Abstract

Popular narratives of African-American outmigration from the city tell a story of “melting-pot suburbs” and the end of segregation. However, these narratives rely on declines in the White population proportion across suburbs and declines in absolute levels of segregation across metropolitan regions. This paper uses segregation indices, ArcGIS spatial analysis, and descriptive statistics at the municipal level to examine the relationship between increased African-American suburbanization and levels of segregation in the Chicago MSA. African-Americans are leaving Chicago and entering the suburbs and the level of metropolitan segregation in the region has been steadily declining since the 1970s. However, analysis reveals that re-segregation rather than integration is occurring in Chicago’s suburbs; that African-Americans remain uniquely segregated in the Chicago MSA; that the rate of segregation is declining at a faster pace in the City than in the suburbs; and that the suburbs are now a greater contributor to metropolitan segregation than the City. As the suburbs become the new terrain for residential segregation, theory must re-examine why African-American entrance into the suburbs has not fit a spatial assimilation model.