

# The Decline of Older, Inner Suburbs in Metropolitan America

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## *Abstract*

This article develops an index of suburban decline for 3,428 U.S. suburbs. The results of this index were used to measure the prevalence and extent of decline for older, inner suburbs and newer suburbs across the nation and in different regions from 1980 to 2000. The general pattern is one of decline in selected older, inner suburbs, especially those with housing built between 1950 and 1969 and those with increasing minority populations.

Regional analysis reveals that the South and the Midwest had the highest proportion of older, inner suburbs in crisis. Suburbs with housing built before 1939 emerged as areas of continuing affluence.

**Keywords:** Demographics; Minorities; Suburbs

## **Introduction**

Much scholarly work on metropolitan decline focuses on central cities. However, in recent years, a number of studies have examined decline in suburban areas (Baldassare 1986; Bier 2001; Bollens 1988; Hanlon and Vicino 2007; Hudnut 2003; Leigh and Lee 2005; Lucy and Phillips 2000a, 2000b, 2001, 2006; Orfield 2002; Puentes and Warren 2006; Smith, Caris, and Wyly 2001; Swanstrom et al. 2004). In the newest national study focusing on this issue, Lucy and Phillips (2006) determined that half of a sample of 2,586 suburbs in 35 large metropolitan areas had income levels below the area income in 1990 and 2000, and half declined in relative income during this same period. In an earlier study, Lucy and Phillips (2000a) found that decline was pronounced in middle-aged suburbs—places where the housing stock had been built between 1945 and 1969. Often characterized as inner-ring suburbs, these areas are deemed most at risk of decline because they now face an aging housing stock, severe fiscal problems, slow population growth, increasing poverty, and struggling local economies (Listokin and Beaton 1983; Orfield 2002).

This article compares the prevalence and magnitude of decline among what are termed “older, inner suburbs” with what are termed “newer suburbs,” beginning with a brief description of how older, inner suburbs and newer suburbs were defined for this study. A method for measuring decline in these areas was developed. More specifically, an index of suburban decline was constructed, and the results were analyzed for a total of 3,428 U.S. suburbs from 1980 to 2000. The results focus on suburban places nationally and in different regions of the country and allow suburbs to be ranked according to the extent of decline or growth. Subsequent papers will analyze the index results for selected metropolitan areas.

Extreme cases of suburban decline were identified, and this article examines different features of these areas: first, changes in their racial and ethnic makeup. Recent studies indicate that racial and ethnic diversity is increasing in U.S. suburbs (Frey 2003). The traditional settlement pattern of immigrants has changed, with some migrating to the suburbs rather than to the central city (Singer 2005). Asians, in particular, are more likely to live in the suburbs than the central city, as are almost half of Hispanics (Frey 2003). Similarly, there has been an out-migration of blacks from the cities to the suburbs, particularly in certain metropolitan areas (Massey and Denton 1988). In part, this article examines whether or not suburbs in crisis—particularly older, inner suburbs in crisis—experienced a greater increase in minority population than prospering or advancing suburbs. There is some speculation that minorities are out-migrating from areas of concentrated poverty in the central city to older, inner-ring suburbs (Jargowsky 2003). This article provides insight into that hypothesis.

In addition, housing age for suburbs in crisis is analyzed. Scholars suggest that the process of suburban decline can be explained in part by the aging of the local housing stock (Bier 2001; Choldin, Hanson, and Bohrer 1980). The underlying premise is that as the housing stock ages, it filters to low-income families, while higher-income families move to newer housing on the suburban fringe (Bier 2001; Hoyt 1939). To provide further insight into this explanation of decline in older suburbs, this article compares and contrasts the age of the housing stock in both advancing and in crisis suburbs to see how it differs. It is to be expected that there is more old housing in suburbs in crisis than in advancing or prospering suburbs (Bollens 1988). It is also to be expected that new housing is prominent in successful suburban areas (Bier 2001).

## Defining older, inner and newer suburbs

For this study, older, inner and newer suburbs in the top 100 most populated urban areas in the country were identified. These areas consist of all 18 consolidated metropolitan statistical areas (CMSAs), which are composed of 73 primary metropolitan statistical areas, and the top 27 most populated metropolitan statistical areas. These are located in the different regions defined by the U.S. Bureau of the Census (1994) as the Midwest, Northeast, South, and West. The most highly populated metropolitan areas spread across these four different regions are represented.

Census place geography was used to define the boundaries of the older, inner and newer suburbs within these areas. According to the U.S. Bureau of the Census (1994), there are three types of places: census designated places (CDPs), consolidated cities, and incorporated places. CDP boundaries are delineated to collect data on unincorporated areas with concentrations of population, housing, and commercial sites. These places have a degree of local identity, and their boundaries are established by the U.S. Bureau of the Census in cooperation with local and state officials. CDPs do not have their own local government structure, while consolidated cities and incorporated places are municipal entities that operate a local government. An incorporated place is established to provide government functions for a concentration of people, and a consolidated city consists of two or more local governments that have merged to create a regional government. Places can be central cities or suburbs. This article focuses on suburbs.

Using geographic information system technology and census place-level data on the total number of housing units built during specific time periods, I identified the suburbs where most of the housing stock was built before and after 1969.<sup>1</sup> Contiguous suburbs that are adjacent to one another and to the central city and that have more than half of their housing stock dating from before 1969 are classified as older, inner suburbs (see table 1). Newer suburbs are classified as those where most of the housing stock was built after 1969. Older, outer suburbs are places where most of the housing stock was built before 1969, but they are not contiguous to the central city. These older, outer suburbs are often very small in both population and geography and take the form of small towns at the edge of a metropolitan area. They are, in this sense, more rural than suburban in character and, for that reason, they were not included as part of this study.

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<sup>1</sup>The percentage of the total number of housing units built before and after 1969 was calculated. Those suburbs where more than 50 percent of the housing units were built before 1969 and those where more than 50 percent of the units were built after 1969 were identified.

**Table 1.** Number of Sample Metropolitan Areas and Suburbs by U.S. Census Region, 1980 to 2000

	Metropolitan Area	All Suburbs, Number (Percent)	Older, Inner Suburbs, Number (Percent)	Newer Suburbs, Number (Percent)
Midwest	18	872 (25)	411 (25)	461 (26)
Northeast	34	1,085 (32)	824 (50)	261 (15)
South	25	868 (25)	207 (13)	661 (37)
West	23	603 (18)	195 (12)	408 (23)
Total	100	3,428 (100)	1,637 (100)	1,791 (100)

*Note:* Totals may not equal 100 percent because of rounding.

On the basis of these definitions, I identified 4,876 older, inner and newer suburbs that existed as of 2000 in 100 metropolitan areas. Only 3,938 of them existed in both 1980 and 2000, and a number of these were dropped from the analysis because of their small population.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, the total sample of suburbs I analyzed is 3,428: 1,637 older, inner suburbs and 1,791 newer suburbs.

Table 1 provides a regional breakdown of the sample. As expected, there is a preponderance of older, inner suburbs in the Northeast and Midwest compared with the South and West. The lack of older, inner suburbs in the South and West can be explained in part by the annexation process in these regions. Cities in the South and West often engulfed the earliest stages of suburban development, in some cases right up to the 1980s (Abbot 1987; Rusk 1999, 2003; Teaford 1993).

Table 2 demonstrates the number of suburbs in the nationwide sample by the different census categories of place. A total of 788 sample suburbs are CDPs, accounting for almost a quarter of the suburbs in this analysis. The remaining three-quarters are incorporated municipalities. Of the CDPs, only 36 are located in the Midwest, indicating that the overwhelming majority of suburbs in this region are municipalities with their own local government.

<sup>2</sup>Because this analysis focuses on decline over time, only places that are defined as suburban by the U.S. Bureau of the Census and that existed in both 1980 and 2000 are included. Any suburb where the population was less than 1,000 in 1980 was dropped.

**Table 2.** Number of Suburbs That Are CDPs and Municipalities

	Suburbs, Number	CDPs, Number (Percent)	Municipalities, Number (Percent)
Midwest	872	36 (4)	836 (96)
Northeast	1,085	251 (23)	834 (77)
South	868	327 (38)	541 (62)
West	603	174 (29)	429 (71)
Total	3,428	788 (23)	2,640 (77)

CDPs = census designated places.

Compared with other regions, the Midwest has a high rate of suburban municipalities among its sample (96 percent). In the South, for instance, 327 suburbs (more than a third of the southern sample) are CDPs, and 541 are local municipalities. Three-quarters of suburban places in the Northeast sample are municipalities, while the remainder are CDPs. In the West, 174 out of 603 suburbs are CDPs. The remaining 429 suburbs are municipalities.

Using CDP and municipal boundaries to define older, inner and newer suburbs has important policy or political implications. Government resources are provided based on both municipal boundaries and CDP boundaries. In the case of the Baltimore metropolitan area, for example, Baltimore County funds revitalization projects for many older CDPs surrounding the city (Hanlon and Vicino 2007). Also, because CDPs capture suburbs with a cohesive community identity, local community groups often mobilize politically around these boundaries (Neidt 2006). In this article, both CDPs and suburban municipalities were grouped together and analyzed.

For the sake of clarification, figure 1 shows how place-level geography is used to identify older, inner and newer suburbs for the Cleveland-Akron CMSA. Housing age was mapped for all suburban places in the metropolitan area, and those where most of the housing was built before and after 1969 were identified. The boundaries for Cleveland, Elyria, Akron, Lorain, and Kent are included to distinguish the central cities from the suburbs. Older, inner suburbs are the contiguous places adjacent to these central cities. As figure 1 demonstrates, newer suburbs are located in the second tier of development. Some older, outer suburbs are located on the fringe of the metropoli-

**Figure 1.** Defining Older, Inner and Newer Suburbs for the Cleveland-Akron CMSA, as Defined by Housing Age



tan area and stretch along Lake Erie. These were dropped from the sample to be consistent with the sampling procedure for other metropolitan areas where older, outer suburbs typically have small populations and a rural character. In the case of the Cleveland-Akron CMSA, there are 66 older, inner suburbs and 36 newer suburbs for a study sample of 102.

### **Constructing an index of suburban decline**

Many indices have been developed to measure city decline (e.g., Furdell, Wolman, and Hill 2005; Nathan and Adams 1976, 1989), but examinations of U.S. suburbs typically make limited use of indices. Recent exceptions are two separate studies by Myron Orfield of CDPs in the Baltimore region and municipalities in the Philadelphia region (1997a, 1997b). For Philadelphia, Orfield (1997b) developed an index of regional economic conditions using four socioeconomic variables: the percentage of female-headed households as a percentage of all households with children, the percentage of children under five years of age in poverty, median income levels, and the tax base per household. Orfield developed a similar index for the Baltimore region (1997a), although the tax base per household variable was dropped because it could not be calculated for CDPs. Using this index, he divided places in the Baltimore region into three distinct suburban community types: high social need inner places, high social need outer places, and low social need places. Similarly, places in the Philadelphia region were divided into affluent suburbs, older cities and boroughs, and middle-income townships. Orfield (2002) developed a suburban typology for a number of regions across the United States.

These indices were obviously developed for specific metropolitan cases and emphasize differences in suburban social status. Orfield's work is concerned with status or stock rather than change or flow. This article, by contrast, is one of the first studies to develop an index of decline for a national sample of suburbs across a large number of metropolitan areas. This index focuses on decline (or growth) over time rather than solely on a determination of the social status of each suburb.

The data source for the construction of the index is the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) data set called State of the Cities Data System (2006), which provides census data on individual metropolitan areas, central cities, and suburban places. The variables employed to construct this index relate specifically to changes in population size, income, and poverty from 1980 to 2000. These variables have been used individu-

ally in previous studies of decline in U.S. suburbs (Bollens 1988; Leigh and Lee 2005; Madden 2003; Orfield 2002; Puentes and Warren 2006). Here, they were combined to develop a robust measure of suburban decline and advancement.

### *Income*

Many studies use relative income rather than absolute income levels, comparing a suburb's income with that of the central city or the metropolitan area where the suburb is located. For instance, Lucy and Phillips (2000a, 2006) measured suburban decline by comparing a suburb's income level per family and per household with the metropolitan income level for that category. For median household income and median family income, these measures were compared with the metropolitan area's income and expressed as a ratio—that is, greater than or less than 1. Similarly, Madden (2003), in her study of the suburbs of large central cities in the United States, compared the median household income in a civil division with the median household income for its metropolitan area. Mikelbank (2006) used relative income to determine the social characteristics of suburbs with different rates of relative population growth.

Relative measures are deemed important because they offer a means of comparison. For this article, I calculated relative income change for each suburb as the difference in median household income ratios from 1980 to 2000. This measures the difference in the median household income of each suburb relative to the median household income of the suburbs as a whole in both 1980 and 2000. This comparison is unique among suburban studies, which typically compare a suburb with the metropolitan area. The *State of the Cities Data System* (HUD 2006) contains a variable for the suburban median household income for each metropolitan area in both 1980 and 2000. A ratio of more than 1.0 means that a suburb's median household income is higher than the suburban median household income in the metropolitan area where the suburb is located. A ratio of less than 1.0 means that the median household income of the suburb is lower than the suburban median household income. The difference in these ratios from 1980 to 2000 was included as part of the index, as was the absolute difference in median household income over this same period.

There is one weakness in using income decline alone as a measure of suburban decline. A suburb could be a high-income community with a low share of suburban poor and still be declining in income. Combining income

change with changes in the number and percentage of residents in a suburb below the poverty threshold provides a more rounded and robust measure of overall suburban distress. Therefore, I also included measures of poverty in the index.

### *Poverty*

I calculated the change in the number of people in poverty from 1980 to 2000.<sup>3</sup> Also, I integrated a location quotient for poverty into the index. This compares the percentage of the population in poverty for each suburb in a metropolitan area with the percentage of the population in poverty in all suburbs in that same metropolitan area for both 1980 and 2000. The poverty location quotient for 1980 for suburb  $i$  was calculated as follows:

$$LQ_{i1980} = \frac{\text{PovertyRate}_{(1980)}}{\text{PovertyRate}_{\text{Metrosuburbs1980}}} \quad (1)$$

The poverty location quotient for 2000 for suburb  $i$  was calculated as follows:

$$LQ_{i2000} = \frac{\text{PovertyRate}_{(2000)}}{\text{PovertyRate}_{\text{Metrosuburbs2000}}} \quad (2)$$

By comparing the location quotients for poverty in a particular suburb in 1980 and 2000, I could identify suburbs where the percentage of people in poverty increased or decreased relative to other suburbs between 1980 and 2000.

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<sup>3</sup>The U.S. Bureau of the Census (2007) uses poverty thresholds to determine the poverty status of the population. Each person is assigned 1 out of 48 possible poverty thresholds that vary depending on family size and number of children. For someone without children, the poverty threshold in 1999 was approximately \$8,500 or less.

### *Population*

Another variable that is included is change in population from 1980 to 2000. Absolute population change was calculated as the difference in the population of each suburb over that period. A relative measure that was calculated by comparing changes in the population of a suburb with changes in suburban population was also used. In a study of growth, Mikelbank (2006) estimated a location quotient that measures changes in population for each suburb relative to population change in the metropolitan area in which the suburb is located. In a similar manner, my analysis compared the change in population of a suburb with suburban population change. Mikelbank states, "It is one thing for a suburb to increase its population in a rapidly growing region; it is quite another for a suburb to maintain some level of growth in the face of widespread regional population stagnation or decline" (2006, 5). On the flip side, it is one thing for a suburb to see a drop in population in a stagnating or declining region, but experiencing population decline while other suburbs are growing rapidly is more indicative of some underlying problem. Relative population change was estimated as a location quotient.

The location quotient for suburb  $i$  was calculated as follows:

$$LQ_i = \frac{\text{Population}_{i2000}}{\text{Population}_{i1980}} \bigg/ \frac{\text{Population}_{\text{Metrosuburbs2000}}}{\text{Population}_{\text{Metrosuburbs1980}}} \quad (3)$$

The numerator and denominator represent suburb  $i$ 's proportionate share of the suburban population (metrosuburbs) in 2000 and 1980. Any suburb with a location quotient in excess of 1.0 experiences an increase in its share of the suburban population over time. A location quotient that is less than 1.0 indicates a decline in that suburb's share of the suburban population from 1980 to 2000. This provides a measure of *relative* population loss or growth. The premise here is that if the population of a suburb is declining while all other suburbs in a metropolitan area are growing, it is a less attractive place to live relative to the other suburbs in the area. This relative measure was included in the index.

It is important to point out that population loss *alone* does not measure suburban decline. In their most recent study, Lucy and Phillips (2006) found that population loss is more likely to occur in a suburb where income is increasing rather than decreasing. In this case, it is possible that low-income

groups are out-migrating in higher numbers than high-income groups. To assess the full negative effects of population loss, it should be coupled with other measures of decline. In this study, I included changes in income and poverty as well as changes in population size.

Table 3 provides a list of the variables used in calculating the index. The values for these variables were standardized for the national sample of suburbs by means of z-scores. The z-score tells us how many standard deviations away from the mean a unit of observation is for selected variables (Gilthorpe 1995). Using these z-scores, I estimated an index score for each suburb with each variable weighted equally. Each suburb was ranked in the nationwide sample on the basis of the index score, thus enabling me to determine different extremes or levels of decline and advancement between and among older, inner and newer suburbs.

What is important to note here is that the relative and absolute measures were estimated for each suburb before the ranking or index procedure. Each suburb was compared with the suburbs in its corresponding metropolitan area on specific measures. It was then ranked in relation to all the suburbs in the nationwide sample. The relative measures ensure that cost of living and other metropolitan effects are considered before suburbs are ranked and compared in the national sample. Therefore, a suburb of San Francisco, for instance, was measured relative to suburbs in its metropolitan area before any direct comparison was made between this suburb and a suburb of, say, Baltimore. Once each suburb received an index score, the suburbs were ranked within the nationwide sample.

### **A broad sweep of U.S. suburban decline**

To analyze and compare decline among older, inner suburbs and newer suburbs at a national scale, the sample of suburban types was divided into deciles based on index scores. Deciles were used to identify the most extreme cases along the continuum of changing suburban social status. Table 4 indicates the number and percentage of older, inner and newer suburbs that fall into the first, fifth, and tenth deciles in the national sample. In the index calculation, the first decile identifies the most extreme cases of decline over time. These are termed “suburbs in crisis.” The fifth decile identifies the suburbs that have remained largely unchanged; in other words, they neither declined nor progressed from 1980 to 2000. These are termed “stable suburbs.” The tenth decile identifies the suburbs that improved during this period. These are termed “advancing suburbs.”

**Table 3.** Variables Used to Calculate the Index Score for Each Suburb

Variable	Definition
Income	Change in median household income, 1980 to 2000 (in 1999 dollars) Change in median household income ratios, 1980 to 2000 (in 1999 dollars)
Population	Change in population, 1980 to 2000 Change in population relative to suburban population change, 1980 to 2000
Poverty	Change in the number of people in poverty, 1980 to 2000 Change in the location quotient of poverty in each suburb relative to suburban poverty between 1980 and 2000

More than two-thirds of the suburbs in crisis are older, inner suburbs, indicating that they experienced a dramatic decline from 1980 to 2000. Nationally, 3 in every 22 older, inner suburbs are categorized as suburbs in crisis, compared with 3 in every 43 newer suburbs. Despite population growth, 125 newer suburbs nationally are in crisis. The overwhelming majority of these newer suburbs experienced a decline in non-Hispanic white population from 1980 to 2000. In the aggregate, the minority population of these suburbs increased from 21 percent in 1980 to roughly 50 percent by 2000. While newer suburbs would not necessarily be expected to be in crisis, many newer suburbs with increasing minority populations are struggling.

Older, inner suburbs are more likely than newer suburbs to be stable. This typically means that these areas have not grown, but neither have they lost population, and their poverty and income levels were unchanged from 1980 to 2000. One in every eight older, inner suburbs is stable compared with 1 in every 12 newer suburbs in the nationwide sample. Typically, newer suburbs grew or progressed rather than declined or remained stable. More than four in five advancing suburbs are newer ones. Nationally, about one in every seven newer suburbs advanced, compared with 1 in every 25 older, inner suburbs.

These findings suggest that when ranking suburbs by index score, extreme decline more likely occurred in older, inner suburbs than in newer ones. In general, the results indicate a national pattern of older, inner suburbs that declined and newer suburbs that improved or advanced from 1980 to 2000.

**Table 4.** In Crisis, Stable, and Advancing Suburbs Based on Their Index Score, 1980 to 2000

	Older, Inner Suburbs	Newer Suburbs
In crisis	217 (13 percent of the national sample of older, inner suburbs)	125 (7 percent of the national sample of newer suburbs)
Stable	192 (12 percent of the national sample of older, inner suburbs)	151 (8 percent of the national sample of newer suburbs)
Advancing	66 (4 percent of the national sample of older, inner suburbs)	276 (15 percent of the national sample of newer suburbs)

### Suburban decline across U.S. census regions

Index results were analyzed for the different U.S. census regions. Again, suburbs were divided into deciles based on index score. Again, the extreme cases of decline are termed suburbs in crisis and the most progressive are termed advancing suburbs. The fifth decile again identifies “stable suburbs.” I determined the number and percentage of suburbs in the Midwest, Northeast, South, and West that fall into these categories, and the results are presented in table 5.

#### *The South*

The region with the highest proportion of suburbs in crisis is the South. A total of 126 or 15 percent of southern suburbs fit this category. An unusual feature of the South is that most of the suburbs in crisis are newer rather than older, inner suburbs. In this region, 50 older, inner suburbs are in crisis in addition to 76 newer suburbs. However, it is important to point out that these 50 older, inner suburbs represent a quarter of all older, inner suburbs in the region. The South is typically identified with unabashed suburban growth, but as this analysis demonstrates, the South was not immune to the problem of suburban decline from 1980 to 2000.

As table 5 indicates, there are proportionately fewer stable suburbs in the South than in other regions, with the exception of the Midwest. Only 7 percent of all suburbs in the South are stable. This means that these areas remained unchanged in terms of population, income, and poverty. Of the suburbs in the South, 13 percent advanced from 1980 to 2000. Newer sub-

**Table 5. Number and Percentage of Suburbs in Different U.S. Census Regions That Are In Crisis, Stable, or Advancing**

	All Suburbs						Older, Inner Suburbs						Newer Suburbs														
	Midwest		Northeast		South		West		Total		Midwest		Northeast		South		West		Total								
		%		%		%		%		%		%		%		%		%		%							
In crisis	125	42	126	15%	49	8%	342	10%	108	36	4%	50	24%	23	12%	217	14%	17	4%	6	2%	76	11%	26	6%	125	10%
Stable	55	162	59	7%	67	11%	343	10%	21	137	17%	11	5%	23	12%	192	12%	34	7%	25	10%	48	7%	44	11%	151	11%
Advancing	84	58	117	13%	83	14%	342	10%	11	28	3%	11	5%	16	8%	66	4%	73	16%	30	11%	106	16%	67	16%	276	15%
<b>Total</b>	<b>872</b>	<b>1,085</b>	<b>868</b>	<b>603</b>	<b>3,428</b>	<b>411</b>	<b>824</b>	<b>207</b>	<b>195</b>	<b>1,637</b>	<b>461</b>	<b>261</b>	<b>661</b>	<b>408</b>	<b>1,791</b>												

urbs in particular fit the advanced category. However, there was substantial disparity among newer suburbs in the South, where a high proportion declined as well as advanced. An example of a newer southern suburb in crisis is Hialeah in Miami. By 2000, the median household income here declined to 25 percent below the suburban median for the Miami metropolitan area, and the poverty rate increased from 13 percent in 1980 to 19 percent in 2000. Three-quarters of Hialeah's population was Hispanic in 1980, increasing to 90 percent by 2000. Hialeah is a newer, struggling minority suburb that contrasts sharply with the newer suburb of Southlake in the Dallas–Fort Worth area. The median household income in this suburb more than doubled from 1980 to 2000, and the poverty rate was cut in half by 2000, ending at less than 2 percent. Southlake has few minorities and was 92 percent non-Hispanic white in 2000.

Table 6 indicates the metropolitan location of suburbs in crisis. Of the southern suburbs in this category, more than two-thirds are located in the metropolitan areas of Washington, DC–Baltimore, Atlanta, Dallas–Fort Worth, Miami–Fort Lauderdale, Houston, and Jacksonville (Fl). A total of 25 of the 126 southern suburbs in crisis are located in the Washington, DC–Baltimore metropolitan area. Of these 25, all but one are older, inner suburbs. A total of 17 southern suburbs in crisis are located in the Atlanta metropolitan area. More than half of Atlanta's older, inner suburbs experienced extreme decline from 1980 to 2000, compared with about one in eight newer suburbs. In Atlanta and Washington, DC–Baltimore, suburbs in crisis are typically older, inner suburbs.

Dallas–Fort Worth has a similar proportion of the suburbs in crisis: 16. Half of them are older, inner suburbs, while the other half are newer ones. Eleven suburbs in crisis are located in Miami–Fort Lauderdale, and only four of these are older, inner suburbs. In the case of Dallas–Fort Worth, suburbs in crisis are as likely to be newer as older. By contrast, Miami suburbs in crisis are more likely to be newer rather than older.

In this analysis, the overall picture that emerged is that the South has few stable suburbs, many newer suburbs that advanced, and, depending on the metropolitan area, a number of newer or older, inner suburbs in crisis. A fair number of newer suburbs in the South are in crisis—more than in other regions of the country.

**Table 6.** Suburbs In Crisis in Metropolitan Areas of Different U.S. Census Regions

Metropolitan Area	Number	Percent	Cumulative (Percent)
<b>South</b>			
Washington, DC–Baltimore	25	20	20
Atlanta	17	13	33
Dallas–Fort Worth	16	13	46
Miami–Fort Lauderdale	11	9	55
Houston	9	7	62
Jacksonville (FL)	7	6	67
Memphis (TN)	7	6	73
West Palm Beach (FL)	7	6	79
Orlando (FL)	6	5	83
New Orleans	5	4	87
Nashville (TN)	4	3	90
San Antonio	4	3	94
Austin (TX)	3	2	96
Tampa (FL)	2	2	98
Charlotte (NC)	1	1	98
Norfolk (VA)	1	1	99
Raleigh (NC)	1	1	100
Total	126	100	
<b>Midwest</b>			
St. Louis	28	22	22
Chicago	27	22	44
Detroit	18	14	58
Minneapolis	15	12	70
Cincinnati	10	8	78
Cleveland	9	7	85
Indianapolis	5	4	89
Kansas City (KS-MO)	5	4	93
Columbus (OH)	4	3	96
Milwaukee	4	3	100
Total	125	100	
<b>Northeast</b>			
New York	17	40	40
Philadelphia	13	31	71
Pittsburgh	4	10	81
Buffalo (NY)	3	7	88
Boston	2	5	93
Hartford (CT)	2	5	98
Providence (RI)	1	2	100
Total	42	100	
<b>West</b>			
Los Angeles	14	29	29
Phoenix	12	24	53
Sacramento (CA)	8	16	69
Seattle	5	10	80
Denver	3	6	86
Salt Lake City	2	4	90
San Diego	2	4	94
San Francisco	2	4	98
Las Vegas	1	2	100
Total	49	100	

Note: Totals may not equal 100 percent because of rounding.

### *The Midwest*

The Midwest followed closely behind the South in the proportion of suburbs in crisis. As table 5 indicates, 14 percent of the Midwest's 872 suburbs fall into that category. In the traditionally older region of the Midwest, decline was far more prevalent among older rather than newer suburbs. There are 84 advancing newer suburbs in the Midwest, 125 suburbs in crisis, and few stable suburbs. According to this analysis, 108—or more than a quarter of older, inner suburbs—are in crisis, and 73 advancing suburbs are newer ones. There is a tremendous dichotomy between old and new suburbs in this region.

As table 6 demonstrates, more than half of the suburbs in crisis in the Midwest are located in St. Louis, Chicago, and Detroit. Almost a quarter of Midwest suburbs in crisis are located in St. Louis, with another quarter in Chicago. Much of this extreme decline occurs in the inner ring. Of the 28 suburbs in crisis in St. Louis, 26 are older, inner suburbs and the other 2 are newer ones. These 26 older, inner suburbs represent one-third of the total sample of older, inner suburbs in St. Louis. In Chicago, 24 of the 27 suburbs in crisis are older, inner ones. According to this analysis, one in five older, inner suburbs in Chicago is in crisis compared with 1 in 50 newer ones. In Detroit, all 18 suburbs in crisis are older, inner ones, with some providing clear illustrations of the negative effects of deindustrialization. A telling example is Ecorse, a suburb located seven miles outside Detroit's central city. Beginning in the 1920s, steel rolled efficiently from the Michigan Steel mill located in the heart of this older suburb. Closed down since 1953, the old, rusted mill now represents the demise of the manufacturing sector in suburban Detroit (Teaford 2008). Almost half of the workforce of Ecorse was employed in manufacturing in 1980, but this number declined to less than a quarter by 2000. Increasing poverty and declining incomes followed the loss of manufacturing jobs. As with many central cities in the Midwest, old industrial suburbs such as Ecorse struggle to retrofit their local economies to the postindustrial era.

### *The Northeast*

Typically, people think that the older suburbs in the Northeast are in crisis, and yet only 4 percent of older, inner suburbs in this region fall into this category. Rather, in this analysis, the older, inner suburbs of the Northeast emerged as areas of relative stability, with 137 classified as stable. There are also a number of advancing older, inner suburbs, and although there are few

newer suburbs in this region, one in nine advanced from 1980 to 2000. Theoretically, the advancement of many suburbs in the Northeast was partly the result of their closeness to economically robust cities such as New York and Boston. In fact, of the 58 advancing suburbs in the Northeast, 51 are located in the Boston and New York areas. A classic example is the older, inner suburb of Dover, which is outside Boston. The median household income of this suburb increased from almost \$83,000 in 1980 to more than \$140,000 in 2000. The poverty rate declined from 4 percent to 3 percent during this same period. With a population that is overwhelmingly non-Hispanic white and college educated (a majority of residents 25 and older are college graduates), Dover is a thriving older, inner New England suburb. The median value of housing in Dover was twice the suburban median housing value in 1980, and this value increased by 2000.

Table 6 illustrates the location of suburbs in crisis in the Northeast. The overwhelming majority are located outside New York, Philadelphia, and Pittsburgh. A total of 17 of the 42 northeastern suburbs in crisis are in New York. Of these, 13 are older, inner suburbs. An example of an older, inner suburb in crisis is Wyandanch, whose black population increased from 62 percent in 1980 to 75 percent by 2000. At the same time, the Hispanic population doubled from 8 percent to 16 percent during this same period. A suburb whose population was heavily minority in 1980, Wyandanch has been left behind as median household income slipped from 15 percent to more than 40 percent below the suburban median for the Nassau-Suffolk metropolitan area from 1980 to 2000. At the same time, the poverty rate increased from 14 percent to 17 percent. Struggling in 1980, Wyandanch continues to struggle despite the gains made by many northeastern suburbs between 1980 and 2000.

Philadelphia and Pittsburgh are in many respects classic older, manufacturing cities that struggle to move beyond their industrial past and adapt to a more service-based economy. Of the 42 northeastern suburbs in crisis, 17 are located in the Philadelphia and Pittsburgh metropolitan areas. Of the 13 suburbs in crisis in Philadelphia, 1 is newer, and the rest are older, inner suburbs. All 4 suburbs in crisis in Pittsburgh are older, inner suburbs. Many of that city's older, inner suburbs in crisis are primarily industrial and have witnessed a major decline in manufacturing employment in recent decades. One example is North Versailles, where 36 percent of the workforce was employed in manufacturing in 1980, versus 14 percent by 2000. During this same period, median household income declined from more than \$39,000 to

about \$30,000, and the poverty rate increased from 7 percent to more than 10 percent. The median household income of North Versailles was on a par with the suburban median household income in the Pittsburgh area in 1980, but declined to 20 percent below by 2000.

In many ways, the patterns of suburban decline in the Northeast and Midwest are similar in that decline is most prevalent in older, inner suburbs. However, in contrast to the Midwest, many older, inner suburbs are also stable, and the distinction between older, inner and newer suburbs is not as sharp. There are a number of advancing older, inner suburbs, typically located around Boston and New York.

### *The West*

After the Northeast, the West has the smallest proportion of suburbs in crisis and the highest proportion of stable ones. Of the Western suburbs in crisis, more than half are located in Los Angeles and Phoenix. In Los Angeles, 14 suburbs are in crisis, and 12 of them are older, inner ones. By contrast, in Phoenix all of the suburbs in crisis are newer rather than older ones. Phoenix has no older, inner suburbs as defined in this article. Suburban areas outside the central city are new—in many cases, small rural places that have witnessed large-scale growth in recent decades. In some cases, however, little has changed and relative decline has ensued. An example is Sacaton, on the outer edges of the Phoenix metropolitan area. Its population is 95 percent American Indian. This is a reservation that has witnessed population decline while the Phoenix metropolitan area grew between 1980 and 2000. On average, the sample of suburbs in Phoenix grew by more than 23,000 people during this period, while Sacaton saw a decline of more than 300 people. The median household income there was 40 percent below the suburban median household income of Phoenix in 1980, and it fell to almost 60 percent below by 2000.

Among regions, the West has the highest proportion of advancing older, inner suburbs. In fact, compared with other regions, many of these areas in the West grew from 1980 to 2000. This is driven in part by an influx of immigrants, a fact explored in the following section. Overall, in the West, as in other regions, there are proportionately more older, inner suburbs than newer suburbs in crisis, although as illustrated by the Phoenix metropolitan area, decline can be also a problem for newer suburbs.

### **Race, ethnicity, and suburban decline**

An ecological model of urban change posits that, when one group “invades” a city neighborhood, it “succeeds” over the preexisting group of residents (Burgess 1925; Downs 1961; Park 1916). In the context of this study, the Burgess (1925) model suggests that newly arriving minority in-migrants to suburbs displace the preexisting non-Hispanic white population. It is possible that this evolutionary process subsequently leads to the emergence of pockets of suburban poverty, because minority populations typically are poorer than non-Hispanic whites (Madden 2003). This section examines changes in race, ethnicity, and immigration in advancing and in crisis suburbs to provide some insight into the validity of this thesis. The expectation is that minority population increased and the non-Hispanic white population declined in suburbs in crisis from 1980 to 2000. It is also expected that the increase in minority population during this period was higher among older, inner suburbs in crisis than among improving newer, outer suburbs.

As table 7 indicates, the suburbs in this study became more diverse over time. The percentage of non-Hispanic blacks, Hispanics, immigrants, and other races<sup>4</sup> increased in the suburbs from 1980 to 2000. In all suburban categories, the percentage of the non-Hispanic white population declined during this period.

Despite this overall increasing diversity, there is some variation in the proportion of different racial and ethnic groups among suburbs in crisis and advancing suburbs. As before, suburbs in crisis are those in the first decile based on index score, and advancing suburbs are those in the tenth decile based on index score. In general, the pattern is one where the proportion of non-Hispanic whites is lower and the proportion of minority populations is higher in suburbs in crisis than in advancing suburbs.

When focusing on racial differences, I found that 57 percent of the population of older, inner suburbs in crisis was non-Hispanic white in 2000, compared with 86 percent of the population of advancing older, inner suburbs. The latter had proportionately more non-Hispanic whites than older, inner suburbs in crisis. Some 15 percent of the residents of older, inner suburbs in crisis were non-Hispanic black in 2000 versus only 1 percent of the population of advancing older, inner suburbs. In short, older, inner suburbs in crisis had proportionately more non-Hispanic blacks than advancing older, inner suburbs.

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<sup>4</sup>In the *State of the Cities Data System* (HUD 2006), the “other race” category comprises those identifying themselves as “American Indian and Alaska Native alone,” “Asian alone,” “Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone,” “some other race alone,” or of more than one race.

**Table 7.** Race and Ethnicity among In Crisis and Advancing Suburbs

	Older, Inner Suburbs		Newer Suburbs	
	In Crisis	Advancing	In Crisis	Advancing
Number	217	66	125	276
Percent non-Hispanic white, 2000	57	86	52	76
Percent non-Hispanic black, 2000	15	1	14	5
Percent non-Hispanic other, 2000	9	7	6	9
Percent Hispanic, 2000	19	5	27	10
Percent immigrant, 2000	20	12	21	12
Percent change non-Hispanic white, 1980 to 2000	-24	-4	-26	-12
Percent change non-Hispanic black, 1980 to 2000	8	0	7	1
Percent change non-Hispanic other, 1980 to 2000	6	4	4	6
Percent change Hispanic, 1980 to 2000	11	0	15	5
Percent change immigrant, 1980 to 2000	10	2	10	7
Declining non-Hispanic white population	216 (100%)	62 (93%)	113 (90%)	254 (92%)
Non-Hispanic white population declining 25 percent or more	71 (33%)	0 (0%)	33 (26%)	22 (7%)
Increasing immigrant population	154 (71%)	55 (83%)	101 (80%)	235 (85%)
Immigrant population increasing 10 percent or more	50 (23%)	2 (3%)	37 (30%)	43 (16%)

There is a similar pattern with newer suburbs. More than half of the residents of newer suburbs in crisis were non-Hispanic whites in 2000, compared with three-quarters of the population of advancing newer suburbs. Moreover, 14 percent of the population of newer suburbs in crisis was non-Hispanic black in 2000, versus 5 percent of the population of advancing newer suburbs. In short, as with older, inner suburbs, advancing newer suburbs had proportionately more non-Hispanic whites and fewer non-Hispanic blacks than newer suburbs in crisis.

Another general pattern is one where the proportionate loss of non-Hispanic white residents between 1980 and 2000 was higher among suburbs in crisis than among advancing suburbs. For instance, the non-Hispanic white population of older, inner suburbs in crisis dropped by almost a quarter compared with a 4 percent decline among advancing older, inner suburbs. Almost

all of the older, inner suburbs in crisis lost non-Hispanic white population, and a third of them experienced a loss of 25 percent or more. One example is Darby, an older, inner suburb of Philadelphia that is in crisis; the population was 83 percent non-Hispanic white in 1980, but a little more than a third non-Hispanic white by 2000. During this same period, the black population increased from 15 percent to 60 percent of the total. The loss of non-Hispanic whites in newer suburbs was less extensive than in older, inner suburbs, although more than a quarter of newer suburbs in crisis experienced a loss of 25 percent or more of the non-Hispanic white population. There is an association between declining non-Hispanic white population and suburban decline.

The immigrant population increased among both types of suburbs, although the extent of this increase is greater among suburbs in crisis than among advancing suburbs. Almost a quarter of older, inner suburbs in crisis experienced an increase of 10 percent or more in the immigrant population. An even higher percentage of newer suburbs in crisis experienced substantial increases in the number of immigrants, who are increasingly residing in newer U.S. suburbs. This finding contradicts the typical trend posited by the Burgess (1925) model, which expects immigrants to settle in older rather than newer suburbs.

As table 8 indicates, the decline in the non-Hispanic white population occurred in the different suburbs of all regions between 1980 and 2000. In every region, suburbs in crisis experienced heavier losses than advancing suburbs. The West and the South experienced the largest decline in the non-Hispanic white population among suburbs in crisis, with declines only slightly higher among older, inner suburbs in crisis than newer suburbs in crisis. In the West, the former lost more than a quarter of non-Hispanic whites, and a similar loss occurred in the newer suburbs in crisis in this region. Similar losses also occurred in the suburbs in crisis in the South. In both regions, suburban demographic change does not necessarily follow a model where minorities settle only in older areas. In the West in particular, the loss of the non-Hispanic white population in suburbs in crisis, both old and new, was offset by an increase in the Hispanic population.

A telling example of this pattern in the West is the newer suburb of Rialto in Riverside, CA. Rialto's non-Hispanic white population declined from 67 percent of the total in 1980 to 21 percent of the total by 2000. During this same period, the non-Hispanic black and Hispanic populations increased by 11 percent and 32 percent, respectively. Meanwhile, Rialto's median house-

**Table 8.** Race and Ethnicity among In Crisis and Advancing Suburbs in Different U.S. Census Regions

	Older, Inner Suburbs												Newer Suburbs											
	In Crisis						Advancing						In Crisis						Advancing					
	Midwest	Northeast	South	West	Midwest	Northeast	South	West	Midwest	Northeast	South	West	Midwest	Northeast	South	West	Midwest	Northeast	South	West				
Number	108	36	56	28	11	28	11	16	17	6	76	26	73	30	106	67								
Percent change, non-Hispanic white, 1980 to 2000	-18	-22	-28	-27	-3	-1	-3	-8	-16	-9	-27	-26	-7	-5	-13	-13								
Percent change, non-Hispanic black, 1980 to 2000	9	5	14	0	0	0	-1	-1	6	1	9	4	1	1	1	1								
Percent change, other, 1980 to 2000	3	4	4	13	2	4	3	7	4	2	4	5	4	3	6	8								
Percent change, Hispanic, 1980 to 2000	6	12	10	14	0	-3	1	2	6	6	15	17	2	1	6	4								
Percent change, immigrant, 1980 to 2000	4	7	11	19	1	1	2	5	6	1	13	11	4	1	9	7								

hold income declined from 19 percent above Riverside's suburban median in 1980 to 5 percent below it by 2000, and the poverty rate increased by 9 percent.

In the South in particular, suburbs in crisis, both old and new, experienced an increase in the non-Hispanic black population. Regionally, older, inner suburbs in crisis in the South had the largest increase in non-Hispanic black population, followed by the Midwest. Table 8 suggests that there is a correlation between rising non-Hispanic black and Hispanic populations and decline, particularly among older, inner suburbs. While this analysis does not offer specifics on in- and out-migration patterns, it does suggest that decline among older, inner suburbs in particular may be the result of incoming poorer non-Hispanic black and Hispanic populations, possibly from nearby central cities.

A classic example of this phenomenon is the older, inner suburb of Woodlawn, outside Baltimore. In 1980, a quarter of the total population of Woodlawn was non-Hispanic black, but this number increased to almost three-quarters by 2000. There were almost 4,000 non-Hispanic whites residing in Woodlawn in 1980, representing 70 percent of the total population. Their number declined to only 917 or 14 percent of the total population by 2000. As non-Hispanic blacks moved into this suburb, non-Hispanic whites moved out. According to census data, between 1995 and 2000, more than 6,000 people moved from Baltimore to Woodlawn. These in-migrants, we can surmise, were largely non-Hispanic blacks leaving poor, inner-city Baltimore neighborhoods.

As table 7 indicates, other races settled equally in both older, inner suburbs in crisis and advancing newer suburbs. As table 8 demonstrates, much of this growth occurred in the advancing older, inner suburbs, the advancing newer suburbs, and the older, inner suburbs in crisis in the West. More research is needed to tease out this finding, but it is possible that the Asian population, the major ethnic group in the other race category, is settling in areas that are prospering as well as declining. The fact that the proportion of other races increased in advancing suburbs detracts from the overall assumption that decline occurs alongside increasing minorities.

The proportion of foreign-born residents in the suburbs rose from 1980 to 2000. In terms of regional variation, the highest rate of growth was among older, inner suburbs in crisis in the West. As table 8 demonstrates, the immigrant population of such suburbs increased by 19 percent. The immigrant population also increased among newer suburbs, particularly those in crisis in the South (13 percent) and West (11 percent). It is possible that immi-

grants are entering both newer and older suburban areas that are currently in decline because these areas are affordable places to live, relative to other suburbs.

Despite this possibility, some immigrant suburbs are flourishing while others are declining. For instance, in the older, inner suburb of Cupertino in San Jose (CA), the number of immigrants increased by 47,000 between 1980 and 2000, and during this same period, median household income rose by \$40,000. Located in the heart of Silicon Valley and home to the world headquarters for Apple, Cupertino is an example of an older, inner suburb that has benefited from the combined arrival of highly skilled immigrants and information technology industries to suburban areas on the West Coast. However, Hawthorne (CA), an older, inner suburb of Los Angeles, saw an influx of more than 11,000 immigrants between 1980 and 2000, while income levels declined from \$35,000 to \$31,000. In 2000, one in five residents of Hawthorne lived in poverty. Immigrants in this blue-collar suburb have been joined by blacks seeking to escape the ghetto of South Central Los Angeles.

In general, an increase in the minority population combined with a decline in the non-Hispanic white population occurred among suburbs in crisis from 1980 to 2000. Advancing newer suburbs had proportionately more non-Hispanic whites and fewer non-Hispanic blacks in particular than newer or older, inner suburbs in crisis. The findings of this study indicate that older, inner suburbs in crisis experienced a disproportionately greater increase in minority population than advancing, newer and older, inner suburbs. Non-Hispanic whites typically dominate these advancing areas while, across regions, poorer minority populations are in-migrating to older, inner suburbs. In some regions, the increase in minority population occurred at an equal or higher rate in both newer and older, inner suburbs in crisis. However, an overall picture is emerging where older, inner suburbs in crisis are becoming increasingly populated by minorities.

### **Housing matters**

It is presumed that as suburbs age, their status changes and they move through the life cycle from a period of stability and growth to eventual decline (Choldin, Hanson, and Bohrer 1980). To examine this further, housing age in advancing and in crisis suburbs was analyzed and compared across both national and regional samples. Again, suburbs in crisis are the first decile, while advancing suburbs are the tenth.

As table 9 indicates, half of the housing stock in older, inner suburbs in crisis nationally was built between 1950 and 1969. When even older housing is examined, however, a different picture emerges. More than one in four houses in advancing older, inner suburbs was built before 1939.

On average, the median house value in the oldest advancing suburbs was more than \$628,000 in 2000, compared with less than \$120,000 for the nation as a whole for that same year. Some advancing older suburbs have exclusive and expensive old housing that continues to maintain its value. On average, the median house value among older suburbs across the nation increased from \$297,000 (in 1999 dollars) in 1980 to more than \$628,000 by 2000. In fact, on average, the value of the oldest housing stock outpaced that of the new housing in the newer suburbs in both 1980 and 2000. The very oldest housing has a certain cachet or exclusivity, while the postwar housing prevalent among suburbs in crisis is showing signs of obsolescence. There was little appreciation in house values for older, inner suburbs in crisis, many of which date from the postwar period. As expected, very new housing is prevalent among successful suburbs. As table 9 indicates, two out of every five houses in advancing newer suburbs were built between 1990 and 2000. In short, the very oldest and the very newest housing appear to be the key to success among suburbs.

As table 10 demonstrates, the very oldest housing is highly prevalent in advancing suburbs in the Northeast and Midwest in particular. A total of 29 percent of the housing stock in the advancing older, inner suburbs of the Midwest was built before 1939. A telling example is Lake Forest, outside Chicago. In this older, inner suburb, about one in every five units was built before 1939. Located along Lake Michigan, this suburb began as an enclave for wealthy Chicagoans in the mid-19th century. Famous for the quality of its architecture and landscape planning, Lake Forest has managed over the past century and a half to keep its elite status among the northern Chicago suburbs (Ebner 1988). The median household income for Lake Forest increased from \$90,800 in 1980 to \$136,000 in 2000.

More than a third of housing units in advancing older, inner suburbs and more than 1 in 10 units in advancing newer suburbs in the Northeast were built before 1939. In the Northeast, very old housing can be found in both advancing and in crisis suburbs. A quarter of the housing in older, inner suburbs in crisis in the Northeast was built before 1939. A classic case of an advancing suburb with very old housing is Scarsdale (NY), which is located north of Manhattan. Half of the housing stock there was built before 1939.

**Table 9.** Housing Age and Value for In Crisis and Advancing Suburbs

	Older, Inner Suburbs		Newer Suburbs	
	In Crisis	Advancing	In Crisis	Advancing
Number	217	66	125	276
Year built				
1990 to 2000 (%)	5	9	14	39
1980 to 1989 (%)	8	9	21	28
1970 to 1979 (%)	16	11	32	18
1960 to 1969 (%)	23	14	18	8
1950 to 1959 (%)	27	19	10	4
1940 to 1949 (%)	11	11	3	1
Before 1939 (%)	11	26	2	2
Median house value in 1980 <sup>a</sup>	\$114,783	\$297,464	\$109,571	\$160,562
Median house value in 2000 <sup>a</sup>	\$133,775	\$628,044	\$114,376	\$238,920

*Note:* Totals may not equal 100 percent because of rounding.

<sup>a</sup>These are mean values in 1999 dollars.

Described as a “sort of utopia,” Scarsdale began as a wealthy enclave and has infamously maintained its high status (O’Connor 1983). The median household income there increased from \$117,000 in 1980 to \$182,000 in 2000.

Scarsdale contrasts sharply with another old suburb in the Northeast, McKeesport in the Pittsburgh metropolitan area. McKeesport is an old industrial suburb where steel-making attracted many working-class families and immigrants, beginning at the turn of the 20th century. Half of the housing stock there was built before 1939. With the decline of the steel industry, McKeesport has changed dramatically. The poverty rate has increased from 15 percent in 1980 to 23 percent in 2000, and the median household income declined from about \$26,000 to \$23,600. This suburb is also becoming increasingly minority since the black population increased from 10 percent in 1980 to almost a quarter by 2000. Clearly, there are older suburbs that can maintain their status and others that decline over time.

**Table 10. Housing Age among In Crisis and Advancing Suburbs in Different U.S. Census Regions**

	Older, Inner Suburbs						Newer Suburbs									
	In Crisis			Advancing			In Crisis			Advancing						
	Midwest	Northeast	South West	Midwest	Northeast	South West	Midwest	Northeast	South West	Midwest	Northeast	South West				
Number	108	36	56	28	11	28	11	16	17	6	76	26	73	30	106	67
Year built:																
1990 to 2000 (%)	4	3	5	6	12	8	17	7	13	11	13	15	40	24	39	40
1980 to 1989 (%)	6	5	9	12	10	8	10	9	15	12	21	23	25	23	31	27
1970 to 1979 (%)	15	11	19	20	11	10	7	15	28	36	32	33	17	18	17	18
1960 to 1969 (%)	24	17	25	22	14	13	8	18	22	20	19	15	9	12	7	8
1950 to 1959 (%)	30	24	25	24	19	17	17	24	14	10	10	10	5	8	3	4
1940 to 1949 (%)	11	15	10	9	6	9	17	15	4	4	3	3	1	3	1	1
Before 1939 (%)	10	24	5	8	29	35	24	16	5	6	2	2	3	12	1	2

Note: Totals may not equal 100 percent because of rounding.

In every region, although less so in the Northeast, postwar housing dominates older, inner suburbs in crisis. In the Midwest, West, and South, half of the housing stock in older, inner suburbs in crisis was built between 1950 and 1969. A typical example of a postwar suburb in crisis is Garden Grove (CA), outside of Los Angeles. This suburb experienced a population explosion after World War II, growing from 3,762 residents in 1950 to an incredible 84,238 residents by 1960. About 60 percent of the current units in Garden Grove were built between 1950 and 1969. Poverty increased from 8 percent in 1980 to 14 percent in 2000, and while the median household income increased slightly from \$43,000 to \$47,000 over the same period, this change represents a relative decline compared with other suburbs in its metropolitan area. Garden Grove's median household income declined from 7 percent to about 25 percent below the suburban median from 1980 to 2000. By that year, almost half of the population of Garden Grove was foreign born. These new arrivals can now avail themselves of the low-cost, postwar housing in this suburb.

In the Midwest, South, and West, 40 percent, 39 percent, and 40 percent, respectively, of housing in the advancing newer suburbs was built in the 1990s. Very new housing is prevalent among the advancing suburbs in these regions. This newer housing is less prevalent among advancing suburbs in the Northeast. It is no surprise that newer housing is increasingly occupied by high-income groups. However, the fact that suburbs with the very oldest housing can improve over time contests prevailing notions that suburban decline is merely a function of the age of the housing stock (Choldin, Hanson, and Bohrer 1980). My study suggests that the oldest suburbs have unique qualities that ensure continued progress, particularly in the Midwest, Northeast, and South. Postwar housing, however, has in many respects lost its charm. Lucy and Phillips (2000a, 2006) found that decline is most prevalent in these middle-aged suburbs, that is, the bedroom communities built after 1945 and before 1970. My examination of housing age among suburbs in crisis agrees with this conclusion. It also implies that the style, size, and uniformity of postwar housing may be more important to suburban decline than age alone. It reinforces Lucy and Phillip's (2006) call for planners and policy makers to consider housing characteristics as a major factor in suburban decline. It also suggests that there are other potential factors contributing to the advancement or decline of older suburban areas.

## Conclusion

This article develops an index of changing status for 3,428 U.S. suburbs. Using the results of this index, I measured the prevalence and extent of decline among older, inner suburbs and newer suburbs across different census regions. Nationally, 3 out of every 20 older, inner suburbs are in crisis and more than 3 in 20 newer suburbs experienced tremendous progress from 1980 to 2000. Extreme cases of decline among older, inner suburbs are most prevalent in the Midwest and South. Stable older, inner suburbs are the prevailing trend in the Northeast, while the West has the highest proportion of advancing older, inner suburbs. Regionally, there is a dichotomy between older, inner suburbs in crisis and advancing newer suburbs. In every region, and in particular in the Midwest and Northeast, suburbs in crisis are more likely to be older, inner suburbs than newer ones.

In exploring relationships between racial and ethnic change and suburban decline, this article finds an increase in minority population among suburbs in crisis, particularly older, inner suburbs, between 1980 and 2000. Regionally, in the South and West, the growth in minority population occurred in both newer and older, inner suburbs in crisis. Although this study did not use in- and out-migration data, it suggests that poorer minorities are out-migrating into the older, inner-ring communities of U.S. metropolitan areas.

Postwar housing, specifically housing built between 1950 and 1969, is most prevalent among older, inner suburbs in crisis. However, housing built before 1939 has maintained its value, and the suburbs where this housing stock prevails improved from 1980 to 2000. Housing age appears to be important in the sense that postwar suburban housing is particularly outdated. However, the fact that some old suburbs with old housing are advancing suggests that style, historic appeal, and a certain suburban cachet can be just as important as age.

Work is needed to fully flesh out the role of housing characteristics as well as other factors in the decline of older suburbs in U.S. metropolitan areas. An index of suburban decline makes it possible to identify extreme cases of decline and advancement in U.S. suburbs. The next step is to conduct case study and statistical analyses to compare and contrast in-depth the dominant characteristics of advancing and declining older suburbs. Also, tweaking the index to examine the periods between 1980 and 1990 and 1990 and 2000 might add further insights. According to Lucy and Phillips (2006), suburban neighborhoods did better in the 1990s than in the 1980s.

As demonstrated by the current study, suburban diversity is on the rise. As Frey observes, “[T]he new suburban diversity patterns, particularly the

fact that minorities are dominating suburban growth in more than half the nation's largest metropolitan areas, raise many questions about 'race and space' in America's metropolitan areas" (2003, 13). Real questions about the nature and characteristics of minority suburban locations emerge. More specifically, how do minority suburbs differ from non-Hispanic white suburbs along specific political, economic, and social dimensions?

The recent emergence of suburbs as the new immigrant gateways offers some interesting areas of investigation (Singer 2005). Studies of immigrant clusters date back to the Chicago School and ecological models of neighborhood change (Burgess 1925; Park 1916). More recent theoretical debates focus on the sociospatial behavior of immigrant communities in this country (Zelinsky and Lee 1998) and the impact of discrimination in the housing market (Rosenbaum and Friedman 2007). Questions emerge about the assimilation process for immigrants settling in the suburbs. The traditional model of assimilation suggests that immigrants settle initially in the inner city and eventually shift outward to the suburbs as they progress economically. Subsequently, they are absorbed into the dominant culture. However, what does the assimilation process look like now that immigrants are bypassing cities and settling in the suburbs? Are these populations predominantly settling in older suburban areas and then eventually progressing to the newer, outer suburbs? Do these suburban immigrants retain their ethnic identities despite spatial dispersion in a suburban setting?

Overall, an emerging body of work on U.S. suburbs is taking shape. The questions raised here provide a basis for continued investigation to help us better understand the processes of decline and transformation in U.S. suburbs.

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