

Strategic Assimilation or Creation of Symbolic Blackness: Middle-Class Blacks in Suburban Contexts

Lori Latrice Martin

Published online: 27 November 2008
© Springer Science + Business Media, LLC 2008

Abstract The black middle class has been the subject of a great deal of scholarly inquiry. Recently, scholars have directed their attention towards understanding how middle class blacks negotiate their racial identity. Some contend that blacks engage in strategic assimilation, working and sometimes living alongside members of the dominant group, while simultaneously maintaining social ties with members of their own racial group. To examine changes in the size and composition of the black middle class in various suburban contexts comparisons were made of selected demographic data from 1990 and 2000. The purpose of the study is to see if middle class blacks are engaging in strategic assimilation. The findings reveal that the size of the black middle class increased between 1990 and 2000 and that demographic differences exist between members of the black middle class based upon whether or not they reside inside or outside of the suburbs. The findings support the contention that middle class blacks are not engaging in strategic assimilation.

Keywords Blacks · Middle-class · Racial identity · Suburbs · Race · Assimilation · Social class

The black middle class has been the subject of a great deal of scholarly inquiry (Adelman 2004; Attwell et al. 2004; Barnes 1985; Bowser 2006; Dyson 2006; Kronus 1971; Landry 1987; Pattillo 1999; Pattillo 2005; Tripp 1987; Tye 2004). Recently, scholars have directed their attention towards understanding how middle class blacks negotiate their racial identity (Fordham 1996; Johnson 2003; Lacy 2004; McDermott 2001; Moore 2005; Prince 2003; Willie 2003). Some contend that blacks engage in strategic assimilation; working and sometimes living alongside members of the dominant group. They do so while simultaneously maintaining social ties with members of their own racial group (Lacy 2004). Others contend that middle class

L. L. Martin (✉)
John Jay College of Criminal Justice,
445 West 59th Street, Room 3221N, New York, NY 10019, USA
e-mail: lmartin@jjay.cuny.edu

blacks form a multi-class identity that links them with other blacks belonging to working and bottom classes (Moore 2005).

Negotiating an individual's or a group's racial identity is difficult enough without the added complexity of negotiating racial identity within an economical framework. This is evidenced by the lack of consensus that exists with respect to defining and theorizing blackness (Allen 2000; Marks et al 2004; Wright 2004). Despite the varying viewpoints, blackness is a concept of self that involves how people identify their race with being part of a disadvantaged group (Allen 2000).

Blackness is in many ways the product of contradictions, which involves treating the collectivity of individuals who identify themselves as black as a generic group despite their social, economic, political, and cultural differences (Wright 2004). Blackness is a manifestation of two aspects of the self, personal, as well as group identity (Marks et al. 2004). It manifests itself in the double-consciousness that sociologist W.E.B. Du Bois commented on. To be black and American has been both harmful and healing (Wright 2004). This contradiction of terms is an issue that blacks have faced in the past; one that blacks continue to deal with today. Theorizing and defining blackness is of particular significance today. Social class presents middle class blacks, particularly those living in American suburbs, with challenges about how to express their racial identity. Should they be loyal to their race or to their class?

To that end, this study examines whether middle class blacks negotiate their racial identity in a way that reflects strategic assimilation or multi-class racial formation. Alternatively, whether there are other forces at play, namely attempts on the part of some in the black middle class to create a "symbolic" racial identity; one that can be willfully embraced or abandoned—in a society that remains color-conscious. In this study, I compare 1990 and 2000 demographic data to determine if middle class blacks are engaging in strategic assimilation, negotiating life in black and white spaces or symbolic racial identity.

Introduction

Debates about the significance of race versus class in the lives of blacks in America are ongoing. Very often, the black middle class is the focal point of those debates (Coner-Edwards and Spurlock 1988; Dent 2000; Horton et al. 2000; Hyra 2006; Jackson and Jackson 2001; Ogbu 2003; Pattillo 1998; Persons 1997; St. Jean and Feagin 1998; Weitzer 2000; Welch and Foster 1987; West 2001; Wilson 1978; Wilson 1987). Wilson (1978) created a firestorm of sorts when he published his work on the declining significance of race. He argued that class had grown in importance for blacks in America such that the impact of the shared experience of centuries of racial oppression at the hands of the dominant group had diminished. No longer were blacks held together or even held back due almost exclusively to this shared oppression. Rather blacks, according to their means, were increasingly experiencing the world around them in fundamentally different ways. Class, not race, would take the helm in the post-Civil Rights Era, as the factor that would determine the life chances and opportunities of blacks in America. He cites the growth of the black middle class as evidence of his view. Later he comments on the

concentration of poverty and the growth of the underclass to support his contentions (Wilson 1987). In short, Wilson argued that race did not exclusively shape black identity (1978). Instead, class would increasingly shape black identity.

Scores of scholars have performed studies to either confirm or deny the aforementioned views with varying results (Adelman 2004; Feagin 1991; Feagin and Sikes 1994; Feagin 2000). The debate about the importance of race versus class has entered a new phase over the past several years. Instead of exploring the extent to which class matters more than race or vice versa, scholars are looking at how the two concepts are related. How do blacks in the middle class maintain their racial identity? Implicit in this question is the idea that by attaining membership in the middle class, one's black identity or blackness is either lost or at the very least called into question. Where does this notion come from? Some contend that prejudice, even racism is to blame. This idea begs the question, when did the achievement of economic prosperity become equated with whiteness and economic insecurity with blackness? This question undoubtedly has its roots in the doctrine of white supremacy and black inferiority. This doctrine still exists despite historic and ongoing efforts to demythologize it (Allen 2000).

Despite many historical examples of blacks prospering even within the oppressive systems of slavery, sharecropping, and Jim Crow, there is a longstanding belief among some that membership in the middle class is to be equated with whiteness (Cashin 2004; Lincoln and Mamiya 1990; McAdoo 2007; Shapiro 2004; Stokes and Halpern 1994). This is partly due to relatively lower levels of socioeconomic status for blacks relative to whites (Moore 2005; Willie 2003). Therefore, over time blacks run the risk of being labeled a “sell-out” or they run the risk of being accused of “acting white” if they gain or seek entry into the middle class. To ward off such claims, blacks could receive formal and informal sanctions from within and outside their racial group; they must negotiate between black and white spaces.

Racial Identity and the Black Middle Class: Multi-class Identity versus Strategic Assimilation

Multi-class Identity

It is difficult for blacks in the middle class to construct identities that are both authentically black and traditionally middle class. Ultimately, those in the black middle class have two options, says Moore (2005). One option involves an affirmation of their unique class identity and the other an affirmation of their ability to cross class boundaries, which some members of the black middle class perceive as a form of racial solidarity. This latter option may lead to an identity that Moore (2005) calls multi-class identity. This is a racialized class identity that allows blacks in the middle class to feel a sense of connectedness to others in their racial group who may not have membership in their social class. Moore (2005) adds that in predominately-black areas like the North Philadelphia, multi-class identity is more likely to be prevalent—but it could also occur in suburban contexts.

Moore (2005) contends that many middle class blacks in Northern Philadelphia have elected to establish a multi-class identity and that this is evidenced in their community development efforts. Moore (2005) views this cross class collaboration as a indicator of racial solidarity. This may not be the case. Blacks in the middle class may not perceive their destinies as tied to other blacks with lower socioeconomic status; in fact, many may feel that they impede progress. Collaborations amongst the black middle class and others, especially as it relates to community development efforts, is more likely the result of public policies than the desire of middle class blacks to maintain ties with other members of their racial group. Several directives related to community development in urban areas require that cities provide assurances that a portion of housing is for moderate and low-income residents. Working together to rebuild a community driven by the need to meet federal, state, and local funding requirements than a need to maintain racial solidarity is more likely to happen when it involves middle and lower class blacks. Nevertheless, an important understudied issue is how black identity varies across place, especially within suburban communities (Lacy 2004; Moore 2005).

Strategic Assimilation

Lacy (2004) devotes attention towards examining the linkages between black identity and assimilation across suburban contexts. This is particularly significant given that many other scholars have all but abandoned the notion that assimilation theories are applicable to the black population, especially in the case of native-born blacks (Dodoo 1997). Yet Lacy (2004) continues to find the theories both useful and applicable to the black experience. In fact, she finds evidence that blacks have assimilated culturally. The existence and growth of the black middle class over time is a testament to that fact.

Many blacks have walked into open doors of opportunity right into institutions of higher learning and into prestigious occupations where they have yielded in some cases relatively high incomes (Battle et al. 2006; Collins 1997; Ginwright 2002; Healey 2006; Hout 1986; Obadele 1999). Blacks have not reached parity with whites on these issues however (Lareau 2003; Larkin 2007; Leondar-Wright 2005; Oliver and Shapiro 1997; Pattillo 2000; Shapiro 2004). Moreover, while blacks may have assimilated culturally they have not assimilated structurally. The meaning of this is that they continue to have challenges in gaining access to mainstream social cliques, clubs, and institutions, at the primary group level (Lacy 2004).

Not only have some argued that the assimilation model does not work for blacks; they argue that black identity keeps them from assimilation. In other words, their blackness is a liability. This is, of course, in sharp contrast to many other racial and ethnic groups who have shown an ability to capitalize on the uniqueness of their racial or ethnic identity. We have seen examples where racial and ethnic identification can be an important asset such as in the case of Cubans in Little Havana or individuals in American's Chinatowns.

Notwithstanding blackness considered by some to be a liability, black identity holds pride for many blacks (Dawson 2003; Fleishman 2002; Jackson and Stewart 2003; Lacy 2004; Moore 2005; Lincoln and Mamiya 1990; Smith and Seltzer 1992; West 2001; and Willie 2003).

How then does one embrace an identity that the group cherishes while at the same time some outside of the group loathe it? Lacy (2004) contends that blacks, particularly middle class blacks, must find a way to deal with this issue as they move back-and-forth between the black and white world. She contends that some blacks in the middle class opt for strategic assimilation. These middle class, strategic, assimilators gain access to predominately white schools, occupations and neighborhoods while simultaneously retaining ties in the black world. They work in professional occupations with largely white coworkers; yet, maintain membership in historically black churches and historically black civic and voluntary associations. Because some members of the black middle class thoughtfully and deliberately follow that route, Lacy (2004) says that assimilation theories should extend to the black population.

Moreover, Lacy (2004) argues that the process involved in how best to negotiate black identity varies, particularly by suburban context. Middle class blacks living in largely black communities use their identity as a buffer from racism. Middle class blacks living in largely white communities use their racial identity and their strategic assimilation ability to prepare the next generation for the racial hierarchy—this is so because future generations will likely become a part of it.

Scholars that do boundary work suggest that middle class blacks who live in predominately-black neighborhoods create symbolic divides between themselves and out-group members with a spatial orientation versus one that has an organizational orientation (Lacy 2004). Herbert Gans (Gans 1979; Lacy 2004) introduced the symbolic ethnicity concept. Lacy states that groups are motivated to create ethnic distinctions, even under conditions where these identities have no real consequences in their everyday life. It may be possible that middle class blacks living in predominately-white suburbs may feel that the “real consequences” of their black identity have declined; thus, their black identity does not affect their everyday life.

Are middle class blacks creating multiclass groups as a show of racial solidarity or are they engaged in strategic assimilation efforts into white space while maintaining social ties to black space? In order to evaluate the social location of the black middle class and to gain a deeper understanding of the diversity among blacks by class, we must explore this population further. This will help develop a social and demographic profile of this population. It will shed light on several of the research questions outlined previously, specifically addressing to what extent the black middle class has increased or decreased over time as well as how the group has changed. If strategic assimilation is occurring then the black middle class will overwhelming is concentrated in predominately-white suburbs and if multi-class group formation is occurring, then the black middle class will reside in multi-class environments.

Social and Demographic Profile of the Black Middle Class

The decennial census includes a series of measures that facilitate the creation of a social and demographic profile of the black middle class and is well suited for the present study. The data set allow for the identification of household and personal characteristics. Occupational score is used as an indicator of social class in this study.

Results

Using Census data for 1990 and 2000, allows us to say the following about race and class for blacks in America. In both years, more blacks were among the bottom class when compared to any other class. The percentage of blacks in the bottom class decreased over time. In 1990, about 54% of blacks were in the bottom class compared to 51% in 2000. A substantial proportion of blacks were in the working class in both 1990 and 2000. In both years, about 40% of blacks were in the working-class. The smallest social class for blacks was the black middle class in each decade. However, over time the size of the black middle class grew the only black social class category to do so. In 1990, nearly 6% of blacks were in the middle class compared with over 8% in 2000.

Table 1 shows that race and social class affected gender differences. In 1990, 7% of black males were in the middle class compared to almost 9% in 2000. For black females, a little less than 5% of them were in the middle class in 1990 compared to over 7% in 2000. Blacks in the middle class compared to blacks in both the working and bottom classes in both 1990 and 2000 were more likely to be homeowners. In both 1990 and in 2000, about 60% of blacks in the middle class owned their own homes. For working-class blacks, 52% owned their own homes in 1990 compared to about 51% in 2000. Less than half of blacks in the bottom class owned their own homes in either decade. In 1990, 44% of blacks in the bottom class owned homes while in 2000 almost 47% of blacks in this social class owned their own homes.

The Black-Middle Class and Suburban Context

Upon further examination of the black middle class, we find differences according to variations in suburban contexts on such factors as number of children, age, education, income, and occupational score. For all blacks in the middle class regardless of the suburban context, the number of children decreased over time. On

Table 1 Percent of Blacks by social class, 1990 and 2000

	1990	2000
All Blacks		
Middle class	5.79	8.10
Working-class	40.35	40.69
Bottom class	53.86	51.21
Black Males		
Middle class	6.84	8.88
Working-class	41.41	41.27
Bottom class	51.74	49.85
Black Females		
Middle class	4.88	7.40
Working-class	39.43	40.19
Bottom class	55.69	52.41
Home Owners		
Middle class	59.81	59.41
Working-class	52.50	50.61
Bottom class	44.35	46.84

Table 2 Selected descriptive statistics for middle class Blacks, 1990 and 2000

	1990	2000
Number of Children	0.95 (1.16)	0.89 (1.13)
Age	38.97 (12.21)	40.21 (12.14)
Education	7.77 (1.32)	7.87 (1.17)
Income (Constant Dollars)	\$35,409 (\$30,501)	\$37,930 (\$38,767)
Occupational Score	39.78 (6.20)	41.18 (5.93)
Living in Suburbs		
Number of Children	1.0 (1.14)	0.96 (1.15)
Age	38.70 (11.26)	40.40 (11.42)
Education	8.01 (1.13)	8.08 (1.04)
Income (Constant Dollars)	\$42,375 (34,480)	\$45,446 (\$41,793.87)
Occupational Score	39.99 (6.55)	41.48 (6.48)
Living outside Suburbs		
Number of Children	1.01 (1.19)	0.90 (1.13)
Age	38.52 (12.30)	39.97 (12.19)
Education	7.61 (1.42)	7.81 (1.19)
Income (Constant Dollars)	\$30,747 (\$28,428)	\$35,942 (\$37,931)
Occupational Score	39.67 (5.9)	41.06 (5.74)

Numbers are means; standard deviations are in parentheses

average, blacks in the middle class reported having 0.95 children in 1990 compared with 0.89 children in 2000. Differences on this variable were relatively unchanged when blacks in the middle class who live in the suburbs were compared with blacks in the middle class living outside of the suburbs. Table 2.

With respect to age, blacks in the middle class were on average 39 years of age in 1990 and 40 years of age in 2000. Blacks in the middle class living outside of the suburbs were slightly younger compared to blacks in the middle class living in the suburbs; the differences were very small in each decade. Blacks in the middle class living in the suburbs had on average higher levels of education compared to blacks in this social class living outside of the suburbs for each decade; they had higher relative incomes. In 1990, middle class blacks living in the suburbs earned about \$12,000 more when compared to non-suburban middle class blacks. In 2000, they earned \$10,000 more than the non-suburban group. The occupational scores were about the same for blacks in the middle class regardless of their suburban context with those living in the suburbs having a slight edge. Table 2.

So where do suburban members of the black middle class live?¹ Pattillo (1999) studied middle class blacks in Chicago, Lacy (2004) in the Washington DC, Maryland, and Virginia metropolitan area, and Moore (2005) in Northern Philadelphia metropolitan area. In 1990, Washington DC, Maryland, and Virginia metropolitan area topped the list of the suburban areas with the highest percentages of suburban black middle class residents with 16.5% followed by Los Angeles-Long Beach, CA metropolitan area with 8.05% and the Atlanta, GA metropolitan area with 7.55%. Newark, NJ; Philadelphia, PA/NJ; Nassau County, NY; Chicago, IL; Miami-Hialeah, FL; Baltimore, MD; and Oakland, CA, respectively ranked in the top 10 highest black populated suburban areas. Table 3.

¹ Results are for 1990 only

Table 3 Suburban areas with the highest percentages of Suburban Black middle class residents, 1990

Metropolitan Area	Percentages
1. Washington, DC/Maryland/Virginia	16.15
2. Los Angeles-Long Beach, CA	8.05
3. Atlanta, GA	7.55
4. Newark, NJ	4.46
5. Philadelphia, PA/ NJ	4.35
6. Nassau County, NY	3.82
7. Chicago, IL	3.54
8. Miami-Hialeah, FL	3.38
9. Baltimore, MD	2.90
10. Oakland, CA	2.71

What is the racial composition of the top ten suburban areas with the highest percentages of black middle class residents? Table 4 shows that Miami-Hialeah, FL; Atlanta, GA; and Washington, DC had the three highest percentages of black residents relative to whites and others. In Miami-Hialeah, blacks in the middle class comprised 24% of the population while whites made up about 74%. In Atlanta, Georgia blacks made up 20% of the total population compared to almost 78% of whites. In DC, about 19% of the suburban population was black and 75% was white. Philadelphia, Nassau County, and Chicago had the highest percentages of white suburban residents relative to others. In Philadelphia and Nassau County, 91% of the population was white while in the Chicago suburbs 96% of the population was white.

The descriptive findings reveal that there is diversity within the black population and that this is true across various suburban contexts. The findings also suggest that blacks in the middle class display an affinity for residency in suburban areas with substantial black populations. This might be indicative of strategic assimilation taking place rather than multi-class group formation. On the other hand, it might point to other factors like the roles of structural barriers beyond the control of the black middle class or the continuing significance of residential segregation.

Table 4 Racial composition of top ten Metropolitan Suburban areas with the highest percentages of Black middle class residents, 1990

Metropolitan Area	Percent White	Percent Black	Percent Other
1. Washington, DC/Maryland/Virginia	74.53	18.90	6.57
2. Los Angeles/Long Beach, CA	74.69	9.64	15.67
3. Atlanta, GA	77.72	20.14	2.14
4. Newark, NJ	82.56	14.27	3.17
5. Philadelphia, PA/ NJ	90.70	7.39	1.92
6. Nassau County, NY	91.36	6.23	2.41
7. Chicago, IL	95.78	2.99	1.22
8. Miami/Hialeah, FL	73.56	24.29	2.14
9. Baltimore, MD	87.62	9.97	2.41
10. Oakland, CA	78.06	7.04	14.91

Black Middle Class Disadvantage and Residential Segregation

Logan (2002) and a team of researchers found that despite the growth in the size of the black middle class that this group overtime remained residentially segregated. They benefit less from their middle class standing than their white counterparts do. Logan (2002) found differences in the advantages associated with being middle class for blacks and whites. Inequalities in income could not explain the differences. Rather, he argues that neighborhood differences go beyond mere income inequalities.

For example, in several metropolitan areas, whites in the middle class were more likely to live in neighborhoods where the average income was equal to or higher than their own income. On the other hand, middle class blacks were more likely to live in a neighborhood where the average income was substantially lower than their own. This was especially true in places like Newark, Oakland, Milwaukee, and Chicago. The situation was much better in places like Riverside-San Bernardino, CA. Comparable whites and blacks face different structures of opportunity (Logan 2002).

Residential segregation may explain variations in suburban contexts for middle class blacks. Logan's (2002) findings might support Moore's (2005) work on multiclass formation given that middle class blacks are more likely than whites to live in close proximity to less affluent members of their racial group. The limits placed upon these middle class blacks might increase their feeling of connectedness to other blacks regardless of social class. Clearly, there is some dispute as to whether the presence or lack, of middle class blacks in predominately-white neighborhoods, in relatively large numbers, is evidence of strategic assimilation, or multi-class identity or some other factor.

Voluntary Associations, Middle Class Blacks and Suburban Context

Perhaps exploring the historically black middle class social institutions might shed some light on how blacks in the middle class negotiate black identity. If middle class blacks cling to associations which include members from various social classes, that might indicate support for multi-class group formation. If middle class blacks, on the other hand, segregate themselves by class as far as membership in voluntary associations are concerned, that might indicate that strategic assimilation is taking place.

Stoll (2000) examined this issue of participation in voluntary associations while taking into account neighborhood conditions. Omitted are neighborhood conditions in studies about the black middle class. Drawing from the work of Myrdal et al. (1944) and others, he examines changes in participation in voluntary associations for various racial groups (Stoll 2000).

He used quantitative analysis to test whether changes in the participation of blacks in voluntary associations explain compensatory behavior. He found that blacks participate because of exclusion from mainstream organizations in voluntary associations. In ethnic associations, blacks participate because of a strong sense of racial identity. He found that there was a strong negative correlation between neighborhood poverty and membership in voluntary associations among blacks. He found that blacks living in higher income neighborhoods, which tended to be more

white than black, had higher levels of participation in voluntary associations. Conversely, blacks living in largely black neighborhoods containing higher levels of people living in poverty, have lower levels of participation in voluntary associations. The growth of social and economic opportunities for blacks in the post-Civil Rights era resulted in fewer of them belonging to voluntary associations. Considering neighborhood conditions, however, blacks living in largely black communities were more likely to participate in voluntary associations.

Lacy's work found that blacks in the middle class, living in predominately white suburbs not only participate in voluntary associations but in voluntary associations that are both authentically black and traditionally middle class. Affiliation with organizations like Jack and Jill is evidence of that fact. Jack and Jill has been described as an organization made up largely of middle class women seeking opportunities for their children to network with other members of their racial group who have membership in the same social class. Leeanna Jackson of Black Enterprise says the organization formed more than 60 years ago in Philadelphia. The purpose of the organization was to link black children to cultural venues that had previously excluded blacks. However, this may not be evidence of strategic assimilation rather a response to ongoing residential segregation.

This may be yet another manifestation of what blacks have historically done when kept out of mainstream institutions; they created their own institutions. To imply that participation in this black, mainly middle class association, is evidence of strategic assimilation may be incorrect. This might be true if blacks had the option of full participation in mainstream clubs and social cliques at the primary group level and they opted for participation only in historically black institutions. There is little evidence to suggest that this is the case.

Strategic Assimilation, Multi-Class Formation, or Symbolic Blackness?

How should we describe black middle class racial and class identities? Based on the research questions addressed here, we know that several things are taking place. First, between 1990 and 2000 the size of the black middle class has grown, although slightly. Second, the black middle class is demographically different from other social classes and these demographic differences can vary by suburban context. Third, middle class blacks tend to live in areas that are predominately white but with substantial black residents. Fourth, blacks in the middle class belong to a number of historically black voluntary associations including houses of worship and clubs like Jack and Jill. These organizations can be comprised of blacks from a single social class or blacks from multiple social classes. Yet the absence of a large-scale survey of voluntary group membership by social class makes it difficult to generalize as to the motivations of blacks from varying social classes and within varying suburban contexts.

Conclusion

Prior research concerning middle class black identity, especially as it relates to living in the suburbs, has studied at the micro-level experiences, relying heavily on

ethnographic and other qualitative techniques. This does not permit generalizations about the black middle class. The present work considered macro-level analysis.

Also, implicit in the ideas surrounding strategic assimilation and multi-class identity is the belief that blacks in the middle class have a myriad of choices; they can choose to create boundaries between themselves and the dominant group. Blacks in the middle class have the power to decide whether they will develop coalitions with working- and lower class blacks as a sign of racial solidarity. These ideas run contrary, in my view, to the very basic definitions of minority and majority intergroup relations in America.

By definition, blacks are a minority group because they have less power over their life than does the dominant group. Blacks have fewer life chances and opportunities relative to the dominant group. Nevertheless, Blacks have not chosen exclusion from any area of society. Rather, mainstream society forcibly excluded blacks. Blacks created historically black institutions like black churches, mutual aid societies, social clubs, sororities, and fraternities because of exclusion from similar mainstream organizations.

Through this prism, blacks in the middle class who live in predominately-white suburbs are not engaging in strategic assimilation. Gained access into predominately-white neighborhoods does not mean necessarily or automatically earning access to other areas of white space. Nor does it mean that they feel the need to maintain ties in black space areas. There are varying degrees of social distance that some members of the dominant group will tolerate. It is not a conscious effort on the part of blacks in the middle class to maintain their racial identity; rather, these blacks are doing what blacks have historically done. They create or become involved in organizations whose objectives are to reap the same or greater rewards that would be available to them were they to have equal access to mainstream institutions.

Most black families have not been in the suburbs for multiple generations. It will be interesting to see whether the third generation principle, a term closely associated with symbolic identity formation, will apply to this group. Will subsequent generations of suburban middle class blacks have a greater interest than earlier generations for residency in predominately or substantially black neighborhoods? Will they express more of a genuine interest in affiliations with historically black institutions? There is a need for further research to answer these and related questions.

References

- Adelman, R. M. (2004). Neighborhood opportunities, race and class: the black middle class and residential segregation. *City & Community*, 3(1), 43–63.
- Allen, R. (2000). *The concept of self: a study of black identity*. Wayne State University Press.
- Attwell, P., Lavin, D., Domina, T., & Levey, T. (2004). The black middle class: progress, prospects, and puzzles. *Journal of African American Studies*, 8(1/2), 6–19.
- Barnes, A. S. (1985). *The black middle class family: A study of black sub-society, neighborhood, and home interaction*. Bristol: Wyndham Hall.
- Battle, J. J., Bennett, M., & Lemelle, A. J. (2006). *Free at last: Black America in the twenty-first century*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction.
- Bowser, B. P. (2006). *The black middle class: Social mobility and vulnerability*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner.

- Cashin, S. (2004). *The failures of integration: How race and class are undermining the American dream*. NY: Public Affairs.
- Collins, S. M. (1997). *Black corporate executives: The making and breaking of a black middle class*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Coner-Edwards, A. F., & Spurlock, J. (1988). *Black families in crisis: The middle class*. NY: Brunner/Mazer.
- Dawson, M. C. (2003). *Black visions: The roots of contemporary African American political ideologies*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Dent, D. J. (2000). *In search of black America: Discovering the African American dream*. NY: Simon and Schuster.
- Dodoo, F. (1997). Assimilation differences among Africans in America. *Social Forces*, 76(2), 527–546.
- Dyson, M. E. (2006). *Is Bill Cosby right?: Or has the black middle class lost its mind?*. NY: Basic Civitas Books.
- Feagin, J. R. (1991). The continuing significance of race: anti black discrimination in public places. *American Sociological Review*, 56(1), 101–116.
- Feagin, J. R. (2000). *Racist America: Roots, current realities, and future reparations*. NY: Routledge.
- Feagin, J. R., & Sikes, M. P. (1994). *Living with racism: The black middle class experience*. Boston: Beacon.
- Fleishman, A. (2002). *New class culture: How an emergent class is transforming America's culture*. Westport, CT: Praeger.
- Fordham, S. (1996). *Blacked out: Dilemmas of race, identity, and success at capital high*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Gans, H. (1979). Symbolic ethnicity. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 2, 1–20.
- Ginwright, S. A. (2002). Classed out: the challenges of social class in black community change. *Social Problems*, 49(4), 544.
- Healey, J. F. (2006). *Race, ethnicity, gender, and class: The sociology of group conflict and change*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge.
- Horton, H. D., Allen, B. L., Herring, C., & Thomas, M. E. (2000). Lost in the storm: the sociology of the black working-class, 1850 to 1990. *American Sociological Review*, 65(11), 128–137.
- Hout, M. (1986). Opportunity and the minority middle class: a comparison of blacks in the United States and Catholics in Northern Ireland. *American Sociological Review*, 51(2), 214–223.
- Hyra, D. S. (2006). Racial uplift? interracial class conflict and the economic revitalization of Harlem and Bronzeville. *City & Community*, 5(1), 71–92.
- Jackson, J. L., & Jackson, J. L. Jr. (2001). *Harlemworld: Doing race and class in contemporary black America*. Bloomington, ID: Mississippi Valley Historical Association.
- Jackson, P. B., & Stewart, Q. T. (2003). A research agenda for the black middle class: work stress, survival strategies, and mental health. *Journal of Health & Social Behavior*, 44(3), 442–455.
- Johnson, E. P. (2003). *Appropriating blackness: Performance and the politics of authenticity*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Kronus, S. (1971). *The black middle class*. Columbus, OH: Merrill.
- Lacy, K. R. (2004). Black spaces, black places: strategic assimilation and identity construction in middle class suburbia. *Ethnic & Racial Studies*, 27(6), 908–930.
- Landry, B. (1987). *The new black middle class*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Lareau, A. (2003). *Unequal childhoods: Class, race, and family life*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Larkin, B. P. (2007). The forty-year “first step”: the fair housing act as an incomplete tool for suburban integration. *Columbia Law Review*, 107(7), 1617–1654.
- Leonard-Wright, B. (2005). *Class matters: Cross-class alliance building for middle class activists*. Gabriola, B.C.: New Society.
- Logan, J. (2002). *Separate and unequal*. Albany: New York. www.albany.edu/mumford.
- Lincoln, C. E., & Mamiya, L. H. (1990). *The black church in the African American experience*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Marks, B., Settles, I. H., Cooke, D. Y., Morgan, L., & Sellers, R. M. (2004). African American racial identity: a review of contemporary models and measures. In R. L. Jons (Ed.), *Black Psychology* (4th ed., pp. 383–404). Hampton, VA: Cobb & Henry.
- McAdoo, H. P. (2007). *Black families*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- McDermott, M. (2001). Class structure and racial consciousness among black Americans. *Critical Sociology*, 27(1), 1–28.

- Moore, K. S. (2005). What's class got to do with it? Community development and racial identity. *Journal of Urban Affairs*, 27(4), 437–451.
- Myrdal, G., Sterner, R., & Rose, A. (1944). *An American dilemma*. New York: NY: Harper and Brothers.
- Obadele, E. (1999). Black labor, the black middle class, and organizational protest along the upper texas gulf coast. *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, 103(1), 14.
- Ogbu, J. U. (2003). *Black American students in an affluent suburb: A study of academic disengagement*. Mahwah, NJ: L. Erlbaum.
- Oliver, M. L., & Shapiro, T. M. (1997). *Black wealth/white wealth: A new perspective on racial inequality*. NY: Routledge.
- Pattillo, M. (1998). Sweet mothers and gangbangers: managing crime in a black middle class neighborhood. *Social Forces*, 76(3), 747–774.
- Pattillo, M. (1999). *Black picket fences: Privilege and peril among the black middle class*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Pattillo, M. (2000). The limits of out migration for the black middle class. *Journal of Urban Affairs*, 22(3), 225.
- Pattillo, M. (2005). Black middle class neighborhoods. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 31(1), 305–329.
- Persons, G. A. (1997). *Race and representation*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction.
- Prince, S. (2003). *Constructing belonging: Class, race, and Harlem's professional workers*. NJ: Routledge.
- Shapiro, T. M. (2004). *The hidden cost of being African American: How wealth perpetuates inequality*. NY: Oxford University Press.
- Smith, R. C., & Seltzer, R. (1992). *Race, class, and culture: A study in Afro-American mass opinion*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- St. Jean, Y., & Feagin, J. R. (1998). The family costs of white racism: the case of African American families. *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*, 29(2), 297–312.
- Stokes, M., & Halpern, R. (1994). *Race and class in the American south since 1890*. Providence, R.I.: Berg.
- Stoll, M. A. (2000). Race, neighborhood poverty and participation. Working Paper. Russell Sage.
- Tripp, L. S. (1987). *Black student activists transition to middle class professionals*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America.
- Tye, L. (2004). *Rising from the rails: Pullman porters and the making of the black middle class*. NY: Henry Holt.
- Weitzer, R. (2000). Racialized policing: residents' perceptions in three neighborhoods. *Law & Society Review*, 34(1), 129.
- Welch, S., & Foster, L. (1987). Class and conservatism in the black community. *American Politics Quarterly*, 15(4), 445.
- West, C. (2001). *Race matters*. NY: Vintage.
- Willie, S. S. (2003). *Acting black: College, identity, and the performance of race*. NY: Routledge.
- Wilson, W. J. (1978). *The declining significance of race*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Wilson, W. J. (1987). *The truly disadvantaged*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Wright, M. (2004). *Becoming black: Creating identity in the African Diaspora*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Copyright of Journal of African American Studies is the property of Springer Science & Business Media B.V. and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.