

# Understanding Modern Segregation: Traumatic Racial Experiences and Other Factors Supporting African American Preferences for Majority- Black Neighborhoods

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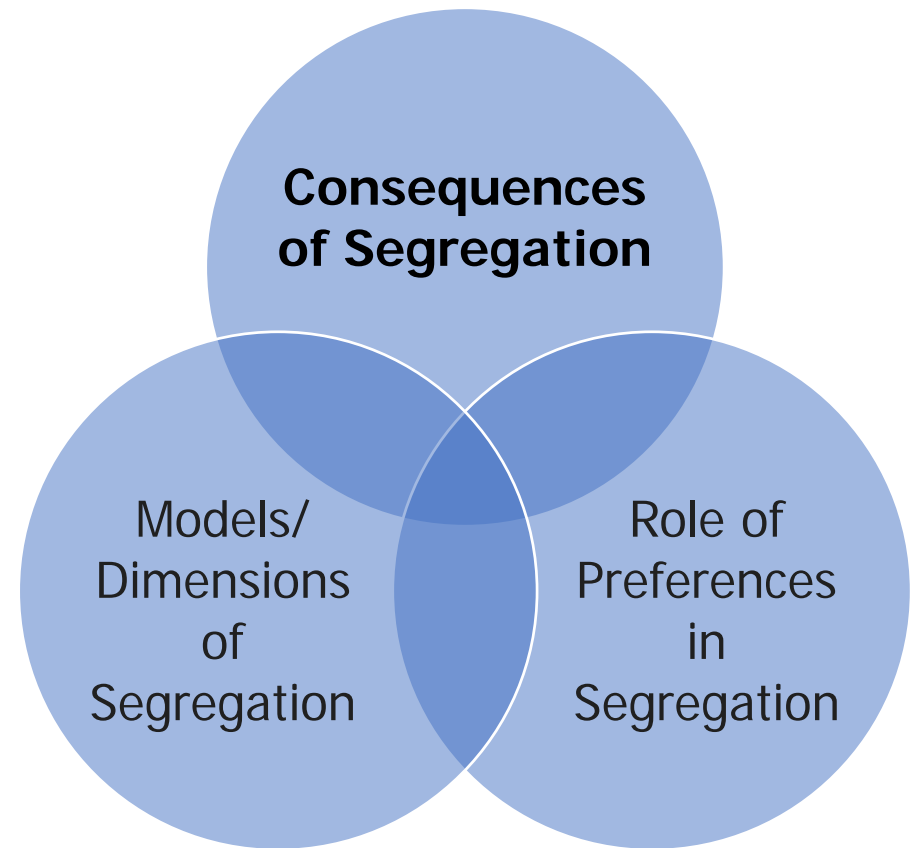


# Introduction

- African Americans have traditionally resided in urban areas, and many scholars have noted the social problems that concentration in urban neighborhoods can cause (especially Massey and Denton 1993, Wilson 1989).
- Concentrated disadvantage in urban communities places residents at disproportionate risk for exposure to trauma.

# Existing Literature on Consequences of Segregation

- This literature focuses on the concentrated urban poor, their isolation, and the equation of segregation with entrenched disadvantage.
- It leads to the assumption that integration is always a positive influence, and *the* way to societal advancement.
- Researchers: Massey, Denton, Fong, Wilson, Krysan, Farley, DeLuca and Rosenbaum

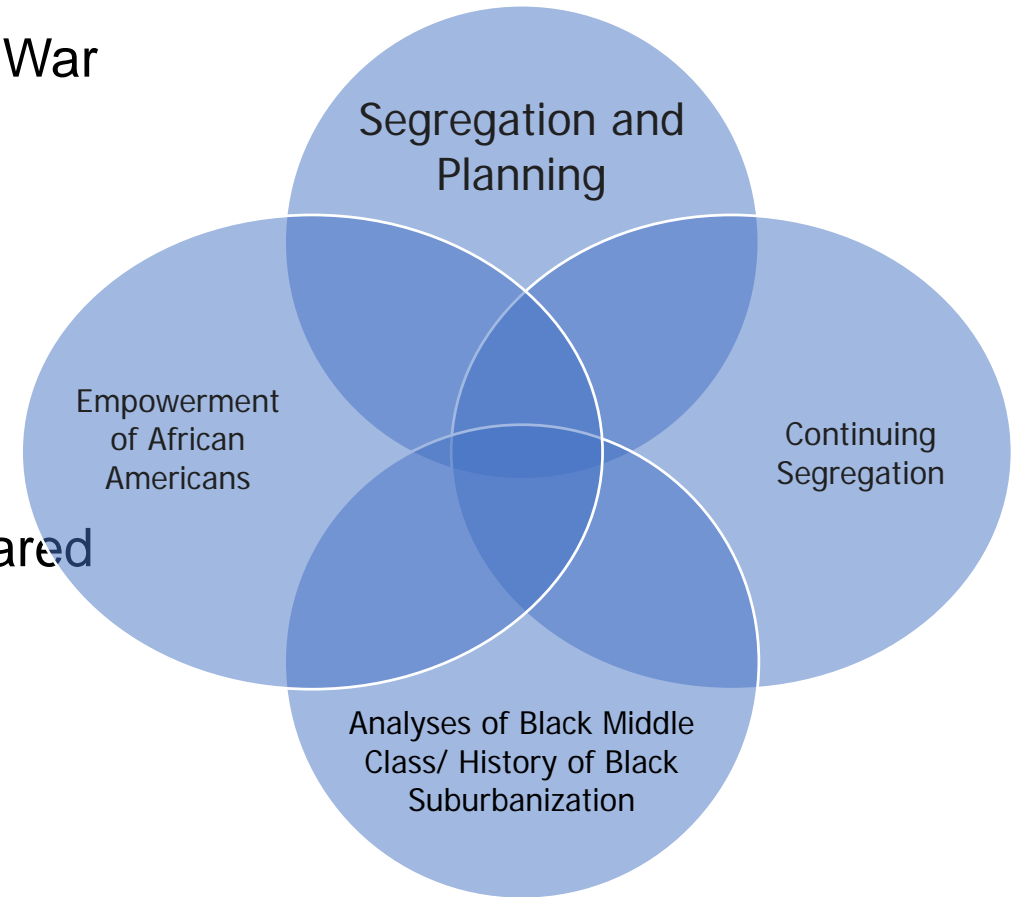


# Introduction (continued)

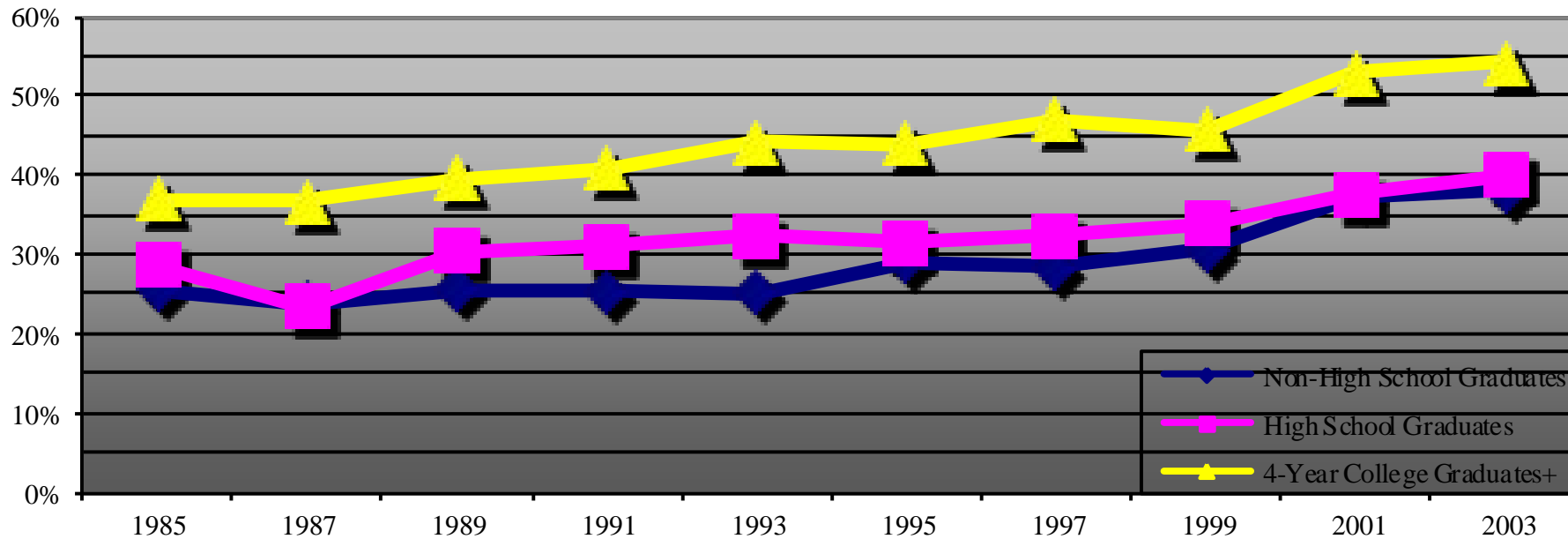
- A new sociological phenomenon exists: middle class African Americans are moving to suburban areas in large numbers and many are moving to majority black neighborhoods, and developing majority black communities.
- This challenges common thinking among social scientists and policymakers who make broad assumptions that concentrations of African Americans are inherently problematic.

# Analyses of Black Middle Class / History of Suburbanization

- “Old” Black Middle Class existed since at least the Civil War
- “New” Black Middle Class formed post-civil rights movement in 1970s and 1980s
- Individual Black communities began forming by early 1900s
- There are costs to living in these communities as compared to White communities
- Black middle class not as separated from poor as white middle class



# Percentage of African Americans in Metropolitan Areas Living in Suburbs, by Education

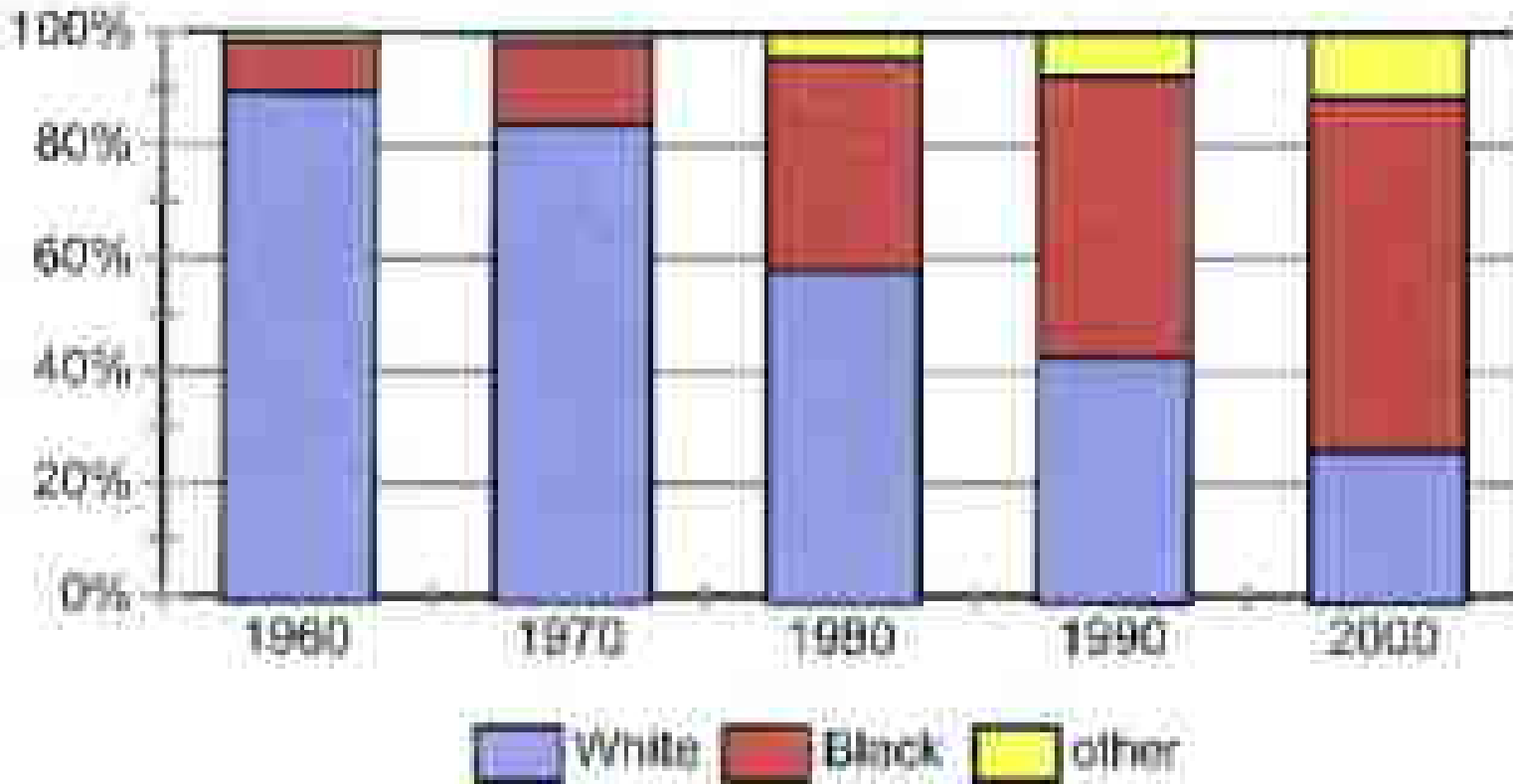


Source: U.S. Census Bureau. 1985-2003. Current Housing Reports, Series H150, American Housing Survey for the United States. (Author's Computation)

# Prince George's County

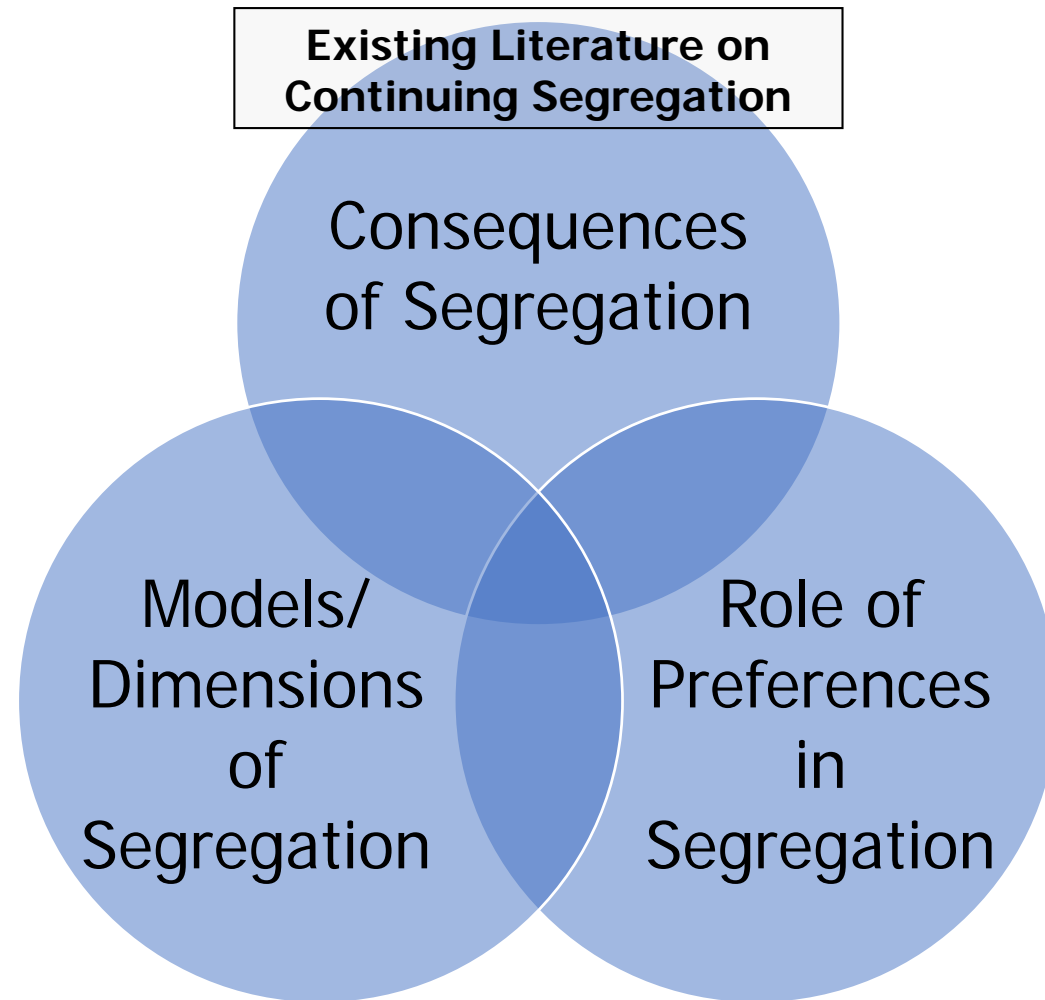
## Minorities Continue to Grow

PGC is a majority-black, majority-affluent county (Wiese 2005, 270). Conversely, MC is a majority white county with relatively large homes and high prices (Anacker, Carr, & Pradhan, 2012).



Source: M-NCPPC

# Introduction (cont.): Segregation Literature





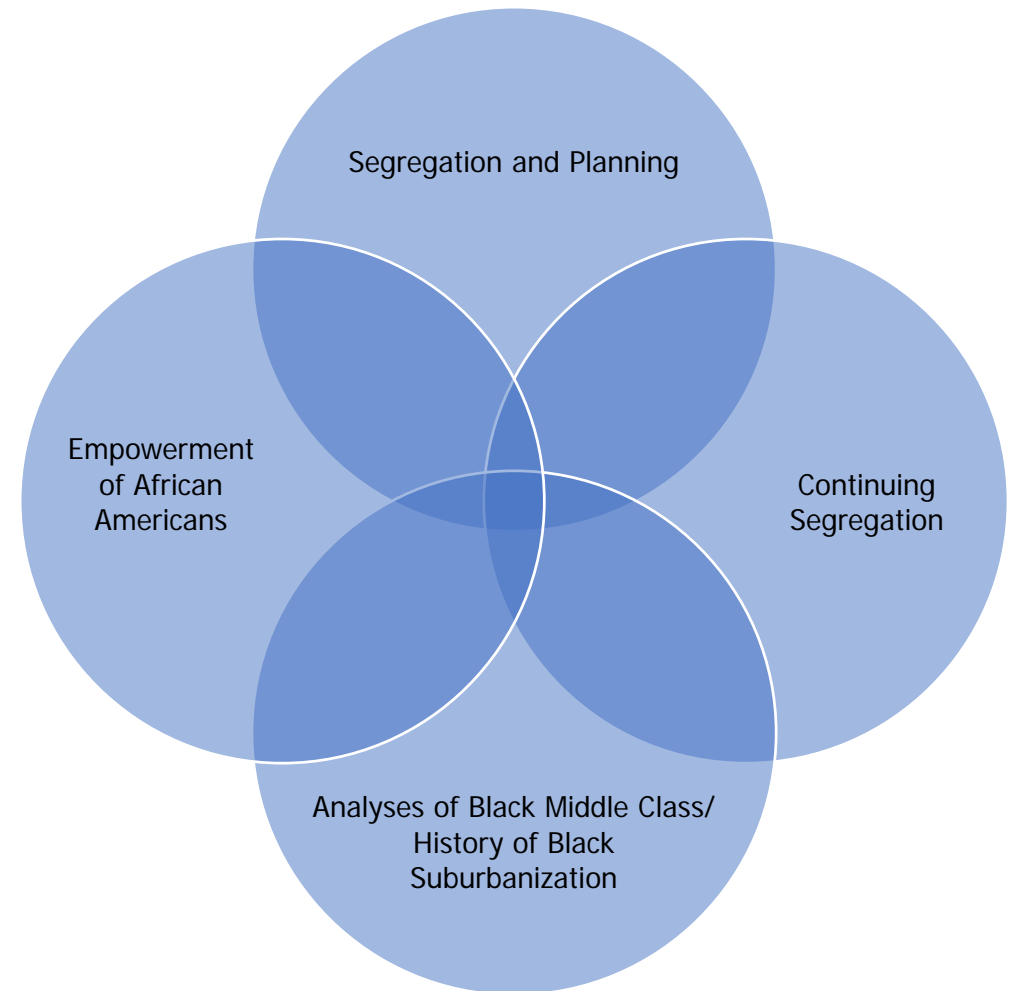
# What's Still Missing?

- What's behind the preferences of African Americans?
- The models could better reflect real decisions and conditions.
- Most conclusions are based on old data.
- Improved understanding of policy implications of racial concentration

# Traumatic Racial Experiences

- Traumatic racial experiences are rarely addressed by those who study segregation
- It may make sense for Black homeowners to choose (racial) concentration:
  - For its benefits (including dominant role in local government and other economic and social institutions)
  - To avoid traumatic racial experiences
  - Because of past traumatic racial experiences
- Researchers into residential patterns are mostly political theorists and urban planners

Researchers: Bobo and Gilliam, Reed, Stone, Dawson, Carmichael and Hamilton



# The Social Identity Approach: Social Identity and Self-Categorization

- Incorporates principles from:
  - Social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979)
  - Self-categorization theory (Turner et al., 1987, 1994)
- The self is context-dependent and can be defined at different levels of abstraction:
  - Personal, social, organizational, national, human
- Different bases of self-definition have consequences for motivation, behavior, and interaction



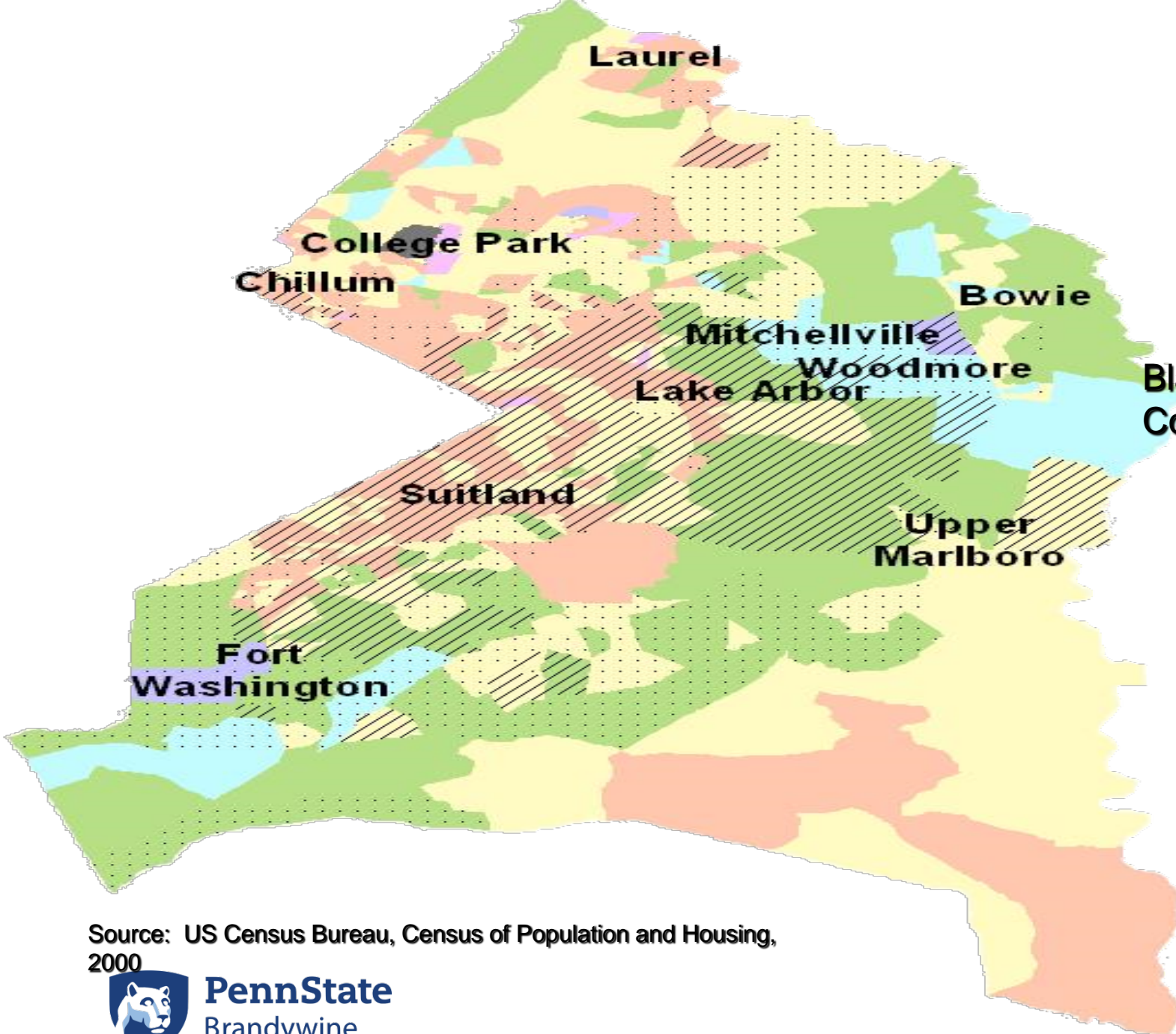
# Research Design

# Context: Prince George's and Montgomery Counties

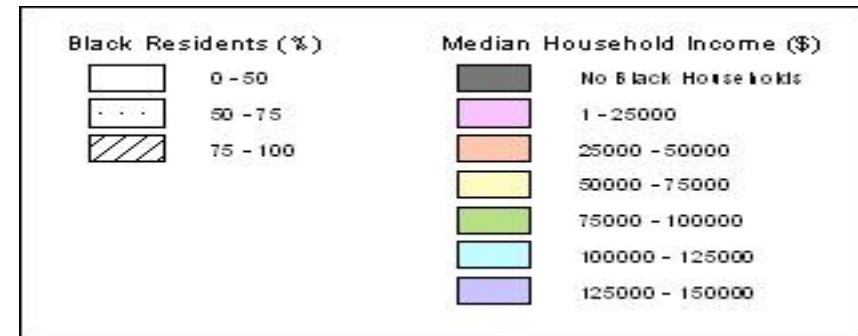
- A range of neighborhoods of different racial and economic characteristics exists.
- Large numbers of migrants to these areas (not just residents who live whole lives in one place)
  - Minimizes interstate differences
- Region has history of integration, strong economy, large number of Blacks, low levels of racial animosity

*All of these factors allow us to study what people actually want when presented with options, addressing many of the shortcomings of previous research.*

# Prince George's County



**Black Household Income and Concentration**



Source: US Census Bureau, Census of Population and Housing, 2000



# The Current Investigation

- The present study utilized social identity and self-categorization to explore how self-identifications function as affluent AAs make housing decisions, and the perceived consequences of those decisions.
- Specifically, narrative analysis was used to identify
  - (i) whether and to what extent participants identified with the county in which they lived;
  - (ii) features of their perceived experience responsible for any such identification; and
  - (iii) any attitudes about living in predominately white and predominately AA counties that acted as limits to identification.

# Methods



# Participants

- In-depth narrative interviews of 35 AA homeowners (representing 21 different ZIP Codes) who self-reported at least one incident of racial victimization in the United States.
- Participants were from neighborhoods of various racial compositions in PGC (majority AA county;  $n=20$ ) and MC (majority white county;  $n=15$ ) in Maryland.

# Research Data. The research data were comprised of semi structured biographical interviews, field notes and participant observation

- Interview Examples:

- Interests when purchasing home (e.g. neighborhood racial composition, neighborhood racial history, income level and social status of neighbors, public school quality, location relative to work, etc)
- Home buying experience
- Life Story (including the narratives participants held about spaces & places prior to purchasing their home)
- Racial experiences (including experiences with racism and racial violence)



# Procedures

- Screening to ensure geographic distribution and that a range of ages and neighborhood types included
- Corroboration of personal accounts
- Following informed consent, in-depth, semistructured interviews were administered to participants in their homes ( $n=33$ ) or at another location of their choice ( $n=2$ )

# Procedures (cont.)

- Interviews lasted approximately 2 hours.
  - These interviews were recorded digitally and were recorded on a digital audio recorder and transcribed verbatim.
- Transcripts were discussed with research colleagues and the subject matter was discussed with other homeowners at several dozen social events over the same time period, including during and after the coding process.

# Results

# Themes. Social Identity by County

- *MC Participants*

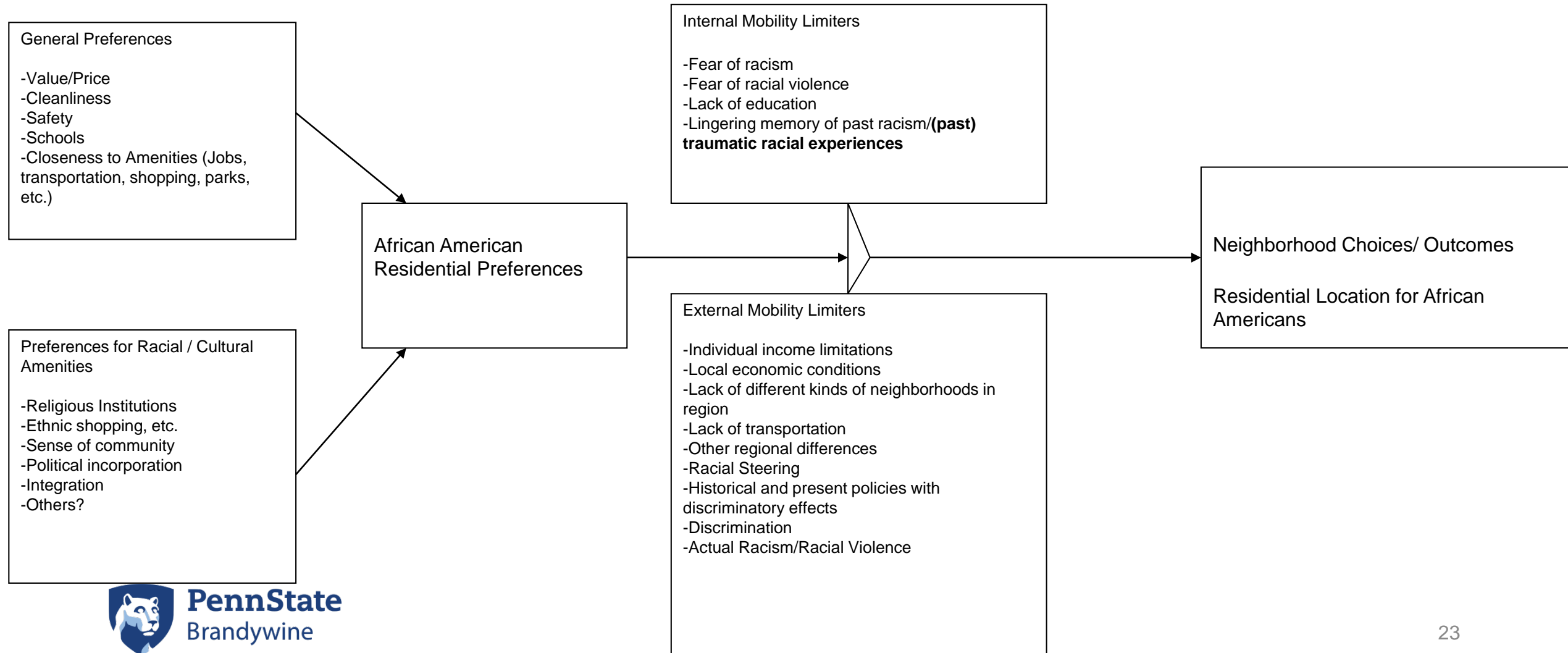
- *Theme 1. Adopted Pro-Diversity MC Social Identity*
- *Theme 2. MC Social Identity via Whiteness and Reflected Glory*

- *PGC Participants*

- *Theme 1. Adopted PGC Social Identity as Children*
- *Theme 2. Adopted PGC Social Identity to Become “Legacy” Builders*

# Illustrative Model

## (Comprehensive List of Participant-Reported Factors)



# Overall

- 1 - Middle-class African Americans who live in predominately black neighborhoods choose to do so because:
  - these neighborhoods give them access to cultural or physical amenities associated with African American culture as well as the comfort of living with other African Americans.
  - to be exemplars to African Americans in other regions of the country (evidence of a thriving black middle class)
  - because of past traumatic racial experiences/fear of future traumatic racial experiences (for themselves and/or for their children)



# Results (cont.)

- 2 - Middle-class African Americans who live in predominately black suburban neighborhoods differ from those that live in predominately white suburban neighborhoods in:
  - their relative preferences for racial diversity and the value of being associated with “whiteness”
  - the relevance of negative residential racial experiences (PGC participants)
  - the importance of avoiding negative group stereotypes (MC participants)
  - perception that a white community will mean a lack of cultural safety (PGC participants)
  - precarious economic situation/ fear of future racist acts (losing a job due to racism)

# Results (cont.)

- 3. Participants in both PGC and MC articulated a belief in the value of diversity but there was disparity in how diversity was defined.
- 4. When participants perceived the AA community in PGC as low in entativity, participants were likely to prefer MC, regardless of where they actually lived.

# Results (cont.)

- 5. Race remained a primary social category
  - All participants thought of themselves as being subsumed into the larger category of “African-American.”
  - Results also showed that MC homeowners, more so than PGC homeowners, did not think that the choice of where to purchase a house was a threat to their place in the singular African-American category.
    - This was a departure from PGC homeowners who perceived that they were building a legacy of AA affluence and success that necessitated that they live in a predominately AA community.

# 6. Variation in the Relevance of Traumatic Racial Experiences

- PGC participants were more likely to express fear of traumatic racial experiences (e.g. discrimination leading to a job loss) when explaining their choice to live in PGC:

“...a higher level of AAs or middle class AAs refrain from acquiring those higher mortgages. And it’s not just based on the neighborhoods, it is based upon the whole set up and they are not sure about their job if it’s solid. They do have jobs and in lawyers’ offices maybe or doctors’ offices but even with that they are not sure how solid their job is there. ...”

(continued in next slide)

## 6. Variation in the Relevance of Traumatic Racial Experiences (cont.)

“...Is it going to bring them to career advancement or are there going to be promotions? Will someone get laid off? It is still on shaky ground. It is a lot of stepping out on faith when you make these purchases because you are not sure where you will be tomorrow. And, again, it is the racism in the job place and because of all these different factors that come into part and being able to rely on the support system of your parents. But [hypothetically] your parents live in apartments, how...can you rely on them? So, therefore, you end up with a cheaper property where you feel that you can really handle it during tougher times. That will put them back into Prince Georges County, or that will put them back in the lower real estate areas.”

## 6. Variation in the Relevance of Traumatic Racial Experiences (cont.)

- MC participants who reported negative residential racial experiences prior to purchasing a MC home and after buying a MC home also identified with MC and described their neighborhoods as “diverse.”

“Some of the white neighbors were *actually* nice to us and would tell us what they would hear from other people. So you kind of figured out who really liked you and who pretended to like you... You know, you second guess everything... You go to the pool and someone would ask you, “are you a resident?”, and you’re like “Oh, why are you asking me? Because I’m Black?’ So it just makes you more racially aware.”

# Implications

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- Results revealed that being a member of either PGC or MC has several important implications for embracing a multicultural community.
  - In most cases, buying a home in either PGC or MC meant adopting a county social identity.
  - MC homeowners, generally, did not express as much emotional and value significance to living in MC.



# Implications

- Ultimately, all study participants drew from both interpersonal (making decisions as individuals) and intergroup (making decisions as representatives of “the black community”) motivations when deciding where to live, regardless of where they chose to live.

# Implications

- Social Identity matters
  - County identification emerged as a salient social identity that related to home ownership choices.
  - For PGC homeowners, this includes moving to the county to become legacy builders or inheriting a county identity
  - For MC homeowners, this includes being part of a pro-diversity cohort and choosing access (via the advantages associated with living in a predominately white community) over all else.

# Implications

- Traumatic Racial Experiences → Beliefs about Diversity and Cultural Safety → Housing Preferences
  - For PGC participants, results revealed that social identification with PGC was primarily connected to an ideology around Black upward mobility and a perceived responsibility to transmit this ideology to other parts of the country and socially reproduce middle class AA culture.
  - **They also perceived that PGC was a more culturally safe county that allowed them to feel safer (culturally and physically) and more comfortable in their communities.**

# Questions/Comments