

Increasing Black-White Separation in the Plantation South, 1970-90

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In former plantation regions throughout the rural South during 1970-90, Black populations grew in cities and towns while White populations grew outside these places. Before 1970, rural Blacks were more likely than Whites to reside in the open countryside, but this is no longer true. If present trends continue, over 40 percent of the Black population in these regions will live in cities and towns by 2000, compared with less than 25 percent of the White population. Such growing residential separation resembles the process that created urban ghettos in the Nation's largest cities, and in most cases signals growing economic disadvantages for the rural Black population.

Blacks are this Nation's largest rural minority, numbering 4.5 million in 1990.¹ Over 90 percent of rural Blacks live in the South, mostly in the Coastal Plain and lower Piedmont (fig. 1). Following three decades of large-scale outmigration and population decline, the Black population within the rural South has been growing slowly since 1970. While overall racial composition remained fairly stable over time, with the Black percentage decreasing only slightly from 38 to 36 percent between 1970 and 1990, the geography of Black and White population growth within the rural South was quite distinct. The Black population grew within towns and cities while the White population grew mostly outside such places, reversing previous settlement patterns. By 1990, 48 percent of the area's Black population resided in incorporated places, compared with only 38 percent of the White population.

Blacks know firsthand how residential location contributes to economic well-being. Overcoming formidable social and economic barriers, many Black

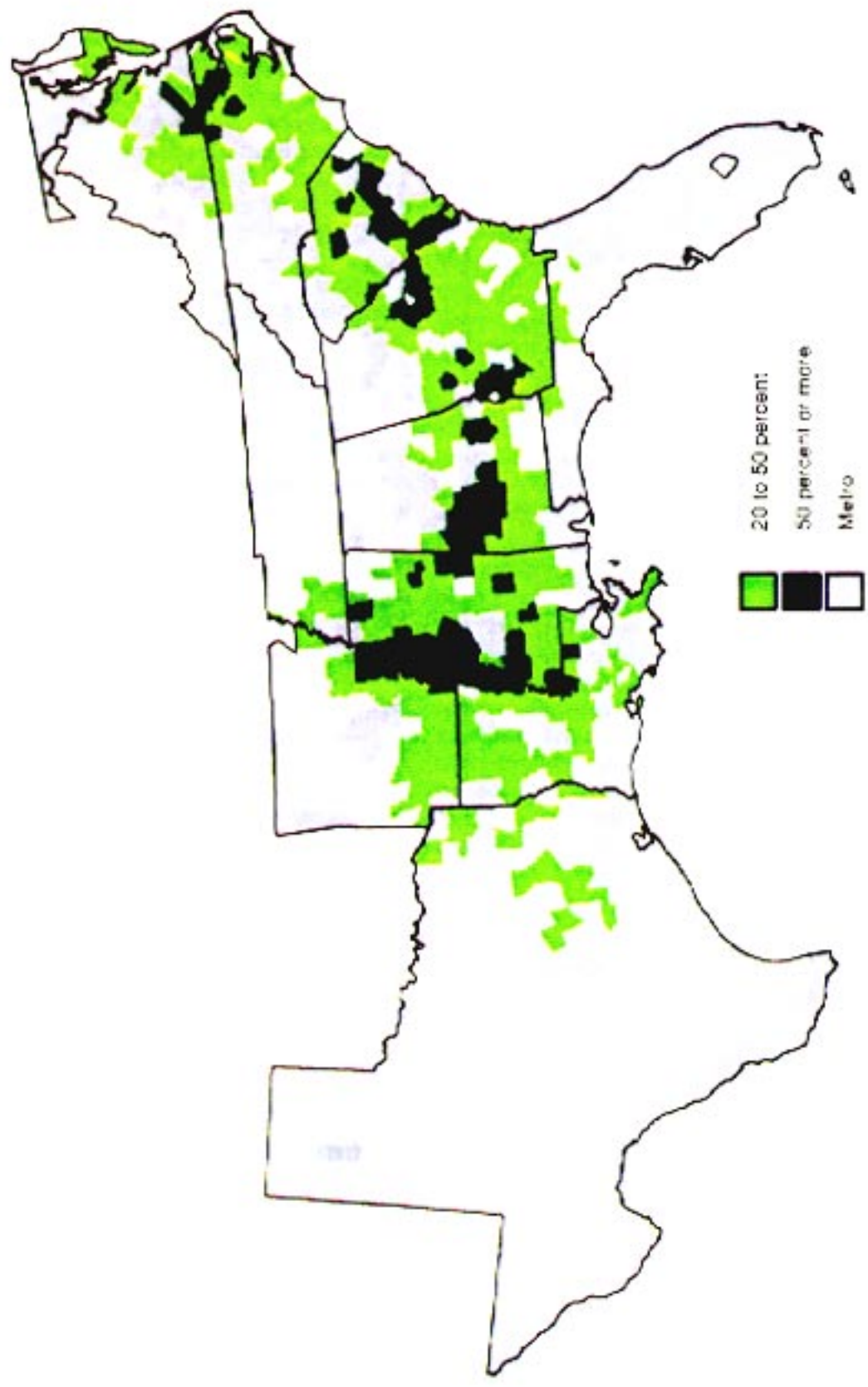
families and individuals have improved their status by choosing new neighborhoods, towns, cities, and regions of the country. The growth of the Black middle class since the 1960's goes hand in hand with their suburbanization. However, the continued poverty of large numbers of Blacks, both rural and urban, is inextricably bound up with their residential isolation.

For Blacks, the relationship between residential separation and economic well-being has always been negative. Other minority groups have thrived within "immigrant enclaves" that allow groups to pool resources and access a ready market for specialized goods and services. Perhaps because of the overt, legal racial barriers that were overcome at great cost, perhaps because Blacks have been part of this country from the beginning and were not "immigrants" to northern cities during the industrial era, the struggle has always been for assimilation within the American economy rather than for development of their own enclaves. Signs of continued and increasing residential separation, whether in neighborhoods of large cities or in rural areas, are necessarily viewed with concern. Changing residential patterns, so closely linked with Black economic status, demand the close attention of demographers and policymakers.

This study documents changing residential patterns in the municipalities and surrounding countryside of southern rural counties during the 1970's and 1980's. The purpose is to measure the change in racial composition caused by differences in Black and White population growth and to determine whether separation increased or decreased as a result. First, we examine population and racial composition change by size-of-place categories (including a separate category for populations living outside incorporated places) and measure the effect of population change on racial separation at the size-of-place level. Second, we examine the variability of racial composition change within the region's incorporated places.

¹ Rural people are those who live in counties outside the boundaries of metropolitan areas, as defined by the Office of Management and Budget. Thus, rural counties include small cities (under 50,000 pop.), small towns, and open country. See appendix for a complete definition.

Figure 1
Plantation South: nonmetro counties with 20 percent or more Black population, 1990



Data source: Bureau of the Census
Map prepared by Economic Research Service

Data and Definitions

Data for this analysis come from the 1970, 1980, and 1990 Censuses. Population data by race for all incorporated places were extracted from 100-percent-count data tapes and combined with similar data for counties in order to derive counts by race for areas outside incorporated places. To calculate a county's "non-place" population, incorporated place counts were summed and subtracted from the county total. In cases where incorporated places straddle county boundaries, weights for the Black and White populations were derived based on their distribution in each part of the place in 1980. Similar county-level breakdowns were not available for 1970 and 1990, so the 1980 weights were used. To be included, a place had to be officially incorporated at all three time points. Thus, persons living in places that were either recently incorporated or recently disincorporated are included among the "nonplace" population of counties, along with persons living in unincorporated villages and hamlets, suburban fringes of incorporated places, and open countryside.

The 1,451 municipalities included in the study are classified into one of five groups according to their size at the beginning of each decade (table 1). Thus, the number of places in each category shifts even though the total stays the same. The first two categories consist of cities and towns, that is, places with populations of 2,500 or more. Places with less than 2,500 people are termed villages.

In this study, the Black population includes all Blacks, Hispanic and non-Hispanic, to have a consistent definition across decades. The region under study contains very few Hispanic Blacks, less than 2 percent of the total. The White population includes all non-Black racial groups. Although other minorities make up only a fraction of the total non-Black population in this region, a few counties contain significant Asian or Native American populations.

While continued residential separation facing Blacks in the Nation's largest cities has been extensively documented, fewer studies have focused on racial composition change within rural areas. Two studies analyzing population change in rural counties showed that Black and White population trends began to diverge in the 1970's (Lichter, Fuguitt, and Heaton, 1985; Lichter and Heaton, 1986). During the 1950's and 1960's, the locus of population growth for both groups was cities and towns (municipalities with 2,500 people or more), indicating a process of concentration. During the 1970's, as part of a

Table 1—Number of incorporated places by size of place, Plantation South, 1970-90

Size of place	1970	1980	1990
	<i>Number</i>		
10,000 or more	85	94	91
2,500-9,999	266	284	268
1,000-2,499	296	287	301
500-999	298	312	277
Fewer than 500	506	474	514
Total	1,451	1,451	1,451

Source: Compiled by Economic Research Service from U.S. Bureau of the Census.

nationwide deconcentration of population, the rural White population grew by 22 percent in villages (municipalities with fewer than 2,500 people) and the outlying countryside, compared with 7-percent growth in cities and towns. However, the Black population continued to concentrate, growing by 17 percent in urban places compared with only 2 percent in villages and open countryside (Lichter, Fuguitt, and Heaton, 1985, p. 491). The 1970's was the first decade of large differences in Black and White growth rates in rural municipalities, with Black growth rates twice as high as those for Whites.

Aiken (1985; 1987; 1990) has documented the concentration of Blacks into countryside hamlets, the margins of municipalities, and predominantly Black towns from 1950 through 1980. Fieldwork conducted in the Mississippi Delta and elsewhere shows that Black concentration in recent decades stands in marked contrast to the dispersed pattern of settlement associated with earlier tenant farming. Redistribution of the Black population during 1950-80 altered the commercial and residential structure of small municipalities and increased racial separation within incorporated places.

Different interpretations have been made concerning the effect of racial population trends in the rural South. Aiken's analysis of increasing separation in the Mississippi Delta is similar to the findings of urban "hyper-segregation" in recent years. Cities and towns with declining retail structures, the concentration of the poor in public housing, economic isolation, predominantly Black towns with no employment base, and the perception of towns as ghettos are common features in this part of the rural South.

In their analysis of all southern rural counties from 1950 to 1980, Lichter and Heaton (1986) draw somewhat less pessimistic conclusions. They note that the pace of racial change was not as rapid as in large cities and suburbs and that Black communities were more demographically stable in rural areas, that is, populations were not rapidly replacing themselves as often occurred in urban neighborhoods. Also, during the 1970's, racial composition changed in the context of overall population growth rather than decline. "Thus, racial change in the South has evolved along a considerably different path than that now found in major U.S. metro cities, where increases in the percentage Black have occurred with White population losses" (1986, p. 352).

This study builds on previous research by considering all southern rural areas with significant Black populations and by including 1980-90 data. We are interested in the following questions: (1) Did Black concentration and White deconcentration continue in the 1980's? (2) Did residential separation increase or decrease as a result of different Black and White population growth? (3) To what extent did the Black percentage of the population increase in municipalities, and how did this vary over time and by place?

Historical and Geographical Setting

Since the end of World War II, the residential geography of this country's Black population has changed significantly. In addition to the well-documented, large-scale migration from the rural South to the urban North and West, a similar shift from smaller to larger places occurred within the rural South among Blacks who chose to remain or who returned to the region over the years. Unlike the large-scale interregional migration, which ended and even reversed after 1970, the process of Black intraregional concentration continued through the 1970's (Aiken, 1990; Lichter, Fuguitt, and Heaton, 1985; Lichter and Heaton, 1986).

Although much has been made of the historical Black population decline in the rural South, a significant number still live there. Population decline was precipitous for several decades before 1970, with the Black population in the rural South (as defined in 1984) dropping from 8 million in 1900 to 4.2 million in 1970. The population declined as Blacks left southern agricultural labor; outmigration, mechanization, and farm consolidation led to the near demise of the Black farm economy (Aiken, 1985; Banks, 1986; Beale, 1966; Moland, 1981). The

number of Black farm operators dropped from 560,000 in 1950 to 100,000 in 1970 (Beale, 1971). During the 1960's alone, the Black farm population in the South declined by 64 percent (Beale, 1973).

Regional outmigration associated with agricultural displacement subsided after 1970, and the rural South's Black population began to grow slowly; in 1990, the population was close to 4.5 million. A small but steady return migration to rural areas from outside the South contributed to this growth (Cromartie and Stack, 1989). However, unlike the White population, which shifted away from towns and cities into the countryside—a new pattern of deconcentration—Blacks within the region continued to concentrate in the cities and towns.

The purpose of this research is to analyze recent shifts in racial composition within rural counties containing significant Black populations. Rural counties with the highest concentration of Blacks, including the 78 that remain majority Black (fig. 1), are in areas that until World War II were distinguished by an all-encompassing plantation-type economy. The plantation system, which depended on the low-cost mobilization of Black farm laborers, did not disappear with emancipation in 1863 but was maintained by various noncash arrangements of share tenancy known as "sharecropping." Although the system suffered from declining cotton prices, boll weevil infestation, and outmigration of Black labor beginning in the 1910's, it ended only after World War II with the wholesale mechanization of cotton and other crop production.

Our study selected rural counties with populations that were 20 percent or more Black in 1990. These counties form an almost contiguous region from the Eastern Shore of Maryland to east Texas. Except in Texas and Florida, all but a handful of the South's rural Coastal Plain counties are included.² Most of the Piedmont counties with high Black percentages lie along the Fall Line, the border between the Coastal Plain and Piedmont. Because of the legacy left by

² Four rural counties that have populations higher than 20 percent Black are not included: Alexander and Pulaski, IL; Geary, KS; and Pemiscot, MO. Although Alexander, Pulaski, and Pemiscot Counties are linked historically and geographically to the Mississippi Delta region, they are not located in the South (as defined by the Census Bureau) and thus are excluded, along with Geary, from this analysis.

Table 2—Black population by region and subregion, 1970-90

Region	Population			Distribution		
	1970	1980	1990	1970	1980	1990
	<i>Number</i>			<i>Percent</i>		
U.S. total	22,674,586	26,482,349	29,986,060	100.0	100.0	100.0
Non-South	10,610,328	12,443,567	14,157,172	46.8	47.0	47.2
Urban ¹	10,303,646	12,094,098	13,714,782	45.4	45.7	45.7
Rural	306,682	349,469	442,390	1.4	1.3	1.5
South	12,064,258	14,038,782	15,828,888	53.2	53.0	52.8
Urban	7,821,878	9,618,443	11,348,070	34.5	36.3	37.8
Rural	4,242,380	4,420,339	4,480,818	18.7	16.7	14.9
Nonplantation	996,815	993,015	1,012,160	4.4	3.7	3.4
Plantation	3,245,565	3,427,324	3,468,658	14.3	12.9	11.6

¹Urban and rural are equivalent to metropolitan and nonmetropolitan.

Source: Compiled by Economic Research Service from U.S. Bureau of the Census.

Table 3—Black and White population change by region and subregion, 1970-90

Region	Black population change		White population change		Share Black		
	1970-80	1980-90	1970-80	1980-90	1970	1980	1990
	<i>Percent</i>						
U.S. total	16.8	13.2	10.8	9.3	11.2	11.7	12.1
Non-South	17.3	13.8	6.9	7.5	7.6	8.2	8.7
Urban ¹	17.4	13.4	5.3	8.6	9.1	10.0	10.4
Rural	14.0	26.6	12.8	3.3	1.1	1.2	1.4
South	16.4	12.8	20.9	13.5	19.2	18.6	18.5
Urban	23.0	18.0	21.4	17.2	18.6	18.7	18.8
Rural	4.2	1.4	19.8	5.7	20.6	18.4	17.8
Nonplantation	-0.4	1.9	22.8	6.9	8.2	6.7	6.4
Plantation	5.6	1.2	13.2	2.8	38.5	36.8	36.5

¹Urban and rural are equivalent to metropolitan and nonmetropolitan.

Source: Compiled by Economic Research Service from U.S. Bureau of the Census.

the now nearly extinct plantation system, we refer to the area under study as the Plantation South.³

The Plantation South's Black population has remained fairly stable at just under 3.5 million, growing only slightly over 20 years (table 2). Because of more rapid growth in other regions, most notably the urban South, the population in the Plantation South has

declined from 14.3 percent of the total U.S. Black population in 1970 to 11.6 percent in 1990.

Both Black and White populations grew much more slowly in 1980-90 than in 1970-80 (table 3). Population growth rates in the 1980's for rural Whites in both the South and non-South were about one-quarter the 1970's rates. Black population growth in the Plantation South fell from 5.6 percent in the 1970's to 1.2 percent in the 1980's. Because of faster White growth during both decades, the proportion of Blacks declined slightly for the South as a whole and for the Plantation subregion. However,

³ Another popular label for this region, the "Black Belt," is somewhat misleading because it takes its name from a physiographic region in east-central Mississippi and western Alabama, named for the color of its soil.

Table 4—Population change by race and size of place, Plantation South, 1970-90

Size of place	Black population change		White population change		Share Black		
	1970-80	1980-90	1970-80	1980-90	1970	1980	1990
	<i>Percent</i>						
Total	5.6	1.1	13.2	2.6	38.6	37.0	36.7
10,000 or more	17.0	13.5	0.9	-5.0	34.8	38.3	42.5
2,500-9,999	15.7	9.3	5.1	-8.3	37.8	40.1	44.4
1,000-2,499	19.4	5.5	5.6	-7.4	35.7	38.6	41.7
500-999	17.9	-2.2	6.3	-8.8	33.0	35.4	37.0
Less than 500	24.5	-8.5	9.7	-9.6	28.8	31.5	31.8
Place total	17.1	9.3	3.6	-6.9	35.6	38.5	42.4
Outside places	-1.9	-5.2	20.9	9.2	40.9	35.9	32.7

Source: Compiled by Economic Research Service from U.S. Bureau of the Census.

the modest decline in overall percentage Black is not indicative of more significant racial composition shifts within the subregion.

Racial Composition Shifts Within the Plantation South

The extent of intraregional racial composition shifts may be analyzed by comparing population changes within and outside incorporated places. Despite extremely low overall growth in the 1980's, patterns of change for Blacks and Whites within the Plantation South continued to be quite distinct (table 4). As in the 1970's, the Black population grew much faster than the White population in the region's incorporated towns and cities, a trend that has increased the Black percentage of these places. The Black population continued to decrease outside incorporated places, while the White population continued to gain in these areas, although at a much reduced rate from the 1970's.

White population grew during the 1970's in all size-of-place categories but followed a systematic pattern of deconcentration. That is, growth was smallest among larger cities, increased down the size-of-place hierarchy, and was largest for the nonplace population. During the 1980's, the White population declined within municipalities at all size levels, but continued to grow outside places.

Black population growth during the 1970's was uniformly high in incorporated places, averaging 17 percent, in marked contrast with the 1.9-percent

decline outside municipalities. A pattern of concentration up the size-of-place hierarchy appeared for the first time during the 1980's. Cities of 10,000 persons or more grew fastest while the Black population in towns under 1,000 decreased. Overall, the municipal Black population increased by 9 percent while the Black population outside places decreased by 5 percent.

Black population growth rates exceeded White rates in all municipal size-of-place categories in both decades. Outside municipalities, White growth was positive and Black growth was negative in both decades. This differing population growth altered racial composition. The population residing outside incorporated places, which in 1970 was 41 percent Black, declined to 33 percent Black in 1990. At the same time, the population in the region's largest cities increased from 35 to 43 percent Black.

During the 1970's, the Black share of population grew within the context of overall municipal growth. White growth at all size levels, because it was positive, kept increases in Black percentages from being higher than they were. During the 1980's, Black growth combined with White decline to increase the Black percentage in places of 1,000 persons or more. In places less than 1,000 persons, Black population declines offset the effects of White decline. Outside of places, Black decline and White growth contributed to Black percentage decreases in both decades, although White growth contributed the most, especially during the 1970's.

Effects of Population Change on Racial Separation

Have different growth rates by size of place increased or decreased racial separation in the Plantation South? In 1970, a higher percentage of Whites than Blacks lived in municipalities of all sizes (table 5). The largest difference occurred among cities with 10,000 or more people, which contained 19 percent of the White population and 16 percent of the Black population. By 1980, the distributions had switched in the three highest size categories; that is, a higher percentage of Blacks lived in places with more than 1,000 people—and the gaps widened during the 1980's.

The process is similar outside municipalities. A higher percentage of Blacks than Whites lived outside of places (61 versus 55 percent) in 1970. As a result of continuing redistribution trends, the Black distribution outside places dropped to 53 percent in 1990, while the White distribution rose to 63 percent. The difference in percentages outside places, having converged and then diverged, was almost twice as large in 1990 as in 1970.

The convergence of distributions followed by divergence is shown in our measure of separation (table 5). The index of dissimilarity, a commonly used separation measure, shows the percentage of one group (Black or White) that would have to change size categories in order to achieve similar distributions. Between 1970 and 1980, Black

concentration and White deconcentration combined to reduce separation among size-of-place categories. Whites were more concentrated than Blacks in 1970. But by 1990 this had reversed, so that Black concentration and White deconcentration served to increase separation. The dissimilarity index was nearly three times as high in 1990 as in 1980.

Figure 2 depicts the population distribution reversals that have taken place in the Plantation South and the growing Black and White gap. The same percentages as in table 5 are shown except the five municipal categories have been aggregated into two categories—places above 2,500 people (cities and towns) and places below 2,500 people (villages). The population outside places is kept as a separate category. Sometime during the mid-1970's, one-third of both Blacks and Whites lived in cities and towns. Since then, population distributions have diverged and the gap in 1990 was much larger than in 1970. Distributions did not change as much for the populations living in villages—close to 10 percent of both races live in these towns and villages—but a reversal to a higher Black percentage took place around 1980.

A majority of both groups were still living outside municipalities in 1990. However, if present trends continue, less than half the Black population but more than two-thirds of the White population will live outside incorporated places by 2000. Over 40 percent of the Black population in the Plantation South will

Table 5—Black and White population distribution by size of place, Plantation South, 1970-90

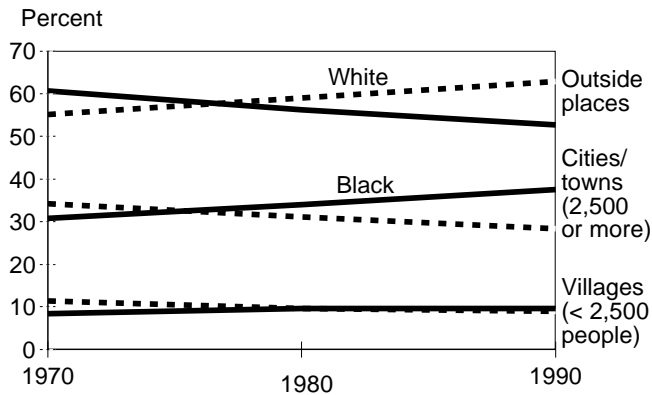
Size of place	1970			1980			1990		
	Black	White	Difference	Black	White	Difference	Black	White	Difference
	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Percentage points</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Percentage points</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Percentage points</i>
10,000 or more	16.3	19.2	-2.9	18.1	17.1	1.0	20.3	15.9	4.4
2,500-9,999	14.5	15.0	-0.5	15.9	14.0	1.9	17.2	12.5	4.7
1,000-2,499	5.2	5.9	-0.7	5.9	5.5	0.4	6.2	5.0	1.2
500-999	2.1	2.7	-0.6	2.3	2.5	-0.2	2.2	2.2	0.0
Less than 500	1.2	2.8	-1.6	1.5	1.7	-0.2	1.3	1.8	-0.5
Outside places	60.6	55.2	5.4	56.3	59.0	-2.7	52.7	62.8	-10.1
Index of dissimilarity ¹	1970 5.8			1980 3.2			1990 10.4		

¹ The index of dissimilarity is the percentage of one group (Black, White) that would have to change residence in order to achieve similar distributions among the size-of-place categories.

Source: Compiled by Economic Research Service from U.S. Bureau of the Census.

Figure 2

Black and White population distribution in the Plantation South, 1970-90



Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census

live in cities and towns by 2000, while less than 25 percent of the White population will live in such places.

Patterns of Racial Change in Incorporated Places

How have these population trends affected the racial makeup of the region’s municipalities? During the 1970’s, the Black share of population increased in 64 percent of the 1,451 incorporated places in the Plantation South; the number of such places grew slightly during the 1980’s to 67 percent. Places where the Black composition increased were not clustered but were distributed uniformly throughout the region, with some exceptions. Fewer places in Maryland and Virginia increased their Black share during the 1980’s (55 percent) than in Mississippi and Texas (75 percent). North and South Carolina also had Black percentage increases in more than 70 percent of municipalities.

The average increase in percentage Black was relatively small, around 6 percent in both decades. But in some municipalities, the increases were substantial enough to cause a switch to majority Black status. Between 1970 and 1990, 197 municipalities became majority Black, increasing the total from 261 (18 percent of the total) to 458 (32 percent). Between 1970 and 1990, 177 municipalities increased in percentage Black by more than 15 percent, with 63 becoming predominantly Black.

The number of municipalities experiencing Black percentage increases varied little between the 1970’s

and 1980’s despite tremendous changes in overall municipal growth patterns. During the 1970’s, 87 percent of incorporated places in the Plantation South grew in total population; only 50 percent of places grew during the 1980’s.

Increases in percentage Black may occur in three ways—faster Black than White growth, Black growth and White decline, or slower Black than White decline. In both decades, the most common pattern was Black growth and White decline, but this pattern was much more predominant in the 1980’s (table 6). Black growth greater than White growth was nearly as common a pattern (as Black growth, White decline) in the 1970’s, but the percentage of places in this category declined precipitously in the 1980’s. At the same time, the percentage of places experiencing slower Black than White decline increased significantly. Thus, during the 1980’s, Black concentration in the Plantation South resulted from patterns of "White flight" and overall population decline; these are demographic processes similar to those affecting ghetto formation in urban cities.

During both decades, roughly one-third of incorporated places decreased in percentage Black (table 6). Among these places, slower White than Black decline increased dramatically, becoming by far the most predominant pattern during the 1980’s. Places with either faster White than Black growth or White growth and Black decline dropped to less than 10 percent of all places.

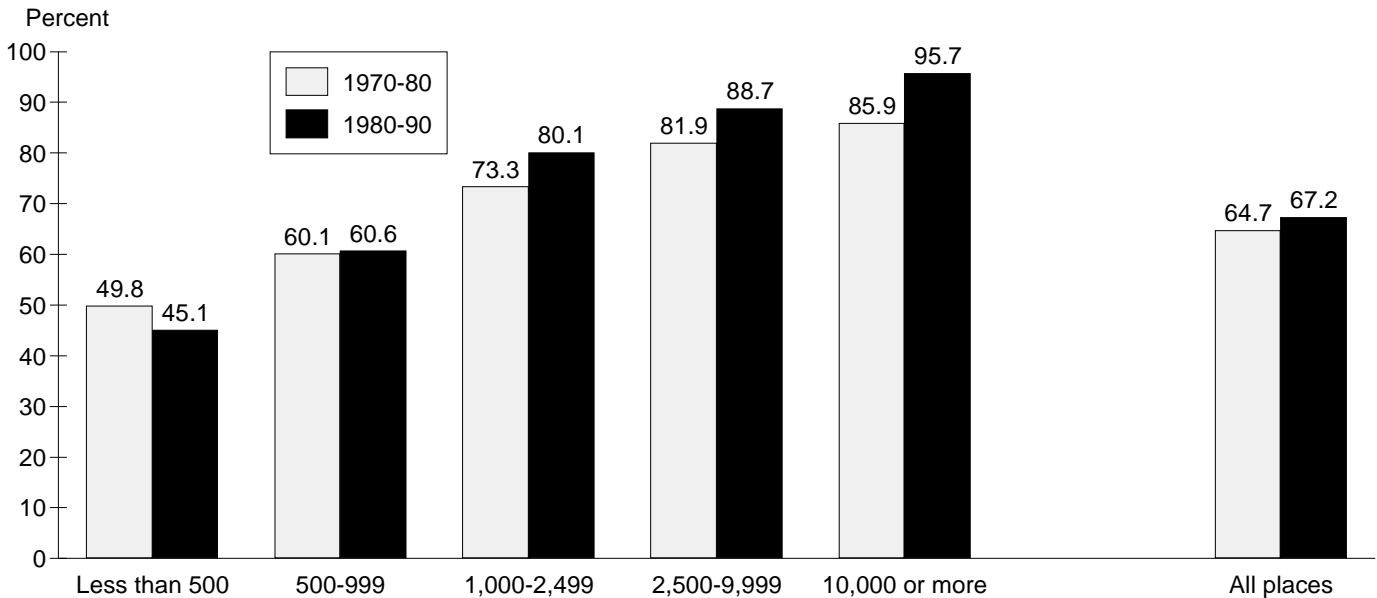
Table 6—Distribution of incorporated places by change in percentage Black and racial growth patterns, Plantation South, 1970-90

Type of change	1970-80	1980-90
	<i>Percent</i>	
Increase in percentage Black	64.8	67.1
Faster Black than White growth	27.2	9.4
Black growth, White decline	30.9	37.4
Slower Black than White decline	6.7	20.3
Decrease in percentage Black	35.2	32.9
Faster White than Black growth	8.9	2.7
White growth, Black decline	14.6	6.5
Slower White than Black decline	11.7	23.7

Source: Compiled by Economic Research Service from U.S. Bureau of the Census.

Figure 3

Percentage of places with an increasing Black composition, 1970-80 and 1980-90, by size at beginning of decade



Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census.

A strong relationship exists between the size-of-place hierarchy and increasing Black composition (fig. 3). The share of incorporated places with Black percentage increases ranged from 45 percent among the smallest villages to 96 percent among the largest cities during the 1980's. This pattern was only slightly less pronounced during the 1970's. The percentage of places with an increasing Black composition topped 80 percent in all size-of-place categories above 1,000 during the 1980's. Larger towns and cities usually provide better chances for jobs, more housing choices, and greater access to education and social services than do smaller towns. These functions appear to be more important in determining Black than White residential choices. Opportunities for Blacks in the Plantation South are continuing to concentrate in larger municipalities.

Is there a "tipping point" in terms of racial composition above which Black percentage increase occurs with greater frequency? Figure 4 indicates a relationship between initial percentage Black and increasing Black composition, especially during the 1980's, but with no obvious "tipping point." In general, the higher the percentage Black, the more likely that a place had Black composition increase, although this relationship did not hold above the 50-percent mark during the 1970's. During the 1980's, the relationship was evident up to 70 percent.

The process of Black concentration seems to be reinforcing previously evolving residential patterns, with predominantly Black places more likely to increase in percentage Black than places with lower concentrations of Blacks.

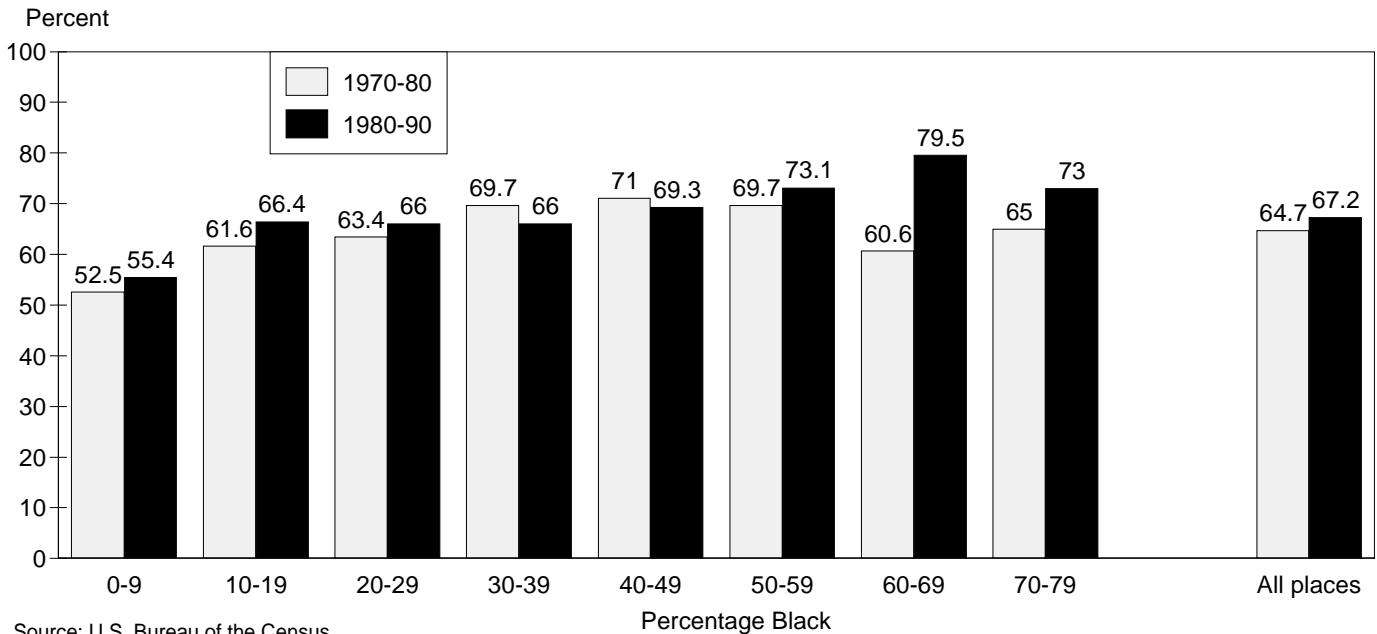
Conclusions

Both by choice and from lack of alternatives, Black southerners for generations have made settlement choices that differ considerably from those of their White neighbors. In the period of heaviest Black outmigration, 1940-70, Blacks within the region both fled and were displaced from dispersed patterns of settlement associated with tenant and/or small-scale farming and began moving into cities and towns. Our analysis of population change within the Plantation South since 1970 shows that Black concentration continued during both the 1970's and the 1980's, combining with White deconcentration to significantly shift the racial composition of incorporated places and the surrounding countryside.

In 1970, a higher percentage of Whites than Blacks lived in cities and towns. Black concentration and White deconcentration led to identical distributions sometime during the late 1970's; since that time, distributions have diverged, so that the two

Figure 4

Percentage of places with an increasing Black composition, 1970-80 and 1980-90, by percentage Black at beginning of decade



Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census.

populations have become increasingly separated along the size-of-place hierarchy. If present trends continue to the end of the century, over 40 percent of the Black population in the Plantation South will share cities and towns with less than 25 percent of the White population.

Separation increasing at the municipal level does not necessarily imply that the same is occurring at the neighborhood level. Traditional economic and social arrangements have always resulted in separate residential areas in the rural South. Within cities and towns where the Black population is increasing relative to Whites, neighborhood sharing may occur for a period as Black families move into formerly all-White neighborhoods (Aiken, 1990). But this situation is strictly temporary, eventually giving way to all-Black neighborhoods.

In most cases, increasing separation at the geographic scale measured in this chapter signals growing economic disadvantages for the rural Black population more hurtful in the long run than continued neighborhood separation. Many municipalities that have become predominantly Black are thought to have experienced declines in their status as retail trade centers, especially those that once served dispersed farm populations. Many have become pockets of poverty with high unemployment,

and many residents depend on government programs for housing and income assistance. Based on demographic evidence, Aiken's case-study depiction of rural municipalities as emerging ghettos appears to be apt, and is not confined to the Mississippi Delta, where most of his work was done.

During the 1970's, patterns of racial change were driven by population growth, whereas the opposite was generally true during the 1980's. Thus, the findings of Lichter and Heaton (1986), that the processes underlying Black composition change in the rural South during the 1970's were considerably different than in urban centers, were not true during the 1980's. "White flight" from rural municipalities was already a common pattern in the 1970's, but it became the dominant pattern in the 1980's, with over one-third of places experiencing Black growth and White decline. Another 20 percent experienced declines of both races during the 1980's, compared with 7 percent during the 1970's. Clearly, the underlying demographic context of increases in Black and White separation in the rural South has become more akin to ghetto-forming processes.

However, not all places in the Plantation South that are increasing in Black composition are emerging ghettos. During the 1980's, Black composition increased in two-thirds of all places and in 96 percent

of cities above 10,000. A number of these places increased in population and did well economically within a changing rural economy. Blacks have taken advantage of increasing job opportunities in the service and government sectors in the larger towns and cities of the region. Moreover, Black composition increases in municipalities often translated into increased political control and decisionmaking power over matters affecting the well-being of the Black population. The large increases in Black elected officials in the region in recent years show significant progress in the sharing of political power that comes with Black concentration. Whether increased political gains translate into Black economic gains depends very much on the future economic health of the region's municipalities.

References

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