

## **PROPOSAL: HOW DO MIDDLE-CLASS BLACK NEIGHBORHOODS EMERGE?**

**Patrick Bayer, Associate Professor**  
**Hanming Fang, Associate Professor**  
**Department of Economics**

In our previous research “Separate When Equal? Racial Inequality and Residential Segregation” (joint with Robert McMillan at the University of Toronto), we found that in 2000 there were about 143 Census tracts (out of a total of more than 49,000 tracts in the US) whose residents were more than 40% black and more than 40% college-educated simultaneously. We call such neighborhoods middle-class black neighborhoods. We know exactly where these 143 middle-class black neighborhoods were located in 2000. We argued in our previous research that such kind of middle-class black neighborhoods are most desirable for highly-educated blacks, and the emergence of such neighborhoods plays an important role in determining whether, in the long run as blacks catch up with whites in their social economic status, we can expect to see more or less residential racial segregation.

In this project, we go a step further and ask the question of how these precious middle-class black neighborhoods we saw in the 2000 Census emerge. To do this, we use the time series Census tract level data going back to 1970s compiled by Geolytics. We have extracted data from Geolytics Census time series data the tract level characteristics covering the period of 1970-2000. We will first trace back the characteristics of the current 143 middle-class black neighborhoods to see how they evolved over time; we will then ask, back in 1990, 1980 and 1970, were there neighborhoods similar to those 143 back then? We will then investigate whether there are systematic determinants of whether neighborhoods similar in their race/education composition will turn into a sustainable middle-class black neighborhoods, or disintegrate into low-SES black neighborhoods?

The student will help produce summary statistics and preliminary analysis of the Geolytics data we already collected, and also extract some additional metropolitan area-level data (also from the Geolytics CD).

**It will be essential that the student have working knowledge of Excel and STATA.**

The primary benefits to the student of this research experience will be to learn how to organize and use large data sets, to learn to work with statistical software packages, and to learn how to apply a wide array of statistical techniques to an important and socially relevant economic problem.