbers in the corporate sector.

Economic Institution

The near destruction of unions and affirmative action presaged the near destruction of many segments of the Black middle class. Revisiting Blackwell's Black middle class trichotomy, it is not difficult to see how true that statement is. The loss of one-third of all manufacturing job in one rust belt town since 1979[4] resulting in the diminution of Blackwell's skilled Blue-Collar workers category was as much a result of union busting as global economy and other forces. Reagan's handling of PATCO in 1981 foreshadowed the foreseeable fate of the unionization movement in America for some time. Although Blacks and Unions under the 1947 Taft-Hartley Act were many times at odds, there were some benefits due to the collective aspects of unionization as well as at least the legal prohibitions against union discrimination, that assisted African Americans in access to blue collar jobs. Demographic figures indicate that Black women benefit relative to White women more from an education than Black men do in terms of their White peers (Swinton, 1992, p. 112):

> More education ...attenuates racial inequality in earnings. The effect was most dramatic for females, where the earnings gap was relatively low in any case. ...
>
> Racial inequality in earnings was much greater for black males. Overall, black male earnings were only 69.4 percent of white male earnings, while the overall black female median was 94.21 percent of the white female median.

So, the fact that manufacturing jobs allowed Blacks at least some limited access, gave them more earning power after World War II. The demise of affirmative action put a significant dent in both

Blackwell's White Collar Clericals and Middle Class Black Professionals.

The demise of affirmative action, although subject to some controversy,[5] has been purportedly stymied somewhat by the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1991.[6] Beginning with the *Bakke* v. *California State Regents*[7] case which prohibited many affirmative action strategies with reference to education and that of the *United Steelworkers of America* v. *Weber*[8] case which upheld a challenge to affirmative action which modified the operation of seniority systems, the U.S. Supreme Court began to dismantle a process which had laid the foundation for minimizing racial barriers to the achievement of a solid Black middle class. Continuing on throughout the 1980s, the Supreme Court worked methodically to unravel affirmative action remedies[9] which included redress for (1) Disparate impact (*Wards Cove Packing* v. *Antonio,*[10] (2) Discrimination and Harassment (*Patterson* v. *McLeon Credit Union,*[11] and (3) Reopening Old Discrimination Cases (*Martin* v. *Wilks.*[12] With *Bakke* and *Weber* leading the way, the Supreme Court set aside reversed crucial methods of eliminating racial claims of discrimination in the workplace. For instance, in the *Patterson* case, racial harassment as well as racial and ethnic discrimination in hiring, promotions, demotions, discharges, retaliation and other employment issues were approved. In *Wards Cove Packing Company* v. *Atonio,*[13] the employer's burden of proving that exclusionary employment policies or practices were justified by business necessity was erased. The Court in the *Wards Cove* case also, the employer's burden of proving which exact individual employment practice produced a discriminatory effect was transferred to the employee. In addition, the Court held in the *Martin* v. *Wilks*[14] case that White employees did not have to rely upon previous civil rights consent decrees and consequently could unlimited numbers of duplicative "reverse discrimination" lawsuits. The right of employees to challenge discriminatory seniority systems was not necessary according to the *Lorrance* v. *AT&T Technologies*[15] court. And further keeping to its *negative* action mission, the Supreme Court wiped out discrimination as a legal factor among others in employment decisions in the case of *Waterhouse* v. *Hopkins.*[16] An important issue in cases where plaintiffs generally do not have much money, attorneys' fees were disallowed for defending consent decrees between courts and employers from "reverse discrimination" attacks in *Independent Federation of Flight Attendants* v. *Zipes.*[17]

Of course, any class difference within the race here would depend upon the *level* of employment sought to be protected and not necessarily the *nature* of the discriminatory act itself.

The demise of affirmative action was not, however, limited to employment situations. On December 23, 1991, *The New York Times* reported that (p. A1, A9) "Minority Business Set Back Sharply By Courts' Rulings." Referring to the 1989 *Richmond, Va.* v. *Croson* case in which the U.S. Supreme Court upheld the effort by White contractors to overturn a city's set aside program for minority contractors, the article describes how such programs demolished fledgling Black businesses.

> "We're talking drastic," said Ralph C. Thomas 3d, executive director of the National Association of Minority Contractors in Washington. "Thousands of minority businesses went under or were neutralized, and thousands of strong businesses became weak. Most of the minority community's business comes from government programs, and when these programs are struck down, they no longer have a place to sell their goods and services" (p. A1).

With reference to relative control over their economic lives, Manning Marable claims that the Black middle classes are disproportionately divested of meaningful input. In a chapter from his book(1983) entitled "The Crisis of the Black Working Class," Marable asserts:

> ...Many white collar workers within government and those hired by affirmative action policies in the private sector may find it difficult if not impossible to keep the positions they have. As the economic crisis deepens, corporations will seek more innovative strategies to weaken unions... (p. 50).

Marable claims that such strategies will have the effect of exacerbating differences between Whites and Blacks. Going on, Marable blames "Black underdevelopment" for eliminating millions of Blacks from belonging to working class organizations (p. 65). He states that the existence of a massive "ghetto class" has the consequence of disrupting the internal functions of the mostly working class Black community. This underdevelopment turns Blacks with blue collar jobs against those without any job. He feels that working class Blacks are essential to the Black community because they foster a sense of "collective humanity, culture and decency." At this point it is safe to assume that Marable's 'working

class' is Blackwell's 'middle class' because fundamentally there is nothing lost in the translation. (This is where the choice of a definition cannot be allowed to cause one to lose the appropriate perspective; and, hence avoid the accurate conclusion.)

What is being lost, however, is something even more fundamental. The inability of the Black middle or working classes—whatever the nomenclature—to offset the diminution in job loss, income and standard of living because of its lack of control over the resources which provide such variables goes to the root of the problem. In other words, because Blacks remain unempowered in the political sector, their ability to retain their meager foothold in the economic sector is undermined. To see the manner in which this operates, requires some background discussion of economic trends accentuated in the 1980s.

According to a report entitled "The State of Working America 1992-1993," published by the Economic Policy Institute, between 1979 and 1989 the median income for a four-person family in the United States went up an average of 0.8 percent. In general, unemployment went from 5.3 percent in 1989 to 7.6 percent by August of 1992. During this period, unemployment for Blacks was almost twice as high as that for Whites. During the 1980s also, income inequality was exacerbated. For instance, this author's state of Ohio was among those of forty-three states that saw income become more unequally distributed in the 1980s.[18] For instance, in Ohio in 1979 the ratio of average income of the top fifth to that of the bottom fifth of Ohioans went up from 6.8-to-1 to 8.5-to-1 in 1989. In all the economic indicator areas: income, taxes, wages, jobs, wealth, poverty, education, housing, health care and child care, the differences between the top fifth of the U.S. population and the bottom fifth became wider and wider during the 1980s.[19]

The Black poverty rate is three times that of the White poverty rate.[20] The family type with the lowest median family income is that of the Black female-headed household ($12,537) as opposed to the White male-headed (married) household's median income of $40,433; the White female-headed household's of $20,867 and the Black male headed household's (married) of $33,893.[21] In fact, the most reliable predictor of middle class status among Blacks was that of married-couple family status. Females head 60 percent of all the poor Black families in the United States.[22]

The gulf between the rich and the poor is even widening within the African American category itself.[23] This development has resulted in "a marked decrease in the proportion of black families in the middle-income ranges."[24] *The New York Times* also noted that

> Among middle-class blacks, the dominant factor contributing to rising incomes was the tendency to have more than one wage earner to a family. The median income of black families in which both husband and wife worked went from $28,700 in 1967 to $40,038 in 1990, an increase of 40 percent. For white families in the same period, family incomes increase 17 percent, from $40,040 to $47,247 (September 25, 1992, p. A7).

(This trend was also noted as an offshoot of the Reagan administration less than six years after its onset in the September 22, 1986 issue of *The Wall Street Journal* (pp. 1, 17). From these synopses, the answer at first seems simple—Black people should all get married. The problem is of course that the same factors which militate against income growth among African Americans, militate against the encouragement of marriageable males. As discussed in the political institution section, Black males are bombarded by negative power struggles in which they are at a decided disadvantage and which prevents them from reaching their full potential whether that potential is defined in class or individual terms. These power struggles keep them in "underclass" status, in other words. And, as Marable puts it

> Subproletarianization and the extension of permanent penury to broad segments of the Black majority provoke the disruption of Black families; increase the number of Black on Black murders, rapes, suicides and assaults; and make terror a way of life for all Blacks of every class background who live in or near the innercity (p. 67).

As far as Marable is concerned, a class which does not have a "self-conscious" and is not willing to act as a collective body is undeserving of the name and in reality is just an amalgamation of individualist, selfish interests. Hence, the Black middle class can choose to wait on a revitalization of the unions and a resurrection of affirmative action. Likewise, it can also hope for a resuscitation of Constitutional civil liberties which would reinvoke the sanctity of a man or woman in the 'castle.' However, with the guardians of these legal remedies being staunch U.S. Supreme Court conservatives (including the

relatively young African American, Clarence Thomas), the outcome of any such hopes by the Black middle classes do not look to be very positive.

CONCLUSION

In terms of the actual power or "might" that the increased rich-poor dichotomization process has upon the Black middle class, it is—along with the class itself—shrinking. As the legal system diminishes law derived redress for affirmative action, criminal justice and the positive determination of other political and social relations as relate to African Americans, the power of the Black middle class becomes increasingly diffuse. In order to maintain its position, it has found itself having to develop coalitions with a wide array of groups ranging from Unions to White women, to Gay-Lesbians to Environmentalists to the Elderly to Welfare Rights activists to any political party that would let them. The Black middle class is coming to the conclusion, however, that coalitions alone are insufficient for it to achieve its major goals. The problem with the coalition strategy, of course, is that it necessarily entails the modification—or more accurately—the enervation of the original African American Agenda, regardless of class affiliation. For instance, during the 1992 Presidential Democratic Convention it led the Black middle class to eschew Rev. Jesse Jackson. Nevertheless, the original intent was only to get a "piece" of the pie in the first place. For the time being anyway, it appears that for the Black middle class that piece will have to be smaller—the Black non-middle ('lower') class may not get a piece at all.

NOTES

1. The Economic Crisis of Urban America. (1992, May 18). *Business Week*, pp. 38-43.
2. Ibid., p. 38
3. Compare U. of Wisconsin repeals Ban on 'Hate Speech'. (1992, September 14). *The New York Times*, p. A10; New Jersey Trial Judge Overturns Law Singling Out Hateful Speech. (1992, September 26). *The New York Times*, p. A10.
4. Ibid., p. 41.
5. *The New York Times*, "With Rights Act Comes Fight to Clarify Congress's Intent," November 18, 1991, A1, C10.

6. Civil Rights Restoration Act of 1991, 42 U.S.C. 1981 as amended; 42 U.S.C. 2000e as amended.
7. (1978) 98 S.Ct. 2733.
8. (1979) 443 U.S. 193.
9. *The New York Times*, "Senate Democrats Back Compromise on Civil Rights Bill: Bush Takes Major Credit, President Insists the Measure Bolsters Workers' Equality Without Using Quotas," October 26, 1991, A1, A8.
10. 490 U.S. 642 (1989).
11. 490 U.S. 642 (1989).
12. 490 U.S. 642 (1989).
13. 490 U.S. 642.
14. 490 U.S. 642.
15. 490 U.S. 642.
16. 490 U.S. 642.
17. 490 U.S. 642 (1989).
18. "Better Off? Many Say 'No': Report Says New Groups Have Lost Earning Power (1992, September 7). *The Plain Dealer*, pp. 1-A; 10-A.
19. Ibid.
20. (1992) *The State of Black America*, New York: The National Urban League.
21. Ibid.
22. Op cit. *Business Week* (May 18, 1992, p. 41).
23. "Rich-Poor Gulf Widens Among Blacks." (1992, September 25, 1992). *The New York Times*, p. A7.
24. Ibid.

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