Sleepwalking into Neighborhoods: Social Networks and Residential Decisions

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As is well known, the United States is marked by high levels of economic inequality. Moreover, because of residential clustering, American families generally live in class-segregated neighborhoods. From gated communities to apartment buildings in inner cities, Americans of different social classes tend to live in different places. These different locations do not appear to be fully explained by differences in housing stock and housing prices. Rather, individuals and families are also drawn to live in different places.

Of course, racial segregation has also historically been a very powerful factor. Moreover, this factor intersects with class-based forms of segregation in complicated ways, particularly for black families. Middle-class black families live in more economically heterogeneous neighborhoods than do economically comparable white families (Pattillo, 2013). Poor blacks often also live in overwhelmingly black neighborhoods. Nonetheless, middle-class black families are much more likely to live in predominantly white neighborhoods than are working-class black families (Pattillo, 2013; Lacy, 2007). These patterns matter for families with children, in particular, because, as a substantial body of literature shows, neighborhood conditions impact children's life chances (Sharkey, 2012). Above and beyond the resources that parents provide, children growing up in different neighborhoods often have different life chances in a host of areas (Sampson, 2013). Indeed, for about three-quarters of children in America, school assignment is a function of the neighborhood catchment area (Goyette, 2014). Economic segregation in schools has been tied to educational outcomes (Reardon and Bischoff, 2011). Neighborhoods also differ in the parks, pools, libraries and other services they provide to children, as well as the hazards that they pose. Thus, residential decisions directly affect important social experiences; taken together these factors can contribute to the maintenance of inequality over time. Moreover, evidence suggests that economic residential segregation has increased significantly over time (Reardon and Bischoff, 2011).

To reduce inequality in neighborhood composition, we need to understand *how* parents and children get sorted into different neighborhoods. Nonetheless, there is limited research on this topic. While a vast number of studies have mapped the contours of class and race segregation in the U.S. (see Goyette, 2014 for a review), and others have examined the contribution that various factors makes to families' residential preferences (Charles, 2009; Krysan and Bader, 2009), remarkably few researchers have sought examine the micro-level processes involved in residential decision-making. The classic work in the field, Peter Rossi's book, *Why Families Move*, was published in 1955. Rossi focused on the critical role of life stage and demographic transitions in triggering moves. To be sure, there has been some important recent work. Krysan and Bader (2009) demonstrate racial differences in the knowledge that blacks, whites, and Latinos have of local communities in Chicago. More specifically, they show that whites had often never heard of communities which were predominantly black; blacks, who generally were much more knowledgeable than whites about local communities, were not familiar with distant, predominantly white suburbs. Sampson (2012), analyzing mobility patterns in Chicago, shows that the destination neighborhoods of low-income families with housing vouchers were similar to those of families without vouchers, implying that factors above and beyond financial considerations played a considerable role. Indeed, his data indicate that families were disproportionately likely to settle in neighborhoods where former neighbors had also moved. This suggests that residential choices are, to some extent, conditioned by information sharing in the neighborhood of origin. Sharkey fruitfully conceptualizes this phenomenon in terms of

"cognitive constraints," which he defines as "individuals' mental perceptions and understandings of which communities are possible residential destinations" (2012, p 16).[1]

Nevertheless, problems remain in the study of residential sorting. Disproportionately, recent studies have focused on the poor (Sharkey, 2012, Rhodes and DeLuca, 2013) or urban residents—and specifically, residents of Chicago (Sampson, 2012; Krysan and Bader, 2009). Yet, a growing number of families live in the suburbs. In addition, it is unclear whether and how phenomena such as "cognitive constraints" affect non-poor families. More importantly, while many studies acknowledge that individuals are located within complex social structures, the role of networks in the formation of the residential choice set has not been sufficiently elaborated. Our paper seeks to redress these gaps in the literature by using interview data from a large Northeastern City and its surrounding suburbs, gathered from parents of young children, to examine the decision-making process that leads families of different backgrounds to particular neighborhoods.

In this paper, we analyze interview data collected from families of varying class and race backgrounds living in urban and suburban neighborhoods in (or near) a large city in the northeast. To preview our argument, we find remarkable consistency across our interviews in the neighborhood selection process. In particular, our results highlight the role of networks in pulling or steering families towards particular neighborhoods. Although the families we studied ended up in very different types of communities, the processes they described was similar.

To be more precise, we find that networks have an impact on the neighborhood selection process in various ways. In their simplest form, network effects take the form of a direct "pull," when families select neighborhoods in order to be near kin or friends. This effect is especially powerful among working-class families (white and black), though it is not limited to them. But at least as importantly, in our data, network ties were often essential in their role as information conduits, informing families about a wide variety of neighborhood characteristics, ranging from housing and the housing market to amenities and public services (especially schools). This information was often based on the network members' own experiences of the neighborhood under discussion; but in some cases, it merely reflected their own knowledge of the reputational hierarchy attaching to particular locales. Whatever the case, information of this sort often played a significant role in "pushing" or steering families towards particular areas or neighborhoods. The key element of the process appeared to lay in the fact that, in order to be influential, network contacts' information had to be trusted; in effect, friends, colleagues, or kin *vouched* for particular neighborhoods.

At the individual level, the centrality of networks had notable effects. First, families frequently decided very rapidly which neighborhoods to move to, and did so with only vague (and incomplete) information. Typically, they did not carry out any kind of systematic research—no

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[1] Sharkey also discusses "structural constraints" which he defines as those "arising from the interaction of the supply of affordable housing and the economic resources that individuals bring to the housing market (2012, p. 16). For cognitive constraints, Sharkey writes: "Individuals' ideas about possible residential destinations may be based on familiarity (or lack of familiarity) with an area, a sense of whether the individual would "fit" in the community, perceptions of the history of the community, or a range of other factors that affect the individual's understanding about whether a given community is a realistic residential destination." (2012, p 16). Sharkey also cites Shroder's (2002) use of the term "psychological constraints."

matter what their class or race. Although a number of the parents we interviewed had grown up in the area, many had not. Members of the latter group, especially, tended to have only fuzzy knowledge of a neighborhood when they began to search for housing within it. Once they had selected a neighborhood, however, they became much more systematic as they tried to decide on a house or apartment, gathering extensive information, comparing options, and so forth. But the very consequential decision about which neighborhood to move to was frequently not, at least in our sample, the result of systematic research or consideration.

Moreover, our respondents typically considered on a small number of (demographically similar) neighborhoods. Thus, in addition to facilitating a decision based on fuzzy and incomplete information, networks had the effect circumscribing the choice set—excluding from consideration the vast majority of neighborhoods in the metropolitan area, including some that closely resembled the ones ultimately chosen by the respondents.

Beyond their impact on individual-level decision-making, however, networks had profound consequences on the distribution of families across neighborhoods. Consistent with longstanding research (see DiPrete, Gelman, McCormick, Teitler, and Zheng 2011), the networks that the families relied on—rooted in kinship, friendship, work, or religion—were often highly segregated by class and race. Consequently, the neighborhoods that network contacts steered our respondents towards were, more often than not, themselves relatively segregated. In this respect, our data imply that the class- and race-segregative housing decisions made by our research subjects *need* not have been explicitly motivated by a concern for to avoid particular groups. To the contrary, the networks which drove the housing search process *already* reflected the class and racial segregation that characterized the region. It is entirely possible, of course, that some families were explicitly avoiding certain areas. But, our research suggested not only that the families had highly selective information, but they were comfortable with their truncated information. This information guided residential decisions. Seen in this light, we feel that our results may be viewed as a contribution to studies of how network segregation impacts inequality in life chances, as with the well-developed literature on the matching of individuals to job vacancies (DiTomaso 2013).

To be sure, there were some exceptions to the process we describe—that is, there were a small number of parents who didn't simply rely on the word of trusted network contacts and the vague, truncated information they provided. In particular, some of the middle-class black parents in our sample approached the neighborhood search process more systematically, giving explicit consideration to factors such as demographic composition and school quality, and undertaking various kinds of research intended to facilitate neighborhood comparison. Yet, even these families only generally considered neighborhoods in areas with which they already had some degree of familiarity and in which they had an informal social connection. Hence, even among these families, the network played a role.

Literature Review and Conceptual Background

A vast amount of research has documented the scope of residential segregation in the U.S. and shown how it impacts various ethnic and economic groups. Numerous studies have documented that residential location varies significantly by class and race. Jargowsky (1996), for example, demonstrated the existence of a trend toward greater income segregation among whites, blacks, and Hispanics. More recently, Reardon and Biscoff (2012) have also shown that residential

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economic segregation has increased over time, which has led to increased economic segregation in public schools. They therefore argue that economic segregation contributes to the social class gap in educational outcomes.

Racial and ethnic residential segregation has, of course, long been a fundamental sociological concern. Massey and Denton's (1993) argued compellingly that black-white segregation, in particular, remained an enduring feature of U.S. society. Subsequent work has established that only modest declines in black-white segregation have occurred more recently, despite apparent attitudinal changes and a trend towards income convergence in 1990s (Logan, Stults, and Farley 2004; see also Wilkes and Iceland 2004). A substantial body research has documented the centrality of race to residential preferences, especially for whites (e.g. Charles 2006). Thus, Crowder and South speak of a general "context of Whites' aversion to residing near large and diverse minority populations" (2008: 16).

To be sure, residential segregation has changed over time. Suburban areas, for example, have become more racially diverse (Logan and Schneider 1984). The simultaneous impact of income results in relatively complicated patterns. For example, Alba, Logan, and Stults (2000) report that middle-class African-American living in suburbs are substantially less segregated from whites than are poor African-Americans living in central cities; however, the suburban neighborhoods they reside in are far less affluent than those of economically comparable white families. More generally, Sampson and Sharkey have described a residential sorting process that aggregates into a "structural pattern of flows between neighborhoods that generates virtually nonoverlapping income distributions" and little exchange between white and minority neighborhoods (2008: 1).

While these patterns are well-documented, relatively little research has been devoted to the process of neighborhood selection. In a classic study, Peter Rossi (1955) examined *Why Families Move*. His work highlights the importance of life-course changes in motivating residential mobility, but gives more limited attention to how families actually select a residential destination. There are, of course, numerous studies of the role of race in residential preferences. In this approach, respondents are typically given cards with different racial distributions of houses in a hypothetical neighborhood and asked to rank them in terms of desirability (Charles, 2006; Clark, 2008, 2009). [2] These studies have been very important. However, they typically solicit opinions only on imaginary neighborhoods. Moreover, they sometimes ask respondents to rank as many as 15 such neighborhoods; as we will argue below, this is not how the search process typically unfolds. Krysan and Bader (2007), in contrast, provide respondents with actual maps of Detroit in order to gauge their knowledge of actual neighborhoods and determine their preferences. Nevertheless, while highly intriguing, it is still not clear that this procedure reflects the actual search process that families undertake when choosing a neighborhood.

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[2] For example, Clark (2009) reports that the following question was asked in the Multi-City Study: "Now I would like you to imagine that you have been looking for a house and have found a nice house you can afford. This house could be located in several different types of neighborhoods as shown on these cards. (*The cards show combinations of 15 own and other races indicated by stylized houses.*) Would you look through the cards and rearrange them so that the neighborhood that is most attractive to you is on top, the next most attractive second, and so on down the line, with the least attractive neighborhood on the bottom?"

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Two lines of work, however, have directly focused on the process of neighborhood selection. In Holme's (2002) study of residential decision-making, middle-class parents were asked how they selected residences (and schools). She found, interestingly, that her subjects relied heavily on word-of-mouth (especially as it pertained to school quality); they did little independent investigation. Nevertheless, this study is now a decade old; moreover, the restricted nature of the sample did not permit a comparison of neighborhood selection strategies across class and race groups.

Beyond this, a series of social experiments providing vouchers to low-income families—the Gatreaux and "Move to Opportunity" projects—have yielded important findings. Studies evaluating these experiments have indicated that despite the intent of the programs to move families to more affluent neighborhoods, many voucher recipients ultimately chose housing in neighborhoods similar to the low-income ones in which they had originally resided. Others returned to low-income neighborhoods after spending a short time in the suburbs. These results have been explained by factors such as the limited amount of time recipients felt they had when making residential choices and the absence of adequate apartments in some neighborhoods (Rhodes and DeLuca 2012). Researchers have also reported that Gautreaux residents who moved to the suburbs had more contact with neighbors than did city residents, but they often reported feeling uncomfortable, including with their neighbors (see Clark, 2009; and Lubinowitz and Rosenbaum, 2000).

In addition to the lack of empirical research on how individuals come to frame particular neighborhoods as attractive options, conceptualization of the residential choice process has been excessively narrow. In their desire for careful precision, researchers have often been restricted to studying the role of individual variables in the residential decision process (e.g., income, home ownership, family structure, and so forth). As a result, researchers often conceive of residential decisions in isolation from other dimensions of daily life (e.g., work location, family support system, school decisions, and tastes in restaurants, shops, and communities). Nonetheless, many factors are, in fact, woven together when individuals make housing decisions, since a host of services are tied to residential location (e.g., schools, parks, pools, shops, yards, safety, and transportation availability). Moreover, many (and perhaps most) parents view residential decisions as part of a broader project of trying to give their children advantages in life. Yet, the social science literature usually has not reflected the lived experiences of parents as they consider these interwoven factors together. Thus, for example, studies which document the transmission of advantages from parents to children (particularly in sociology of education) have given scant attention to residential decision-making (for a review these studies see, among others, Brint 2006, and Pallas and Jennings, 2009). Indeed, researchers have documented that schools are highly segregated by class and race, and that this segregation has an influence both the cultural climate and on educational outcomes (Brantlinger, 2003, Condron, 2009; Downey et al, 2004, Demerath, 2009, Van Zandt and Wunneburger, 2010). Nevertheless, relatively little attention has been paid to how parents come to arrive at the residential locations which result in segregated schools. Our analysis seeks to examine the social mechanisms which leads parents to prioritize certain neighborhoods and select particular residences.

Research Methodology

Our paper is based on in-depth, face-to-face interviews with parents of young children in the city and suburbs of a large Northeastern city. Table 1 describes the core study of upper-middle-class,

middle-class, and working class white and African-American native-born parents in 87 families. (Four of the families are interracial; all are white women and black men.) Most of the interviews are with mothers, but five are with fathers, and in an additional five the mother and the father were interviewed together. The families were recruited in a variety of ways. The study was originally designed to focus on parents of children whose eldest child was in kindergarten in three suburban communities. We began by gaining permission to study a very elite school district, which we call "Kingsley," which is a predominantly white, affluent nearby suburb (Figures 1-5). We then studied the contiguous school district we call "Gibbons," which is also predominantly white, but less affluent. Our third school district, "Warren," is close to Gibbons; it is much less wealthy and much less white. The houses in all three districts, however, lie within a thirty-minute drive of City Hall in the central city. With the help of the respective Superintendents, we selected one elementary school in each district. We sent letters home to parents of children in kindergarten; we also visited the school during events to recruit parents face-to-face. [3] And, we also sent out emails at daycares in the school districts. Parents also referred us to other parents. We told all parents that we were interested in learning how they came to live where they live.

Although the majority of the families in the study had an eldest child who was three to six years of age, in order to find families through the snowball sample we included some whose eldest child was as old as ten. We also ultimately included a sample of urban parents. These parents were drawn primarily from daycares, and the subsequent snowball sample, but a few, particularly the upper-middle-class African-American parents, were found by activating the social networks of the researchers. (We did not, however, interview anyone we knew or would cross paths with in our work or social lives.) We sought to have a minimum of four or five families per "cell" of the sample. Although the number of white and African-American parents are roughly comparable, the study is imbalanced. We have relatively few white working-class families; we have more working-class African-American families than elite families. Still, the study includes 22 middle-class African-American families. The authors conducted 51 of the 88 interviews; the others were carried out by a racially diverse group of doctoral students. We gave the families an honorarium of $50 for the interview. In addition, as a friendly gesture, we brought a pie or other dessert to the interview.

In designing the sample, we defined social class in terms of the educational requirements of respondents' jobs and the amount of autonomy they experienced in them. The upper middle-class includes families in which at least one adult has a full-time job that requires highly complex, educationally certified (i.e. post-baccalaureate) skills and also entails substantial autonomy (i.e. freedom from direct supervision) in the course of his or her work. The middle-class includes families in which no adult meets these criteria, but at least one is employed in a

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[3] We also told parents we were interested in how they ended up sending their children to this school. As working parents with small children, many had trouble finding 90 minutes to 2 hours for an interview. They were simply too busy. Many parents suggested that we email them; they did not respond, however, to the email. As a result, we found that the best way to recruit was face-to-face or by having someone ask another parent if they were willing to be contacted by us; if the parents agreed to consider the request, we asked for their email *and* phone number. Since many parents were suggested to us who we did not interview, it is difficult to calculate a response rate. Almost all of the interviews took place in the home of the parent. We found that parents frequently suggested meeting in a coffee shop. Due to the need to protect the sound quality in the tape recording, however, we sought to have the interviews be in the home or, on occasion, in an office or other private setting.

full-time job that requires relatively complex, educationally certified skills (i.e. a bachelor's degree or above); however, the job need not entail high levels of autonomy. (Thus, our sample folds a small number of families in which one parent has a master's degree into the "middle-class" category, on the grounds that he or she is closely supervised. Their occupations included social worker and insurance claims evaluator.) Working-class families are those in which no adult has a job requiring complex, educationally certified skills.

In addition to the core sample, we also carried out a number of "satellite studies," including interviews with 30 middle-class and upper-middle-class white city parents, 30 Kingsley suburban parents active in the PTA at the elementary school, and 15 immigrant and native-born renters in Kingsley and another elite public school district. Although not the focus of this paper, the patterns we report here also surfaced in these satellite studies. All of the interviews were transcribed verbatim. After looking for themes in the interviews, the authors devised a coding scheme. The interviews from the core sample were then coded by research assistants using Atlas.ti.[4]

The Context

The metropolitan area in which we did the study has around three million residents. Although most of the suburban communities are predominantly white, some inner-ring, older suburbs have become overwhelmingly minority in recent years. Indeed, the suburbs which ring the city vary significantly in terms of their social and demographic characteristics. There are over 40 school districts in the area that could be considered as being within commuting distance of the central city. As noted, we selected three of these as sites for the study.

Kingsley is often referred to as the "Garden Area" and has a reputation as being particularly affluent. Housing in Kingsley varies from small, brick row homes to massive mansions with broad expanses of gardens, hills, and carefully trimmed yards. The median home value exceeds $450,000. There is a central corridor with boutique stores as well as grocery stores, restaurants, shopping malls, and chain stores such as Office Depot, Bed Bath and Beyond, and a national fitness chain. The townships in the Kingsley School District are part of an elaborate park system with two pools with modest entry fees for residents that include a water slide, a space for picnics, and life guards. There is also an extensive library system. Many residents are employed in professional occupations such medicine, law, academia, and finance. Most census tracts in the district are approximately 95% white; however, one is over 50% African-American (and 10% Hispanic). (This tract generally contains smaller, less expensive homes; historically, it was where the servants of the wealthy residents lived.) The schools in Kingsley are widely reputed to be some of the best in the state. The district spends approximately $25,000 per student annually, and at the elementary school where we recruited families, third grade reading and math proficiency rates were over 90%.

Gibbons is widely described as a more "middle class" area and is heavily Catholic. It has smaller, ranch homes with smaller plots of land than Kingsley. The median home value is still considerable, at over $300,000. The business district consists primarily of strip malls. The area

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[4] In our quotations, to improve clarity, we have eliminated stutters, false starts, repetitions of words, "like," "you know," "um" and other utterances when they do not shift the meaning. In a few instances, we have altered the order of sentences to improve readability.

has few boutique stores, but there are numerous grocery stores as well as other shops. The schools in Gibbons do not have the wide ranging reputation of those in Kingsley, but are generally viewed positively. The district spends approximately $15,000 per pupil. Like Kingsley, third grade proficiency rates at the school where we recruited families were over 90%.

Warren is a larger school district; it is also more heterogeneous than Kingsley or Gibbons. Some sections of the district are made up of tree-lined streets containing single-family homes with neatly manicured yards; others are very similar to, indeed indistinguishable from, poor neighborhoods in the central city. A few small shopping districts offer residents diners, insurance brokerages, and convenience stores; others present residents with discount retail stores, check cashing operations, and corner stores. The median home value in Warren is approximately $150,000. A real estate broker told us that many of the more affluent residents in the district send their children to private schools. This is consistent with the fact that in the elementary school where we recruited families, roughly 90% of children were eligible for free or reduced price lunch. The district spends approximately $14,000 per pupil per year, and third grade proficiency rates at the school where we recruited were approximately 40%.

Finally, the central city itself has several million residents. African Americans and whites are the largest racial/ethnic groups, although the city has a substantial number of Hispanic residents and a smaller number of Asians. The poverty rate exceeds 20%. There are approximately equal number of renters and home owners. The city contains numerous neighborhoods with relatively distinct identities; these neighborhoods are heavily segregated, both economically and by race. The urban school district has over 150 elementary schools, as well an increasing number of charters. Parents who can afford them also have numerous private school options. The district spends approximately $13,000 per pupil per year. It has a choice policy that permits parents to apply to out-of-catchment public schools if they do not want their children to attend the neighborhood school. In a recent year, more than half of the district's public schools did not make Adequate Yearly Progress.

Findings

Guided by Networks

Social networks were a crucial element in the process of how parents decided where to live. This was evident, most obviously, in the direct "pull" that was often exerted by kin and (occasionally) friends. Indeed, across racial and class groups, and in both city and suburban communities, living in proximity to kin was often a central motivation in residential decision-making. Respondents of all backgrounds sometimes mentioned the support provided by their own parents as a key criterion in their decision-making.

An example is provided by Denise Thompson, a quiet, serious, middle-class black single mother, who chose to buy a house in the working-class African-American city neighborhood where she grew up. She purchased her small, three bedroom, one bath rowhouse for $136,000 just before her son was born, six years before the interview:

> I was comfortable of course with the area 'cause I grew up in this area. I went to that school, so I wanted to stay where I was comfortable. It's also close to my family. My mother's like a block this way. My sister is a couple blocks another

way. And I have another sister five minutes from here, so I knew I needed that support, so I would be with my family and I could get that support. I found this house and it's nice 'cause I can kind of keep an eye on him when he's running around. I don't have to go searching through different rooms. The house is small enough that I can find him. So it's good.

Indeed, for a large proportion of the single parents in our data set, being near family was essential. These parents only considered residences that were close to their relatives. For example, an upper-middle-class African-American mother of three children was decisive on this point. Elana Elliot, a tall, heavy-set, single-mother with a booming voice and a robust sense of humor owned a row house in a black middle-class area at the edge of the city; she rejected Terryville, a suburban community five minutes further out:

> Terryville, didn't really think about it. Because, my mother lives right in Trestle, my aunt, my mother's sister, also lives in Trestle, so I knew that I had to be close to them. I definitely would not consider moving too far away from my family. So, I felt like Terryville took me out of the way.

Her family provided important resources. She smiles as she recounts the benefits:

> ….easy access to babysitting (chuckles). Easy access to babysitting, oh, and, the kids, their father's parents…they live right in the vicinity as well, so everything is just one stop.

> If I needed to call them and say, "oh, can I drop the kids off, I need to go shopping"—or, "can you come over?" Everything's just a hop, skip and a jump, so my mom—anytime if I need to go to the store or anything, she's right [here], she's five minutes, ten minutes away, [and] my aunt's ten minutes away.

The appeal of living near kin was especially powerful among the working class respondents in our sample. Indeed, many of working-class parents we spoke to were pulled into the orbit of their own parents, siblings, aunts, uncles, and cousins after moving away from home for a period of time. This is the case with Ms. Edgerton, an African American single mother of a five year old daughter, Taisha, who lived in Warren, a predominantly working-class suburb. She was unemployed at the time of the interview, having recently been laid off from her job at a loan collection agency, where she had earned roughly $1400 per month before taxes. She received unemployment, which she used along with savings, child support she received from her daughter's paternal grandmother, and money that her own mother provided to pay rent and expenses.

After Ms. Edgerton finished high school, she and her partner moved out of state to be near his family. While she was there, her daughter was born. Although her mother came to stay with the couple for a month after the birth, Ms. Edgerton reported that she was deeply upset that her family couldn't be with her when her child was born. Shortly afterwards, her boyfriend became involved with another woman, and Ms. Edgerton decided to leave him. There was never any question that she would move back to her old neighborhood:

> We're right here on Vine Street right now. My uncle lives right over this bridge. He has a duplex. My cousin lives downstairs from him…. On Main Street, my

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aunt has a store right next to the Shell station. My uncle owns that building right next door so I have a cousin family in that complex. It is just literally every other block, we have family all around (laugh)…. No choice…. We came back when she [Taisha] was six months old. Went back to the area. Went to school in this area and everything. You could try to go away, but it's just so close in it. Literally everybody knows [you], from the crossing guards to the police officer. You know everyone…. It's safe. In a bigger town, you don't who're around.

Ms. Edgerton took considerable pleasure in the fact that Taisha will attend her former school, where some of the same teachers she had still work. The importance of family in guiding residential searches dominated working-class interviews for both black and white families.

As noted above, however, the importance of living near kin was also expressed by some middle-class parents. For example, Mr. Vilmer, a white father with a professional career who shared custody of his four-year old daughter, considered proximity to his own parents to be significant, since he relied on their support: "I can work my schedule so that I could pick her up whenever, or my mom lives 15 minutes from here so if need be, my mom could pick her up."

Particularly for single- parents, family support was essential. But two-parent dual career families also reported the value of having kin nearby. In many, but not all, instances, the location of family played into residential decisions. However, given the relatively compact nature of the geography (compared to, say, Los Angeles), the families in the study usually had a choice of multiple neighborhoods within a fifteen minute drive of key geographical reference points (such as the location of a job). Often parents did not examine closer neighborhoods; for some Kingsley parents, for example, Gibbons was closer to both their family and their work. Thus, distance was only one part of the equation.

Beyond the direct pull exercised by kin, networks were essential to residential decision-making as conduits for credible information. This was especially true among middle-class and upper middle-class families. Indeed, in almost all of the interviews with members of these groups, parents discussed learning of neighborhood options from trusted members of their networks: co-workers, kin, and friends.

The reliance on networks for information on neighborhoods was particularly clear among parents who moved to the region with no prior knowledge of it. For example, Ms. Leslie Neil, a talkative, bouncy, white, middle-class woman in a dressy suit, heels, and fashionable necklace, plopped down on the couch to talk to us one late afternoon as her six-year old and three-year old sons ran around outside. She worked in a managerial health care position; her husband, a financial manager, frequently traveled all week for his work. Their combined income was around $225,000. They lived in a small, two-story home with a massive backyard in Gibbons which they had bought for $425,000 in 2007 ("at the height of the market") in a neighborhood which has bubby rides, summer block parties, and ice cream socials. They moved there because her future boss recommended it:

> I kind of threw my resume out because Tim was commuting so much, and I got the call from my boss who's very much like, "when can you start." I finished work in Rochester like on April second or third and started here April ninth. So we flew in in February. So my boss mentioned that there was somebody moving

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because the family here had a child with special needs and they were moving;…they needed to be closer to family. We didn't really look a whole lot, but we kind of look back on the whole moment and say, it was so meant to be.

Her husband drove around for one day with an agent:

> he had kind of looked around with an agent;….they looked in Kingsley [in three different communities] – this kind of whole area, because he definitely…thought it would be good to live in this area; and I said, "as long as it's an easy train ride," and that's what my boss kept saying: "anything is an easy train ride."

But they quickly visited the house her boss recommended:

> and he looked around a little bit and then when I came here, we literally only looked in this neighborhood, which is why sometimes when we have something go wrong with the house, he'll say, "Oh, we should have looked a little bit more."

If she were to do it again, she reports, she would be more systematic:

> But, honestly, I never really went on and did what I probably would do now if I were moving…—how they always do the *City Magazine*, even though it's not always scientific, but, like, the top school districts in the area…. I probably would have done more investigation. And even with my sister in Ohio, I've kind of gone by, they're in the area that we would have looked [at], like one of the top Blue Ribbon schools in the area and it's a public school. I said I wish we kind of were in a neighborhood that could boast that that's where we're top…, but I don't feel like that's absolutely necessary.

Thus, despite having "looked around a bit," the Neils—in the difficult position of needing to find a place to live before they knew much about the area—followed the advice of her boss, choosing the neighborhood he recommended.

A similar story was recounted by Bethany Thorson, a white, slim, earnest middle-class mother had moved to Kingsley when her daughter was one; her husband, a physician, had been offered a position in the medical school at a local prestigious university. At the time of the study, her elder daughter was 11; the younger daughter was 8. Although she had a Master's degree in Finance and had worked over 50 hours per week in upper-level management supervising an operations department, she was currently at stay-at-home mother. She considered her active volunteering to be her job. When they moved, they did not have ties to anyone in the area. The university referred them to a realtor:

> We were not familiar with the area at all. But we knew that he didn't want to drive far to work, as close of a commute as possible. And, we knew that Kingsley school district was a very good school district, and we are both very strong believers in public schools. So… that led us to Kingsley.

> And then, we looked around all of Kingsley. And not having any knowledge about the various schools or the various neighborhoods, we basically trusted our realtor to show us all around.

All of their information about the quality of the school district came from the (weak) networks ties they were forming: the colleagues who took them out to dinner and the realtor recommended by people in his department.

> Q: And you said that you had heard that the Kingsley school districts were good. Do you remember how you heard that, or who told you?

> A: We heard it from the realtor of course. We heard it from colleagues of my husband's that he was going to work with. We had met, and we had gone out for dinner, and they wined and dined us, of course. And we heard all about, you know, where young people were living and where there were kids in the neighborhoods and the schools that were good. It's a very big private school area also. But because we wanted public school we knew that Kingsley…. If we, I mean, we also looked at houses in [a nearby, elite, school district]. But it [would have] put us a little further out.

Hence, Ms. Thorson's information gathering was restricted to the information she received from informal networks.

Other parents, even those who had a less rushed process, described similarly trusting who they knew. Their friends, family, and co-workers recommended neighborhoods; the parents then looked in those areas. For example, a white middle-class couple, the Stewarts, had been living in a small, one-bedroom apartment in the city near the husband's work; in 2008, due to the impending birth of their first child, they needed to move, as Joanna Stewart explains:

> I was pregnant with Charlie and, you know, he was about to be born and our lease expired in February, and we're like, either we go for another year or we have to find a place, I mean, what are we going to do? And a coworker of my husband actually lives in Kingsley just around the block, and he's like, "Oh, you should come to Kingsley. It's a beautiful neighborhood, Kingsley schools, and it's just great."

Ms. Stewart was dubious at first, in part because it was out of the city:

> I was like, "I know you're not going to like it, what are you talking about? I don't want to--." Like, "I'm totally not familiar, I've never been here." So we came actually a couple days before I gave birth…. It looked alright.

The third house they saw was a very small (i.e., less than 1,000 square foot house) fixer-upper for $185,000:

> I mean, I'm not like sold on it [the area] but, you know, it looks nice. And then the baby was born in December and we came back with a realtor and actually, that's the third house we saw. It was an older gentleman [who] lived here so it needed a lot of TLC like paint and things like that, but I saw potential, and we put our bid on it, and they gave us asking price. We're like, "Okay!"

Another interesting example is provided by Ms. Davis, a teacher who resided with her family in Kingsley. Ms. Davis is a Jewish woman who had grown in a suburban community in the metropolitan area; her husband is an Afro-Caribbean immigrant. She worked as a teacher in the city, while he was employed as an auto mechanic. The couple have two children, aged 9 and 6 years old. When she and her husband were choosing where to live, they had a great deal of difficulty finding an acceptable neighborhood. On the one hand, she considered only a small number of top performing school districts acceptable. On the other hand, they did not want to live an all-white community: "We were looking for a place that was—I mean, knowing our racial mix here we were looking for a place that was racially diverse, or at least diverse enough that it had African Americans and Caucasian people living together in relative harmony."

Ms. Davis was aware of Kingsley and the excellent reputation of its schools. However, in her mind it was homogenous, both racially and with respect to nativity. Nevertheless, she was directed to a particular town in the district by a member of her congregation:

> Q: Who told you about [the town]?
> A: Another person who lived [there] who went to my synagogue. She lived close to Kingsley High School and she was telling me that this was a diverse community, and I said, "no it's not." I really could not believe what she was telling me, so I tried to feel her out a little bit to find out what she knew and [whether] she was really giving me [good] information. I don't remember what specifically she told me but I knew that Kingsley was a good school district, but I had no idea that it was racially diverse. So when this house came on the market, we were looking at some houses in Gibbons, and we looked around really and it really seemed very white and I really wasn't too inclined to be in that area—so I was looking around here and as we walked around here, we saw that not only were there African American people, but we saw some biracial families….

Thus, Mr. and Ms. Davis clearly felt a need to "verify" the information provided by their friend. Indeed, she reported that they made a point of "scoping out the neighbors to see what their reaction was to us walking around." (A key discovery came during a drive through the neighborhood, when they noticed a Caribbean grocery store—significant evidence of a vibrant immigrant presence.) However, it was only through the recommendation of Ms. Davis' friend in the synagogue that they became aware of the town.

A similar story emerges, but in the urban context, if we consider the Grants, a white, middle-class family who lived on the east side of the city. Mr. and Ms. Grant are in their mid- to late-30s, with two children, aged 5 and 2 years old. Ms. Grant has a master's degree and works in educational administration; her husband has a bachelor's degree and works in marketing for a private company. They owned a three bedroom house, which they had purchased for about $200,000 six years before the interview. They reported that, at the time, "We had just gotten married and we didn't have a lot of money and we wanted to buy a house that would be easy to move in[to], and we didn't want to have some kind of fixer-upper, so this was a perfect fit." Their immediate neighborhood was predominantly white (he described it as "95 percent") with a few Asian families.

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Both Mr. and Ms. Grant had gone to college in the city at one point, and both felt that they knew it well. However, when they began the process of looking for a house, they became concerned that the character of city neighborhoods often varied at an extremely local level. Thus, in addition to relying on their own knowledge of the urban geography, they turned to network contacts:

> Q: So how did you know it was a good neighborhood?
> A: Well, we knew that because we had lived here as renters. I mean granted it was [south] a few blocks, but we had been up and down this area. A friend of mine from home actually grew up [on the east side] and moved out to the burbs when he was in high school, so he knew—because he had relatives at various spots around [the east side], if I would just tell him a block or a corner or a street, he'd be able to tell me instantly if it was, like, good or bad. If I said like [13th and Elm St.], he would say, "Yeah, that's good," or [29th and McGovern], he would say, "no, you don't want to—don't bother with that."
> Q: Do you know what he was basing that on? Just his [experience] of the area?
> A: Crime, I mean, [East Avenue] is a lot different from [Goodman Estates]…—obviously, [in terms of] ethnic backgrounds, but crime was a big thing, access to different things like stores and stuff. So yeah, we had enough knowledge of the area on our own, plus we had several friends to rely on.

As noted, this kind of neighborhood "steering" was quite common, at least among the middle-class families in the data. As such, it clearly represents a network effect on residential decision-making. And, like most Americans, the families we spoke with generally had networks that were segregated by class and race. Thus, as we argue in the conclusion, there is ample reason to suspect that network segregation contributes to residential segregation.

Sleepwalking into Neighborhoods: Vague Information, Rapid Decisions

Most of the parents we spoke with reported ultimately having chosen a neighborhood to live in quickly, and in a rather haphazard fashion. They relied heavily on information provided by the network, and rarely made more than cursory attempts to confirm what they had been told: information provided by trusted network tended to be received credible. In particular, the parents we spoke to rarely described undertaking systematic comparisons of multiple alternative options. Instead, many reported sleepwalking into neighborhoods. And, as a result, a few reported making decisions that, at least in retrospect, they considered mistakes.

For example, a white mother, Madeline Peterson, a research scientist with a doctorate, married to another scientist and with a boy in kindergarten, described a vague process in which they gathered little information, made a rapid decision, and looked at few options before buying a home in Kingsley. The family's one-story modern house (purchased for $360,000) had a sweeping array of windows looking out on a large, pastoral backyard. Ms. Peterson had a thoughtful, quiet, somber air about her. On a Saturday morning, the house was immaculate and completely quiet. They had moved from an urban, Midwestern city. The couple wanted a larger yard which would "hold a sandbox," but they were otherwise vague about exactly what they were looking for. Smiling ruefully, she looked somewhat sheepish about her inability to provide a crisp response:

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Q: When you were thinking about moving here…, where did you consider moving?

A: So I was thinking about that, I was thinking if I really know the answers to these questions (laughs), because it's not that crystal clear. I suppose it isn't crystal clear for lots of people.

We wanted to be somewhere where there were good public schools, and we wanted some space, and we wanted to minimize our commute. And so that gave us a radius. And we looked, very half-heartedly across the river, and it wasn't anything about schools there, we didn't get that far, in logic we didn't want to have a bridge between us and work, (laughs), so, um, so that brought us to this general area, and we needed to be near a train line, because we wanted to have a one-car family, so that narrowed it down for us.

As they looked for the house, schools were not a key part of the decision:

So none of this had anything to do with school, and one of the [reasons] that school didn't come into it quite that early is my sense, partially from talking to other people,…that most of the schools here, public schools here, were very acceptable. Um, so we looked. And, and if the school, and I know you're not asking me that at this point, but if the schools came into it, it may have been sort of Southern County, Madison County, but even then, when I look back, I don't think my information to say that the Southern County schools were better than the Madison County schools was particularly solid. You know, I'm a scientist, I know how to check things out, and the fact is I really didn't do it.

Indeed, she and her husband took the train to work. Living in Kingsley meant that they needed to ride to the main train station, take a slow shuttle bus, and then walk a couple of blocks. If they had instead moved to another district in the South called Bridgeway—which was quite similar to Kingsley—they could have shaved 15 to 20 minutes off of their commute time:

Q: Did you consider Bridgeway?

A: In retrospect, we should have. It would have made a lot of sense, because actually the connection would have been more convenient to us, because it would have taken us out right at work instead of at the train station and the shuttle bus. I knew that that was also a very nice neighborhood, and I had no reason to think that the schools there were an issue. I think really what happened is our friends lived in this neighborhood, and we knew this neighborhood best from visiting them. My sister had lived for a long time in [a town near their current home], so we knew this area, somehow deep in our brains from decades ago. So we didn't really look very hard in Bridgeway, and then I think [that] had the real estate agent shown us homes in Bridgeway, we would have looked at them happily, but she didn't because this was her stomping grounds, too.

Ms. Peterson and her husband, it bears repeating, were trained researchers. Nevertheless, as with many of the parents we interviewed, the process she described was casual, vague, and somewhat haphazard, and relied heavily on the knowledge they gained from informal networks.

Other parents' accounts echoed this. The mother of a child in kindergarten, a high-level professional, also white and upper-middle-class, had returned from Europe after separating from her husband. In selecting where to live, she described being drawn to the city, but then selecting Medford (a town in Kingsley) as a better option. Her $400,000 home is close to extended kin; it all seemed to be a perfect fit to her:

> I grew up in the suburbs of [the city] and my family all live in various parts of [the city] not far from here. I was coming back as a single mother with a toddler who my family were very excited to see and I wanted to be near where they were. I thought about living in the city. Initially I kind of was—I like cities and I wanted to move downtown, but the more I thought about it, it made more sense with a child to be somewhere a little less urban. Medford to me was just the right combination of having a little shopping district where there's a train station and all the shops are there and you walk to it from home, and so I liked that feel. And then it also had a great playground and school system too—which attracted me to this area. And then it was about five or ten minutes away from various relatives.

Hence, this mother, in a similar fashion to Ms. Peterson, relied on her informal knowledge based on her familiarity with the region and the location of her family. Although someone who did research as part of her occupation, she did not examine a wide array of options; she considered only the city and Medford, the location of her family.

In short, many families moved rapidly to a decision based on information given to them by their informal networks or through visits to the intended community. They considered few options, even ones that would have had tangible benefits (such as reduced commuting times). In interviews most parents were very vague. Few could identity, for example, who had told them that Kingsley was a strong school district. Instead, it was widely-shared taken-for-granted knowledge. This lack of clarity does not seem to derive from the retrospective nature of the interviews. Parents could provide extensive detail on the original color of the walls of their house, the kinds of remodeling they did, the price of the house, and the number of trips they made to find a home. But they could not articulate, in a detailed fashion, how they had chosen the neighborhood in which they lived.

Thus, similar to what Krysan and Bader (2009) have shown, the parents in our study had many "blind spots," in the sense there were many communities which they had never heard of or considered as options. For example, although Kingsley and Gibbons shared a border, Kingsley was widely seen as "one of the best" school districts in the state. Gibbons, despite having elementary school test scores that were as high as Kingsley's, was not a district which was well known. A number of parents had never heard of it. Moreover, most Kingsley parents had never heard of the Warren school district, although it was 20 minutes away. They had, however, heard of Bridgeway, a relatively elite suburban district 25 minutes away. And, conversely, Warren parents had very limited awareness of Gibbons or Kingsley.

Variations

The processes that we describe—including the network driven formation of the neighborhood choice set and a decision-making process that was rapid and relied on vague information—were apparent throughout the sample. That is, regardless of race, class background, or community type, we observed significant numbers of families whose neighborhood selection unfolded in this manner. That said, a degree of variability was apparent within the sample. This was most apparent among members of the black middle-class, where we observed a number of cases in which families did significant research and undertook systematic comparisons.

For example, the Taylors, an African-American middle-class family with two sons aged 8 and 9, had recently moved into a rental home in Kingsley. Mr. Taylor was an unusually jovial, sociable fellow; he chuckled frequently--ridiculing himself--even when discussing painful matters. Mr. Taylor earned a bachelor's degree in Communications at a historically black college; his wife had three years of college from a state college in the south. Although their income from a family-run nursing home was over $200,000, they were recovering from an economic setback. Mr. Taylor ruefully said, "I fancied myself a real estate investor at the end of the real estate boom, so I bought [four properties] high and lost my shirt. And the money wasn't a big thing. It was the credit that I had to forgo." Rather than pay an exorbitant interest rate, or be declined for a loan, he requested a five-year lease on their home.

The Taylors had previously lived in a "gentrifying area" in the central city, where they rented a home. They were fond of the neighborhood, which they described as having "just a little bit more energy" than their current suburban location. Although they had some safety concerns for their children, the decision to leave the city was precipitated mainly by friction with the administrators at the private school the children attended. Thus, the process of residential mobility was strongly tied to concerns about schools. Describing the friction with the private school, Mr. Taylor recounted:

> I said to my wife, "we're paying for something. It shouldn't be this aggravating. This is not the only school in the world." And I just started to research a lot about school districts. [I] grew up in [the city]. I knew that Kingsley had a pretty good school district. I didn't realize how good it was until I started to research, looking at the testing, looking at the schools [i.e. colleges] that their students had matriculated to.

Although impressed by Kingsley, Mr. Taylor nonetheless undertook an unusually energetic and systematic comparison with two other high performing school systems in the region:

> Webster I believe we considered, and Spencer. I didn't like the housing I saw available for the money I [would have been] paying there, and I looked at some of the test scores of the African American children, and I didn't feel like the test scores were high enough…. Those were the three districts we looked at and when I was kind of comparing them, this one kind of came out ahead. The test scores here were higher in general. The kids here were performing at a high, high level. And then I looked at the high schools, the tools they had. You know, the robotics program…, the drama program…, all the extracurricular activities and the foreign language program that they have at these schools impressed me, and although some of the other districts had some of that, they didn't have it all in one-stop

shopping. And then the proximity to downtown [in the city] is like a win, win, win, win, all these wins out here.

This was an unusually detailed search. Once Mr. Taylor and his wife had settled on Kingsley, he carried out further research on the demographic composition of the district's elementary schools. He and his wife decided to search for housing within the catchment areas of the two schools with the greatest diversity. Ultimately, they found a house to rent within one of these attendance zones, for which they pay $3,000 per month. The street has many children on it; he estimated that their block is about 3% African-American; in an ideal world he would like the neighborhood, and his sons' schools, to be 20% minority, but, he noted, "I kind of get along with all kinds of people." Smiling broadly, Mr. Taylor reported that was pleased with the school: "We're having a great experience and I think he [his eldest son]…seems to be extremely happy."

Other middle-class and upper middle-class black families provided accounts of a residential search process which assiduously considered test scores. For example, Noelle Miller, a middle class black woman with twins who worked as a school counselor in the city system, reported, "I didn't do too much verbal research, inasmuch as I don't really care what people personally think…, because I feel it's my duty to know it for myself." She and her husband actively considered—and looked at homes in—five school districts. As with the Taylors, issues of school quality were the primary criterion. Her husband was an executive in a highly respected non-profit; she took the lead on the research:

> I told him I wanted to sell the house and he was like, "okay." I did, well, I came to him with a specific plan, and--he has to have plans and everything has to be laid out and he has to have reasons and you gotta give, like, a presentation, so— (chuckles) um, so—a PowerPoint presentation. I literally had to have a PowerPoint presentation.

They settled in the suburban community of Webster, an elite district about 25 minutes south of Kingsley with comparable test scores and housing prices:

> Q: So why was Webster your first choice?
>
> A: The test scores, the graduation rate, the college going rate, the competitiveness of the school district. That was pretty much it.
>
> Q: I see. And, people gather information in different ways. Some people talk to people. Some people look the website. How was it for you?
>
> A: I looked on the website. I went on their website. I got the community newsletter that had all the graduation information. I looked on the state website. I looked everywhere to research…you know, Greatschools.org, all kinds of different websites just to compare and contrast school districts that would be in this area.

Discussion

There is little doubt that the United States is characterized by very high levels of segregation by

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race and social class. Indeed, while black-white segregation has decreased slightly in recent decades, income segregation has increased dramatically (Taylor and Frye 2012). Increasingly, American children grow up with other children of a similar economic position. Although members of the African-American middle-class are much more likely to live in more racially diverse neighborhoods than white middle-class individuals, there is little doubt that compared to working-class and poor families, they live in relatively elite settings (Pattillo, 2013). And, as many studies of class and child rearing have shown, middle-class parents (black and white) aggressively seek to transmit advantages to their children (Lareau, 2011; Pallas and Jennings, 2009). For the most part, middle-class parents succeed; children of middle-class parents have highly favorable life chances in a host of arenas relative to children born to working-class or poor parents (see Goyette, 2014 for a review).

Thus, the literature testifies to the importance of *place* in determining children's life chances. It therefore implies a strong interest in the processes that lead to the segregative distribution of families across neighborhoods. However, much of the research on residential segregation has been geared towards describing macro-level patterns rather than the micro-level interactions through which these patterns are constituted and sustained over time. Furthermore, to the extent that researchers have turned their attention to the micro-level processes that constitute residential decision-making, their focus has often been on explicating the choices made by poor families moving into and out of urban neighborhoods. While this focus is entirely understandable—especially in work with a policy orientation—it has, arguably, led to a loss of interest in more general features of the process of residential decision-making.

This is especially clear with regard to the role of networks, which have received surprisingly little attention in research on residential decision-making outside the context of studies of the poor (e.g. Boyd 2008). While many decades of research have stressed the importance of amenities (such as schools) to families' choices, few have asked the question of how families acquire information about the characteristics of particular neighborhoods and how they form a preference for (or an aversion to) these neighborhoods. Our results suggest that network ties are crucial in this regard, regardless of families' class or race: far from conducting systematic "research" on the range of options open to them—examining school performance, crime rates, consumption opportunities, housing value changes, and so forth—the majority of the families in our data were guided toward a set of neighborhoods by trusted network contacts. These contacts could be friends, coworkers, or kin, but their influence is hard to overstate.

In a certain sense, the importance of network contacts may seem unsurprising, since the range of options available in the metropolitan area we studied was potentially daunting. On this view, reliance on trusted contacts would simply be a means of reducing the complexity of sifting through these options. However, the families' networks were themselves heavily segregated, by both race and class, and the effects exerted by network contacts tended to reflect this: overwhelmingly, families considered only neighborhoods populated primarily by people who were demographically and economically similar to themselves. Thus, at least on our view, residential decision-making need not be motivated by an explicit desire to avoid particular groups in order to bring about a segregative result. Put differently, there is ample evidence of racial discrimination and racial exclusion on the part of whites towards other racial and ethnic groups, particularly African-American families. Nonetheless, in this study, we are struck by the

crucial role of social networks in framing segregative choices rather than a "smoking gun" of overt prejudice. The social homogeneity of networks, our data suggest, may contribute significantly to such a result.

The information that came to families filtered through their networks was highly truncated. Most of the families considered only a small subset of the neighborhoods that were potentially feasible (i.e. economically within reach and within commuting distance of their jobs). Similar to what Krysan and Bader (2009) refer to as "blind spots" and what Sharkey (2009) terms "cognitive constraints," the choice sets our subjects drew from greyed out much of metropolitan area, leaving only a small number of socially homogenous neighborhoods. Moreover, network-filtered information was inevitably vague and fuzzy (e.g. "the schools there are great"). Our respondents rarely sought to refine or specify this kind of information, much less to validate or contextualize it. Nevertheless, they tended to find it sufficient for making a choice. As a consequence, decisions were often rapid. This was especially obvious in case of the relocators, who were often time-constrained; but it was by no means limited to them.

Taken together, these results have a number of implications for studies of residential decision-making and, more generally, of residential segregation. First, we would argue that the choice of a neighborhood should not be conflated with the choice of a home. In our data, these decisions were sequential, and very different in character. As we have described, the first, the choice of a neighborhood, tended to be highly abbreviated, guided by network ties, and reliant on vague information. The second, by contrast, was more systematic, with careful comparison of the features of different properties and explicit consideration of their costs and benefits.

Secondly, our results suggest that researchers need to use significant caution when considering abstract models of neighborhood choice or experiments designed to reveal preferences. The truncated maps that most of our respondents relied on do not resemble the situation created, for example, by experimenters who present subjects with a (relatively large) set of alternatives that vary starkly across one or two key variables, and then ask them to make a choice. While experiments of this sort may be effective at revealing preferences (or biases) the subjects are unwilling to articulate, one cannot assume that they reflect the actual processes—cognitive or social—that lead individuals and families to particular neighborhoods.

More generally, our results suggest a modification of sociological views concerning the intergenerational transmission of life chances. Much of this research (Demerath, 2009; Hays 1996; Lareau 2011; Weiss 2008) documents ways in which parents work assiduously to enhance their children's outcomes. Our data, however, imply that the advantages or disadvantages that accrue to children as result of their residential neighborhood are rarely the result of "concerted cultivation" or other elaborate strategies. Rather, guided by their networks and by highly truncated mental maps, parents often appear to "sleepwalk" into particular neighborhoods. Each of these neighborhoods or localities has been shaped by historical forces, from zoning and tax policy to housing regulation, lending practices, and infrastructure development, and as a significant literature attests, they have widely varying implications for children's life chances. However, even schools—the public good which, according to our respondents themselves, played the largest role in their decision-making—are rarely the object of any sustained "research" or consideration. It is possible that parents' lack of vigor in choosing neighborhoods

was linked to the trusted nature of their network contacts, as well as the deeply stratified nature of community life. For example, since most upper-middle-class people lived in economically segregated communities, the neighborhoods to which they were referred were also class segregated. Hence, the decision did not seem risky. The lack of research about neighborhoods was as true of upper-middle-class parents as it was of their working-class counterparts. And in this regard, the choice of a neighborhood stands in interesting contrast to other choice processes, such as the selection of a child's college—which, researchers have shown tends to be energetic, systematic, and anxious, at least among the middle class (Stevens 2009). And, urban middle-class parents, when their children became school-aged, then displayed an anxious interest in finding a highly desirable school for them.

In this paper we have attempted to unpack some of the mechanisms through which residential segregation is recreated over time. One finding, perhaps ironic, is that the process seems to be quite similar for families across the class spectrum. Nevertheless, given the social segregation that tends to characterize social networks, the outcome tends to engender social reproduction.

	White Families		Black Families		Interracial Families		Total		Total by
Table 1. Core Sample of Parents									
	Urban	Suburban	Urban	Suburban	Urban	Suburban	Urban	Suburban	Class
Upper middle-class	7	11	5	5	1	0	13	16	29
Middle-class	6	9	7	4	0	2	13	15	28
Working Class	6	5	9	9	0	1	15	15	30
Total	19	25	21	18	1	3	41	46	
Total by Race	44		39		4				87

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