Sociology, Segregation, and the Fair Housing Act
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**Introduction**

The sociological study of urban life in the United States over the past century and the study of residential segregation are inextricably intertwined. From W.E.B. DuBois (1903) to St. Clair Drake and Horace Cayton (1945), efforts to understand the causes and consequences of segregation were central to urban sociology in the first half of the Twentieth Century. These authors challenged contemporaneous sociological and legal arguments about the naturalness of segregation and established that segregation was not just an example of physical separation in dwelling places, but actually part of a systemic structure of racial subordination. This sociological research on segregation helped lay an academic foundation for the civil rights struggles that ultimately led to the passage of the Fair Housing Act in 1968. In this chapter, we examine the Fair Housing Act from the perspective of these historical sociological insights and add contemporary assessments of the Act's contributions, as well as continuing work on the ways in which residential segregation facilitates the reproduction of inequality.

**W.E.B. DuBois and the Sociology of Segregation**

The first rigorous, empirical sociological studies in the United States were conducted by W.E.B. DuBois in the late 1890s and early 1900s (see Morris 2015). From careful inductive analysis of the social life of black residents of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and then Atlanta, Georgia, DuBois began to formulate a theory of social stratification and organization, with attention to the role that race plays in the social order of the United States. In Philadelphia in 1896, DuBois went from house to house in the city’s Seventh Ward to conduct more than 2,500 surveys and supplemented those surveys with interviews and participant observation. In The Philadelphia Negro (1899), DuBois painstakingly described the complexity of the African-American community in Philadelphia, analyzing the geographical distribution, daily life, organizations, and social relations of Philadelphia’s black residents. He problematized in particular the segregation that so many at the time took for granted. He writes:

> Here is a large group of people—perhaps forty-five thousand, a city within a city--who do not form an integral part of the larger social group. This in itself is not altogether unusual; . . . and yet in the case of the Negroes the segregation is more conspicuous, more patent to the eye, and so intertwined with a long historic evolution, with peculiarly pressing social problems of poverty, ignorance, crime and labor, that the Negro problem far surpasses in scientific interest and social gravity most of the other race or class questions. (1899: 5)

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DuBois points out that the segregation of African Americans is related to the segregation of other groups in the city, and yet is distinct, shaped by the unique history of slavery, emancipation, and a rigid white supremacist caste system. In an article for the *Annals of the Association of Political and Social Science*, DuBois (1898: 8) similarly notes how the challenges of poverty faced by African Americans are universal ones and yet distinct because of the “peculiar environment” in cities in the United States characterized by “a widespread conviction among Americans that no persons of Negro descent should become constituent members of the social body.” It is this experience of the “definitely segregated mass of eight millions of Americans [who] do not wholly share the national life of the people” and “the points at which they fail to be incorporated into this group life [that] constitute” social problems, DuBois argued (1898: 7). In both of these turn of the century writings, DuBois set a penetrating agenda for sociological research in the United States at the time—to understand the broad processes of social stratification through the experiences of African Americans. Central to that stratification, DuBois recognized, were the lines of residential segregation that were being drawn ever more starkly at the moment he was writing.

In *The Souls of Black Folk*, just a few years later, DuBois started by famously pronouncing that “the problem of the Twentieth Century is the problem of the color-line.” He noted the significance of patterning in “dwelling-places, the way in which neighborhoods group themselves” and described the ease with which a physical color-line can be drawn on the map, “on the one side of which whites dwell and on the other Negroes” (DuBois 1903). DuBois (1903) wrote that an observer in the South finds that:

> the world about flows by him in two great streams: they ripple on in the same sunshine, they approach and mingle their waters in seeming carelessness—then they divide and flow wide apart. It is done quietly; no mistakes are made, or if one occurs, the swift arm of the law and of public opinion swings down.…

Even as DuBois analogized the separate lives of black and white residents of the South to the waters in two flowing streams, he emphasized how this was all set in motion and enforced by human action and institutions, in particular state and collective action to enforce white supremacist norms through the arm of the law and the through norms of social control. He continued: “between these two worlds, despite much physical contact and daily intermingling, there is almost no community of intellectual life or point of transference where the thoughts and feelings of one race can come into direct contact and sympathy with the thoughts and feelings of the other” (DuBois 1903). DuBois here succinctly identified segregation as an effective mechanism for enforcing social distance and, as a result, racial inequality. As profoundly, he highlighted the dangers that a lack of a shared intellectual life create for a divided society.

From these works, DuBois (1905/2000) moved to consider the direction of the field of sociology as a whole in investigating “the vast and bewildering activities of men and lines of rhythm that coordinate certain of these actions.” One can see DuBois in these articles and books at the turn of the century challenging other sociologists to use this relatively new social science to understand how the social order subjugates African Americans and privilege whites as a specific example of broader process of stratification in which “a combination of social problems is far more than a matter of mere addition” (DuBois 1899: 385). The color-line that residential segregation made visible was for DuBois so problematic because it was a cornerstone in the creation of racial inequality.
Segregation was so pernicious not because of the mere fact of separation but because of the discrimination it represented and the inequality it created. As DuBois later wrote, “theoretically, the Negro needs neither segregated schools nor mixed schools. What he needs is Education” (DuBois 1935: 335). He continued: “Other things being equal, the mixed school is the broader, more natural basis for the education of all youth. . . . But other things seldom are equal” and being “treated like human beings . . . “is infinitely better than making our boys and girls doormats to be spit and trampled upon and lied to” by white classmates, teachers, and administrators in integrated schools (DuBois 1935: 335). DuBois’s leadership in the Niagara Movement and the National Association for Colored People in the following decades made segregation a central target of African American collective action, particularly resistance to the municipal segregation ordinances and white supremacist collective violence that spread through U.S. cities in the first decades of the Twentieth Century. “The opposition to segregation,” he wrote, “is not or should not be any distaste or unwillingness of colored people to work with each other, to live with each other. The opposition to segregation is an opposition to discrimination. The experience in the United States has been that usually when there is racial segregation, there is also racial discrimination” (Du Bois 1924).

The Chicago School of Urban Sociology

Despite DuBois’s groundbreaking scholarship, the Department of Sociology at the University of Chicago is often seen as the foundation of sociology in the United States and, in particular, of urban sociology. Robert Park’s 1915 article, “The City: Suggestions for the Investigation of Human Behavior in the City Environment,” described the city as an institution that manifests “the habits and customs of the people who inhabit it” (578) and Park proposed conceiving of “the city as a laboratory or clinic in which human nature and social processes may be most conveniently and profitably studied” (612). Park had studied with John Dewey, William James, and Georg Simmel and worked with Booker T. Washington at the Tuskegee Institute before joining the University of Chicago in 1914. Park was particularly interested in neighborhoods, processes of segregation, and “the forces which tend to break up the tensions, interests, and sentiments which give neighborhoods their individual character” (1915: 581).

Perhaps the best known publication of the Chicago School was Ernest Burgess’s 1924 essay theorizing the growth of a city in terms of a model of concentric zones. This model conceptualized urban growth through an analogy to processes of invasion and succession borrowed from plant ecology, and it conceived of the incorporation of individuals into communities through an analogy to “the anabolic and katabolic processes of metabolism” borrowed from human biology (1924: 51). Relying on these analogies to the natural sciences, Burgess suggested that “a process of distribution takes place which sifts and sorts and relocates individuals and groups by residence” (1924: 54) and that this “differentiation into natural economic and cultural groupings gives form and character to the city…[f]or segregation offers the group, and thereby the individuals who compose the group, a place and a role in the total organization of city life” (1924: 56).

Park’s and Burgess’s analyses of urban neighborhoods and processes of segregation was flawed in many ways, but perhaps most importantly by naturalizing processes of segregation as part of inevitable, almost biological processes of invasion, succession, and assimilation. It also conceived of the inequality so visible in Chicago as a largely temporary condition for all, with little attention to the processes of racialization and the institutional structures that made inequality, especially black-white inequality so durable.
The Chicago School nevertheless educated generations of urban sociologists. One of its early graduates was Charles S. Johnson, who studied under Robert Park and received his Ph.D. in 1917. After Chicago’s infamous “race riot” in July of 1919, Johnson was named as the principal researcher for the Chicago Commission on Race Relations and published in 1922 *The Negro in Chicago* which emphasized the poor housing conditions faced by Chicago’s African American residents and the resistance to the denial of social, political, and economic opportunity they faced. The community self-survey that Johnson was one of many ethnographic studies of various occupational roles, groups, and neighborhoods that the Chicago School inspired and supported. One of the most influential of those ethnographies was St. Clair Drake and Horace Cayton’s 1945 masterwork of social research, *Black Metropolis: A Study of Negro Life in a Northern City*.

**Black Metropolis**

In *Black Metropolis*, Drake and Cayton asked “To what degree is the Negro subordinated and excluded in relation to white people in society, what are the mechanisms by which the system is maintained, and how do the lives of Negroses reflect this subordination and exclusion?” (1945: 776). To answer these questions, they coordinated more than 200 researchers conducting studies of black businesses, churches, unions, newspapers, and other aspects of African-American life in Chicago. Drake and Cayton (1945: 101) focused in large part on the “color-line which marks Negroes off as a segregated group deemed undesirable for free association with white people in many types of relationships.” They added that “[t]he color-line also serves to subordinate Negroes by denying them the right to compete as individuals, on equal terms with white people for economic and political power” (101).

Drake and Cayton carefully documented the ways in which segregation in Chicago was not the product of any organic process of city growth, but was instead produced by private violence, institutional policies, political decisions, and state action. They document the white violence, the refusal of services, and the police action used to keep beaches, parks, restaurants, and other public accommodations racially segregated. They also clarify the way in which racially restrictive property covenants both segregated and subordinated Black Chicagoans into the most rundown areas of the city. They squarely placed the responsibility for this subordination on white racism. “Segregation,” Drake and Cayton wrote, “is fundamentally a reaction against the specer of social equality,” combined with a white “economic interest that results in the concentration of Negroes within the Black Belt” (1945: 127-128).

But Drake and Cayton simultaneously recognized the agency of Black Chicagoans in transforming a “Black Ghetto” into a “Black Metropolis,” in forging a vibrant community in the face of pervasive discrimination (see also Pattillo 2015). They noted that Black Chicagoans took pride in “their city within a city” and “remain ambivalent about residential segregation: they see a gain in political strength and group solidarity, but they resent being compelled to live in a Black Belt” (1945: 115).

Ultimately, Drake and Cayton argued, like DuBois, that racial segregation and subordination was not just a local or regional issue but one of fundamental national and global significance:

the fate of the people of Black Metropolis—whether they will remain the marginal workers to be called in only at times of great economic activity, or will become an integral part of the American economy and thus lay the basis for
complete social and political integration—depends not so much on what happens locally as on what happens in America and the world.
(Drake and Cayton 1945: 767)

The Road to the Fair Housing Act
In the two decades following the initial publication of *Black Metropolis*, Black migration to Northern and Western cities continued, while the construction of federal highways and the mortgage assistance provided by the G.I. Bill spurred white suburbanization. African American homeseekers were largely shut out of these federal housing benefits both because many new suburbs used federally encouraged racially restrictive covenants to bar sales to Black homebuyers and because federally encouraged race-based grading of neighborhoods according to the perception of their lending risk meant that residents of predominantly non-white and racially integrated neighborhoods would have to pay significantly more for private mortgage financing, if they could obtain it at all (Jackson 1987; Sugrue 1996; Satter 2010; Brooks and Rose 2013; Rothstein 2017). Even as the U.S. economy grew rapidly, those gains were not evenly distributed and as the Civil Rights Movement gained momentum in the South, Black residents of increasingly segregated and disinvested inner cities began to revolt against racial subordination.

The NAACP continued to challenge policies enforcing residential segregation, especially the racially restrictive covenants that had become so common. At a 1945 NAACP conference in Chicago, Charles Hamilton Houston described the strategy of using “the court as a forum for the purpose of educating the public on the question of restrictive covenants because, after all, the covenants reflect a community pattern” (Vose 1959: 60). As part of that education, Houston proposed always beginning litigation by challenging accepted conceptions of race altogether, by “deny[ing] that the plaintiffs are white and the defendants are Negroes. . . . Every time you drag these plaintiffs in and deny that they are white, you begin to make them think about it” (Vose 1959: 61). Just as the NAACP lawyers could challenge conceptions of race itself, so too could they challenge conceptions of segregation. “Play whites on their own prejudices,” Hamilton suggested—“what degree of penetration changes a neighborhood from white to colored? One drop makes you colored, but one family in a block doesn’t make the block colored?” (Vose 1959: 61). A crucial part of the NAACP’s strategy for using these segregation cases as a form of public education was also incorporating sociological and psychological research on the effects of segregation, as in the well known Kenneth Clark studies that the Supreme Court referenced in the *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) decision.

Consistent with this emphasis on more quantitative analyses of segregation, scholars from the Chicago School continued to study segregation extensively, but moved in a demographic direction, rather than the more ethnographic one that Drake and Cayton represented (Taeuber and Taeuber, 1964; Taeuber and Taeuber, 1965). Karl Taeuber, a well-known sociological scholar of segregation at the time, together with his co-authors Alma Taeuber, Evelyn Kitagawa and others played a central role in popularizing commonly used measures of segregation in sociology operationalized as measures of population dispersion (Duncan and Duncan 1955; Kitagawa and Taeuber 1963; Taeuber and Taeuber, 1976; James and Taeuber 1985; Massey and Denton 1988). These and other sociological studies played an important role in measuring and documenting segregation.

After the passage of the Voting Rights Act in 1965, Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference turned their focus to housing segregation in Northern cities. In January of 1966, they announced a partnership with the Coordinating Council of
Community Organizations and launched the Chicago Freedom Campaign to “eradicate a vicious system” of housing discrimination and residential segregation “which seeks to further colonize thousands of Negroes within a slum environment” (King 1966a). The struggle to create truly equal access to housing and to neighborhoods was one of the most complex and challenging of all the difficult struggles that King faced (Ralph 1993).

At a march near Marquette Park on August 5, 1966, white residents hurled rocks, bottles, and firecrackers at the marchers. King was struck in the head by a rock and knocked to the ground. Catching his breath, he said, “I have seen many demonstrations in the South, but I have never seen anything so hostile and so hateful as I’ve seen here today” (King 1966b). Against this hostility to neighborhood integration, however, King had little concrete progress to show even after seven months of marches, protests, and meetings. King and the campaign struggled to effectively organize Chicago’s culturally and economically diverse Black residents and faced mounting opposition from many white residents. King eventually moved on to the Poor People’s Campaign.

The Black Power movement simultaneously began to question whether integration was a worthwhile goal at all. Stokely Carmichael in a 1966 speech argued that “we were never fighting for the right to integrate, we were fighting against white supremacy” (Carmichael, 1966: 6). With Charles Hamilton, Carmichael articulated the Black Power call for “black people in this country to unite, to recognize their heritage, to build a sense of community. It is a call for black people to begin to define their own goals, to lead their own organizations and to support those organizations” (Carmichael and Hamilton 1967: 44). Carmichael and Hamilton (1967: 55) challenged a conception of integration “based on complete acceptance of the fact that in order to have a decent house or education, black people must move into a white neighborhood or send their children to a white school.” They described how this emphasis on integration “reinforces, among both black and white, the idea that ‘white’ is automatically superior and ‘black’ is by definition inferior” (Carmichael and Hamilton 1967: 55). “Integration,” they argued, then, “is a subterfuge for the maintenance of white supremacy” ((Carmichael and Hamilton 1967: 55).

Urban uprisings across the country in 1967 led President Johnson to convene a commission to study these civil disorders, led by Illinois Governor Kerner. In language not dissimilar to that of DuBois and of Drake and Cayton, the Kerner Commission’s report, released in February of 1968, stated that “what white Americans have never fully understood—but what the Negro can never forget is that white society is deeply implicated in the ghetto. White institutions created it, white institutions maintain it, and white society condones it” (National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, 1968: 1) The Commission famously described the nation as “moving toward two societies, one black, one white—separate and unequal” (National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, 1968: 1).

The report recommended, among other prescriptions, that the federal government “enact a comprehensive and enforceable open housing law to cover the sale or rental of all housing,” and that it “reorient federal housing programs to place more low and moderate income housing outside of ghetto areas” (National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, 1968, p. 28). Whether the highly publicized report would actually lead to legislative change was unclear, however. Civil rights legislation that included anti-discrimination provisions in housing had repeatedly failed even as bills regarding voting rights and segregation in public accommodations had passed. As Senator Mondale noted, the focus on housing nationwide, instead of Southern segregation, “was civil rights getting personal” for Northern voters and their representatives.
Then, on April 4, 1968, Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated, and the threat of racial conflict seemed to consume the country. One week after King’s assassination, Congress finally passed the Fair Housing Act, “to provide, within constitutional limitations, for fair housing throughout the United States” (42 U.S.C. § 3601 (1988)). It was passed against the specter of King’s assassination and continuing urban unrest. Speaking in support of the Act, Senator Javits cautioned that “the crisis of the cities…is equal to the crisis which we face in Vietnam” (1968: 2703). Senator Mondale warned that “our failure to abolish the ghetto will reinforce the growing alienation of white and black America. It will ensure two separate Americas constantly at war with one another” (1968: 2274). He emphasized that citywide problems are “directly traceable to the existing patterns of racially segregated housing” (1968: 2276). The Fair Housing Act therefore aimed, in Mondale’s words, to replace segregated ghettos with “truly integrated neighborhoods” (1968: 3422). The primary operative provisions of the act prohibited discrimination on the basis of race, religion, national origin, or sex, in the sale, rental, or financing of a home. The Fair Housing Act also required that federal housing and community development funding “affirmatively further” fair housing, but as discussed below, this provision was largely ignored for nearly a half century. The Fair Housing Act was amended in 1988, among other things, to prohibit discrimination on the basis of disability or family status.

**Sociology and Segregation After the Fair Housing Act**

Even with the protections of the Fair Housing Act, however, discrimination in the rental, sale, and financing of homes continued. Community organizers and civil rights activists pressed for further protections against pervasive lending discrimination and succeeded in winning the passage of the Equal Credit Opportunity Act in 1974, the Home Mortgage Disclosure Act in 1975, and the Community Reinvestment Act in 1977 (Squires 2003). Together with the Fair Housing Act, these laws helped allow some middle class Black families to have greater choice in their housing and financing options.

But as these laws were raising the costs of discrimination, economic shifts were undermining hopes of social mobility for many Black urban residents. As William Julius Wilson documented (1987, 1996), processes of deindustrialization and the shift to a service economy beginning in the late 1960s caused a dramatic loss in decently paid manufacturing jobs available to urban jobseekers without college degrees. Those job sectors that were growing were often characterized by a mismatch in either skills or location for poor and working-class inner-city residents. As jobs left, some Black middle class households also departed central city neighborhoods, heightening for everyone who remained in inner cities the social isolation, concentration of poverty, and lack of access to job networks.

In *American Apartheid*, Douglass Massey and Nancy Denton (1993) emphasized the central role of residential segregation in making the declining access to jobs that Wilson had chronicled so significant. Massey and Denton (1993: 8) argued that structural changes in the economy “would not have produced the disastrous social and economic outcomes observed in inner cities” if not for “segregation that confined the increased deprivation to a small number of densely settled, tightly packed, and geographically isolated areas.” Documenting the public and private actions that contributed to the rise in residential segregation by race during the first half of the Twentieth Century and its persistence in the second half, Massey and Denton focused in depth on the role that residential segregation has played in “mediating, exacerbating, and ultimately amplifying the harmful economic and social processes” associated with the shift from a manufacturing to a service economy and the shift in the location of production to suburbs, the
Numerous other scholars have extended upon and innovated from this work, focusing on the intersection of race, class, and residential segregation (South and Crowder 1998; Iceland and Wilkes, 2006); on multi-ethnic dimensions of segregation (Frey and Farley 1996; Charles 2003; Iceland 2004; South, Crowder, and Pais 2008); on the segregation of immigrants (Iceland and Scopilliti 2008); on the significance of metropolitan level characteristics (South, Crowder, and Pais 2011); and on change in segregation over time (Logan, Stults, and Farley 2004), among other topics.

Attention to both differences in neighborhood characteristics and the effects that neighborhoods might have on outcomes grew significantly in the 1990s and 2000s (see Ellen and Turner 1997; Sharkey and Faber 2014). One branch of that scholarship focused on the stability of neighborhood inequality and the way in which that differentiation by residential location is part of “a durable spatial logic [that] organizes or mediates social life” (Sampson 2012: 21). Indeed many of the social problems on which sociologists often focus, from educational attainment to crime to mortality have persistent spatial patternings despite relatively high levels of individual geographic mobility. In that context, Robert Sampson investigated “how residential mobility, organizational ties, and elite social networks differentially connect neighborhoods to the cross-cutting institutions and resources that organize much of contemporary economic, political, and social life” (Sampson 2012: 61). This attention to neighborhood differences and the effects of those differences is intertwined with segregation by both race and class. This attention also illustrates how residential segregation has become both an object of study in sociology, e.g. what drives continuing segregation, and also a tool for researching social stratification more broadly, e.g. how does the segregation of individuals allow scholars to analyze the role that different contexts have on outcomes.

While much of the literature on segregation focused on the Black poor (e.g. Wilson 1987) or “underclass” (e.g. Massey and Denton 1993), segregated living patterns continued to characterize the experience of much of the Black middle class (Pattillo 2005; Sharkey 2014). Evoking Drake and Cayton’s Black Metropolis, Mary Pattillo (1999: 4) noted that “the black middle class has not outmigrated to unnamed neighborhoods outside of the black community” but instead “are an overlooked population still rooted in the contemporary ‘Black Belts’ of cities across the country.” Pattillo’s rich ethnography noted that continuing racial segregation meant that Black middle-class neighborhoods “are characterized by more poverty, higher crime, worse schools, and fewer services than white middle-class neighborhoods,” contributing to economic fragility and downward economic mobility (1999: 3). Indeed, not only does the average African-American or Latino household with an income of over $75,000 live in a census tract with a higher poverty rate than the average white household that earns less than $40,000 (Logan 2011) but Black middle class households end up paying more for and receiving worse financial products than similarly situated white peers (Faber 2013).

These spatial dynamics of intergenerational socioeconomic mobility have become a focus of more recent research in both sociology and economics. Scholars such as Patrick Sharkey have suggested that racial inequality can only be accurately understood from a multigenerational perspective and that neighborhood must be conceptualized as an independent dimension of that stratification—in other words, that we should examine the “trajectories of individual families in combination with the trajectories of the places they occupy” (Sharkey 2013: 6). Sharkey writes that “to understand why the children of the civil rights era have made such minimal progress toward racial equality, we need to consider what has happened to the communities and cities in which they have lived over the past four decades” and chronicles changes in predominantly
African-American neighborhoods characterized by “severe disinvestment and persistent, rigid segregation; where the employment base that supported a middle-class urban population has migrated away, contracted, or collapsed; and where the impact of punitive criminal justice policies has been concentrated” (Sharkey 2013: 5-6). Like wealth, “neighborhood environments, along with all of the advantages and disadvantages that go with them, tend to be passed on from parents to children” and “African Americans have remained tied to places where poverty has become increasingly concentrated, where opportunities for economic advancement have declined, and where the risk of going to prison has become more prevalent than the hope of going to college” (Sharkey 2013: 44, 49). Sharkey identifies effects of neighborhood disadvantage experienced during childhood that continue to have an impact into adulthood and that cumulate over generations. This work has taken place as scholars in economics have noted similar trends, including the significance of metropolitan areas in shaping intergenerational socio-economic mobility (Chetty et al. 2014) and the negative effects of childhood exposure to higher neighborhood poverty rates on future college graduation and earnings (Chetty et al. 2015).

Although there is increasing recognition of the significance of residential location for access to opportunity (De la Roca et al. 2017), whites’ preferences for living in predominantly white neighborhoods continues to reinforce residential segregation by race today. The housing search process is shaped by neighborhood perceptions and also by homophilous social networks that are themselves already shaped by segregated residential patterns (Krysan and Crowder 2017). Not only does neighborhood racial composition matter to homeseekers, it matters differently depending on who the homeseeker is. Whites tend to favor predominately white neighborhoods (estimated at less than 20 percent black) and are often reluctant to move into neighborhoods with more than a few non-white households (Charles 2008). Black homeseekers, however, prefer significantly more integrated neighborhoods (Krysan and Farley 2002). Research on neighborhood preferences has also found the existence of a racial hierarchy in preferred neighborhood composition, with whites the most-preferred “out-group”—a race different from the homeseeker—and blacks consistently the least preferred out-group neighbors, and Asians and Latinos usually in the center of the hierarchy (Charles 2000).

While early studies established that neighborhood racial composition affects homeseeking behavior, recent research has analyzed whether the observed neighborhood racial preferences are driven by race itself or whether race serves as a convenient proxy for other socioeconomic factors. Existing research has consistently identified independent effects of neighborhood racial composition beyond socioeconomic factors (Krysan 2008; Lewis, Emerson, and Klinenberg 2011). Perhaps the strongest evidence that racial composition matters independently of class or other neighborhood characteristics when whites make housing decisions comes from studies employing experimental methods to test directly the racial proxy hypothesis. In one experimental study, researchers showed respondents videos of neighborhoods in which the researchers manipulated the racial and class characteristics of the neighborhood in order to test the independent effects of race and class characteristics on neighborhood preference. For example, researchers would show a video of the exact same neighborhood scene but change the race of visible neighborhood residents or the class valence of their activities. White homeseekers consistently rated all-white neighborhoods as the most desirable. The effect of race was smaller for blacks, who identified racially mixed neighborhoods as the most desirable (Krysan et al. 2009).

In addition to differences by race in preferred neighborhood racial composition and neighborhood perception, segregation is exacerbated by the “mismatch” between whites’ desired
neighborhood racial composition and the composition of neighborhoods in which they perform their housing search. Whites search in neighborhoods with even higher percentages of whites than they say they would prefer. In contrast, black and Latino homeseekers conduct their search in neighborhoods that correspond to their stated preferences (Havekes, Bader, and Krysan 2016). While whites mainly search in overwhelmingly white communities, black homeseekers search in communities with a variety of racial compositions (Krysan 2008; Krysan and Bader 2007).

This research on preferences suggests that the barriers to stable integration are substantial because integration means different things to different groups and individuals (Krysan, Carter, and van Londen 2017; Krysan and Crowder 2018). One out of five white respondents still prefer all-white neighborhoods, one out of four exclude Blacks altogether, and one out of three exclude Latinos and Asians. Latino and Asian-American respondents often exclude African Americans entirely in their preferred neighborhood compositions, and while almost no Blacks want an all same–race neighborhood, two out of five Black respondents still exclude either Latinos or Asian-Americans (Charles 2003, 2006; Bobo, Charles, Krysan, and Simmons 2012). Schelling (1971) demonstrated that the interactive dynamics of discriminatory individual choices means that extreme segregation can arise from relatively small differences in preferences. The interactions between individual choices can generate a non-linear response, such that when the share minority in a neighborhood passes a certain tipping point, white flight (and/or white avoidance) quickly leads to stark isolation (Krysan and Crowder 2018). Society today continues to be structured by substantial divergence in preferred neighborhood composition, so perhaps it is not surprising that residential segregation continues to be so pervasive (Charles 2006; Card, Mas, and Rothstein 2008; Krysan, Carter, and van Londen 2017).

Despite most whites’ preferences for living in predominantly white neighborhoods, there is growing public concern about the extent and significance of neighborhood gentrification. As cities have become increasingly popular for young professionals and housing costs, especially median rents, have increased faster than median incomes in many cities, fear over housing affordability has increased. Many historically Black and Latino neighborhoods near the centers of growing cities have witnessed the displacement or departure of working class Black and Latino households and their replacement by higher income white households in processes of rapid neighborhood change. While some have suggested that these neighborhood changes may lead to more racially and economically integrated neighborhoods (Byrne 2002; Godsil 2013), it seems more likely that these shifts will drive a process of resegregation in which Black and Latino households are dispossessed of desirable neighborhood locations (powell and Spencer 2002).

Scholars have debated the extent to which gentrification causes displacement directly and the extent to which it leads to neighborhood demographic change (Freeman and Braconi 2004; Freeman 2005; Newman and Wyly 2006; Lees, Slater, and Wyly 2008; Ellen and O’Regan 2011; Hwang 2016). In theory, an increasing tax base and residents with more political and economic power could help improve neighborhood infrastructure and amenities (such as schools or parks) for all residents. Mary Pattillo suggests, however, that “in practice such a redistribution of resources often takes a backseat to feeding the demands of the new gentry for more public art, smoother streets, and support for more high-end housing, recreational, and commercial activity” (Pattillo 2007: 107). Gentrification may also further subordinate non-white or non-wealthy residents in spaces that they once saw as their own. For example, new middle-class residents often attempt to control the use of public spaces by low-income neighbors, sometimes through the “progressive criminalization of ‘quality of life issues’” Mary Pattillo (2007: 264). Lance
Freeman (2006) similarly gives the example of drinking outside in gentrifying neighborhoods: “certain activities, such as drinking in public, are proscribed unless they conform to the gentry’s idea of what is acceptable. . . . [W]hat difference should it make whether someone is standing on a corner or sitting behind a restaurant cordon?” (Freeman 2006: 107). Indeed, the stability of multiracial, mixed-income neighborhoods created through gentrification is precarious as pressures for shorter commutes and rising rents can lead to rapid changes in neighborhood residents in some highly-valued locations, even as investment and upgrading seem as distant as ever in others (Edlund, Macahado, Sviatschi 2015).

Although African Americans have historically been far more segregated than other minority groups, Latino-white and Black-white segregation levels began to converge between 1980 and 2010 (Iceland and Nelson 2008). Indeed, the growth of the U.S. Latino population is provoking a transformation in 21st Century metropolitan areas similar to the Great Migration of the 20th Century (Tienda and Fuentes 2014). As the Latino population continues to grow, Latinos seem to be coming to share the segregated urban structures experienced by African Americans. Although there is substantial heterogeneity among Latino groups of different ancestry, residential segregation is associated on average with significant negative educational and employment outcomes for native-born Latino young adults (De la Roca, Ellen, and Steil 2018). These negative effects for Latinos are as, or more, significant than the negative effects of segregation for African-American young adults.

Through more than a century of sociological scholarship, research has suggested that residential segregation is one mechanism through which inequalities are reproduced. The decentralized structure of government in the United States leaves the provision of many goods and services, and the raising of a substantial share of government revenue, to municipal governments (Briffault 1990; Frug 2001). This metropolitan fragmentation facilitates processes that sociologist Charles Tilly (1998) and others have called opportunity hoarding. Tilly suggests that durable inequalities, such as racial inequalities, arise “because people who control access to value-producing resources solve pressing organizational problems by means of categorical distinctions” (1998: 7-8).

In metropolitan areas in the United States, valuable resources, such as access to municipalities and their schools, parks, and other amenities have been and continue to be valuable resources guarded by wealthier, whiter households against those seen as threatening or encroaching upon them (Oliver and Shapiro 2006; Conley 1999). Through these processes of opportunity hoarding, residential segregation serves as the “structural linchpin” of racial stratification (Massey 2016; see also Pettigrew 1979; Bobo 1989).

**Conclusion**

Levels of Black-white residential segregation have decreased from their 1968 levels, but remain high and levels of Latino-white segregation have remained relatively consistent over the same period. Research suggests that segregation continues to produce separate and unequal access to resources, such as schools or jobs, and exposure to hazards, such as violence or environmental risks (Steil, Ellen, and De la Roca 2015).

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2 Black-white dissimilarity declined consistently between 1980 and 2010 (from 0.73 to 0.60), while Latino-white (0.52 in 1980 and 0.50 in 2010) and Asian-white dissimilarity (0.41 in 1980 and 0.42 in 2010) remained relatively steady (De la Roca, Ellen and O’Regan 2014). Although Latino isolation (that is, the share of Latino residents in the neighborhood where the average Latino lives) has risen less rapidly than Latinos’ quickly rising share of the population, average levels of Latino isolation have still risen substantially and matched average levels of African American isolation in 2010. Over this time period, African American isolation declined from 0.61 to 0.46 while Latino isolation rose from 0.38 to 0.46 (De la Roca, Ellen and O’Regan 2014).
The Fair Housing Act has been a crucial tool in the fight against discrimination in housing. Enforcement has been limited to some extent by a combination of lack of awareness by victims of discrimination, low levels of enforcement by the government agencies empowered to implement the Act, and relatively weak penalties for law-breakers (Schill 2006). Nevertheless, audit studies have suggested that explicit discrimination in housing has decreased and taken somewhat more subtle forms, such as non-white homeseekers being shown fewer units or offered fewer financing options (Turner et al. 2013; Pager 2008). More fundamentally, however, the Fair Housing Act has had less of an effect on reducing segregation overall because the structures that encourage and perpetuate segregation are entrenched in our local government boundaries and home ownership structures (Steil 2011). Continuing asymmetrical preferences for neighborhood racial composition combine with metropolitan fragmentation, exclusionary zoning, and regressive local financing structures to generate neighborhoods that remain separate and unequal. As DuBois, Drake and Cayton, and others noted a century ago, this intersection of residential segregation and neighborhood inequality continue to generate racial disparities in educational outcomes, wealth, health, and well-being while obscuring their causes. Continuing segregation also decreases the likelihood of being able to shift racial attitudes.

Data from the General Social Survey on changing attitudes is illuminating. In the 1976 General Social Survey, 63 percent of white respondents nationwide, or nearly two out of every three, favored a hypothetical local law allowing homeowners to discriminate on the basis of race when selling their home over a hypothetical law prohibiting discrimination (Smith, Marsden, Hout, and Kim 2017). In 2016, that share had fallen dramatically, but still included more than 14 percent of white respondents, or nearly one out of every seven (Smith, Marsden, Hout, and Kim 2017). These results suggest that a nontrivial minority of white Americans today still openly oppose the protections enshrined in the Fair Housing Act. There have been sweeping changes in white attitudes regarding de jure segregation, mixed-race marriages, and the categorical inferiority of non-whites (Bobo et al. 2012). Yet, despite growing acceptance of the general principle of integration in social life, whites still express strong preferences for social distance from non-whites, particularly African Americans (Bobo et al. 2012). Support for government action to reduce both segregation and inequality remains limited among whites, and is declining among African Americans (Bobo et al. 2012). While whites have moved away from biological explanations of racial inequality, they have moved toward cultural ones, and African Americans have moved from structural explanations towards cultural explanations as well (Bobo et al. 2012; see also O’Connor 2001). This naturalization of inequality through cultural narratives is consistent with the ways in which segregation reinforces inequality by making its origins less visible. These shifts in attitudes among both whites and African Americans towards cultural explanations and African American shifts away from support for government intervention present challenges for the future of fair housing.

If the goal of the Fair Housing Act is the elimination of intentional discrimination, audit studies suggest the Fair Housing Act has made progress, even if intentional segregation does continue (Turner et al. 2013; Freiberg). If the goal of the Fair Housing Act is the broader reformation of the institutions and practices that reproduce the subordinate social status of historically oppressed groups through unequal access to place based opportunities, however, the Fair Housing Act has not been nearly as effective. In terms of creating real housing choice and meaningful equality of neighborhood resources, the distance remaining is large.
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