The Enduring Significance of Residential Segregation: Race, Immigration, and Structural Drivers of Black Mobility

Special Fields Paper

April 20, 2025

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Abstract: The pervasiveness of segregation[1] in American cities and metropolitan areas has been and continues to be a topic of significant interest to sociologists and segregation scholars, particularly in terms of how to define and measure segregation. This essay traces the historical roots of segregation in the U.S. and illustrates how the causes and consequences of contemporary segregation must be situated within the broader context of the structure of American society. I then discuss the definitional and methodological approaches to residential settlement analysis to parse out how scholars of segregation identify the essential features of residential settlement worth examining. After the definition and measurement overview, I discuss two practical areas that may contribute to ongoing scholarship on (i) the residential outcomes of post-1965 Black immigrants and how racial prejudice and discrimination structure Black immigrants' experiences and (ii) "The New Great Migration" coupled with the secondary migration of Black immigrants to the American South, which raises questions regarding how these patterns of migration challenge the prevalence of segregation in American society or further exacerbate them. Overall, the essay underscores the need for the literature on segregation to pay closer attention to the residential settlement outcomes of Black immigrants, given that the Black immigrant experience is reflective of the African American experience.

Introduction

Segregation is "the unequal distribution of different groups across neighborhoods" (Iceland 2004: 250). "Residential space," as Smith (2001: 547) argues, "is a gateway to services, educational and employment opportunities, health, and social services. Where people live is therefore a reflection of who they are, but it is also an influence on who they can become." Scholars of racial and ethnic disproportionalities have extensively studied the profound effects of segregation in general. While scholars have meticulously documented the multiple causes and consequences of segregation in American society, the literature remains divided on the processes and actions that foster its maintenance (for in-depth reviews about segregation and other important neighborhood characteristics, see, for example, Adelman & Gocker 2007; Cagney et al. 2020; Faber & Drummond 2024; Hwang & McDaniel 2022). Most scholars take segregation, at a general level, to refer to the "degree to which two or more groups live separately from one another in different parts of the urban environment" (Massey & Denton 1988; Piekut et al. 2018). They tend to assess

[1]The reader should keep in mind that "segregation," as it is used in this essay, refers only to racial residential segregation.

segregation by focusing on how segregation results in life-altering outcomes for those caught in the snare of an unequal society.

The quality of life afforded by the neighborhoods in which people reside matters for their life outcomes. Neighborhoods affect people's access to quality healthcare resources and facilities, social networks, and quality education, as well as experiences of crime, incarceration, and poverty. The effects of exposure to neighborhood disadvantages underscore the need for continuous assessment of the impact of segregation. The well-established fact that Black Americans and other minoritized groups continue to experience significantly higher rates of segregation further emphasizes the importance of this ongoing assessment. The prevalence and uniqueness of segregation within Black neighborhoods have been termed "hypersegregation" by Denton & Massey (1989) to describe extreme levels of segregation. Importantly, that race is intricately bound up with other social identities further illustrates how segregation is a complex web of intersecting social, economic, and historical factors that perpetuate inequality. As such, ongoing scholarship seeks to interrogate how "persistent segregation facilitates racialized and exploitative economic relationships through the policies and practices of [multiple] actors" (Faber & Drummond 2024:502).

In the six decades following the passage of the Federal Housing Act of 1968 to end legal segregation, the patterns remained relatively consistent, while interest in the persistence of segregation waxed and waned. Massey & Denton's seminal book, *American Apartheid* (1993), however, refocused the conversation on segregation and explored the rise of the urban underclass during the 1970s. For them, the disappearance of the word "segregation" from American discourse during the 1970s and 1980s underscores how the American public had come to underestimate the extent and persistence of black segregation. At the time of its publication, *American Apartheid*

insisted that segregation was not a relic of the past but was actively maintained through institutional and individual action.

The conditions of concentration and segregation for African Americans that were observed and condemned in Massey & Denton were equally observed and decried more than a century earlier in W. E. B. Du Bois's (1899: 297) *The Philadelphia Negro* and his assertion that "Color prejudice makes it difficult for groups to find suitable places to move – one Negro family would be tolerated where six would be objected to." This concentration of inequality in black neighborhoods and whites' reluctance to have blacks as neighbors became emblematic of Du Bois's (1909) warning about "the problem of the color line." In other words, the contemporary manifestations of racial and place stratification that Massey & Denton made central to their thesis revealed that concentrated disadvantages are systemic and they impact Black Americans' life chances. The concentration of disparities becomes self-fulfilling, and those caught in the web of structural inequalities are essentially "trapped." Thus, taking the factors that create and maintain segregation seriously means engaging with the historical processes that bring about its existence and how segregation's past shapes our present context.

This essay draws on literature from sociology and other fields to explore the historical origins of segregation in the United States. It also demonstrates how contemporary manifestations of segregation should be understood within the larger context of American racial structures. I also discuss the current approaches for defining and measuring segregation to parse out how scholars identify the essential features of this phenomenon worth examining and addressing. After the definition/measurement overview, I discuss two practical areas that may further contribute to ongoing scholarship: (i) post-1965 Black immigration and how racial prejudice and discrimination structure Black immigrants' experiences and (ii) "The New Great Migration," particularly to the

American South, which raises questions about whether Black Americans' internal mobility challenges existing patterns of segregation or further exacerbate them.

Segregation: Historical and Contemporary Causes and Consequences

Segregation in the U.S. has a deep history. It is this history that informs how scholars continue to make sense of the systemic and pervasive nature of segregation, both in its historical (i.e., *de jure*) and contemporary (i.e., *de facto*) manifestations. The roots of segregation, early- to mid-19th century, can be traced to the institution of slavery. Historians and legal scholars have documented how enslavement contributed to the establishment of U.S. racial hierarchy and, with it, segregation (DiTomaso 2024; Farley 1997; Fields 1990). They contended that legal and social codes during this era of American racial formation were instrumental in designating enslaved people as property, thereby restricting both their mobility and settlement (Middleton 2020). Some scholars emphasized the extent to which racist ideologies were developed as a means through which to justify the maintenance of slavery (Camara 2002; Grynaviski & Munger 2017; Mitchell-Yellin 2018; Shelby 2003).

Others argued that free states, specifically in the American North, implemented and upheld discriminatory practices that impacted the housing, education, and employment outcomes of free Black Americans (Hammond 2014; Harris 2023). In the American South, however, the emergence of "black codes" further restricted the freedom and movement of formerly enslaved Black Americans, thereby limiting their civil rights (Crouch 1999). The 1857 Dred Scott Supreme Court decision, for example, which declared that both free enslaved people were not citizens of the United States, stripped not only Black Americans of their right to sue for freedom but also their ability to travel or settle in different territories (Powell 2008). Thus, the legacy of slavery and the

early forms of segregation illustrate how the black-white spatial separation is enmeshed in the historical context of the United States.

In tracing the present-day manifestations of segregation, some scholars take the perspective that the abolition of slavery, rather than improving the conditions of African Americans, instead created new conditions that perpetuated their disadvantage. Scholars argue that the American Civil War and Reconstruction's Promise with the "Reconstruction Amendments" have not fully lived up to its promise (Engl et al. 2003; Józefczyk 2009; Wu 2004). While this era of Reconstruction offered formerly enslaved Black Americans a brief period of political participation and advancement, this was relatively short-lived as the white backlash against Reconstruction was fervent (Foner 1987, 2013; Gosse 2021). This backlash resulted in massive rollbacks of many of the policies that were put in place to ensure Black Americans' political and economic progress (Zelbo 2019). For example, in *Black Reconstruction in America*, W. E. B. Du Bois (1935) pinpointed the struggles Black Americans faced during the Reconstruction era, particularly the systematic efforts of white Americans to undermine their progress, including white supremacist violence, economic exploitation, and political disenfranchisement. Du Bois's argument underscored how the failures of Reconstruction were not due to the incapacity of Black people but rather the determined resistance and sabotage by white Southerners and the complicity of Northern interests. Evidence of Black disenfranchisement and exploitation was reflected in their housing conditions and the structure of their confinement.

Other historical developments explaining the segregation in American society have pointed to one of the key outcomes of the failure of Reconstruction: the emergence of Jim Crow. The rise of Jim Crow laws in Southern states, despite the 15th Amendment, resulted in the systematic disenfranchisement of Black voters through poll taxes, literacy tests, and intimidation (Inwood

2011; King 2006; Wilson 1976). It also brought about the implementation of legal segregation in all aspects of public life, including schools, transportation, and restaurants, among others (Highsmith & Erickson 2015). Notoriously, the *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) Supreme Court decision that instituted the "separate but equal" doctrine became the order of the day. Equally, the Jim Crow South relied on lynchings, mob violence, and other forms of terrorism as means through which to enforce the racial hierarchy and to "keep Blacks in their place" (Bailey et al. 2011; Beck et al. 2016; Makovi et al. 2016). Current research has further demonstrated that the rise of the Ku Klux Klan was instrumental in the enforcement of the black-white racial hierarchy, particularly segregation and the suppression of Black political and economic progress (Fryer & Levitt 2012; McVeigh & Cunningham 2012; Owens et al. 2015).

The literature tracing the historical roots of segregation in the United States has illustrated how each phase of legal segregation – from enslavement to Jim Crow – served not only to subjugate African Americans but also as a system designed to reward whites and punish African Americans (Emerson 2020). For instance, one strand of the literature has shown that despite legal efforts and mob violence to "keep Blacks in their place," African Americans resisted overt forms of discrimination and what Du Bois (1903) saw as a "second slavery."

Through the formation of organizations like the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), African Americans used the legal system to fight for racial equality and justice, particularly to challenge legal segregation. Thus, the deliberate undermining of Black cultural and intellectual life was an alternative means to disadvantage Black Americans (Heathcott 2005; Taylor 2002). In *Making Black History*, Snyder (2018) discussed how African Americans grappled with fundamental questions about their identity and their place in American history, especially during the Jim Crow era, and how Black historians and activists sought to redefine

American history by placing the Black experience at the center. The earlier analysis offered in *The Souls of Black Folk*, particularly the notion of the "veil" that separates African Americans from white America, offers one way of recognizing the materiality of the "veil" as the physical separation of neighborhoods by race. Segregation transforms the abstract concept of the veil into a concrete reality for many Black Americans (Baehr 2019; Brand 2018). Thus, the reality of segregation underscores how a system of advantages and disadvantages was constructed both symbolically and materially along racial lines to reward white Americans and, in turn, punish African Americans (Emerson 2020).

The system of advantages and disadvantages in shaping the life chances of Black Americans was further revealed in the experiences of the roughly six million African Americans who migrated from the South in search of better opportunities as well as to escape the constant threat of mob violence. Between 1910 and 1970, African Americans relocating from the South to cities in the Midwest, Northeast, and West constituted what came to be known as "The Great Migration." In Tolnay's (2003) assessment of the African American "Great Migration," for instance, the author documented how this particular wave of migration led to significant social, economic, demographic, and cultural changes in northern cities. Through The Great Migration, the urbanization of Black Americans ensued, shifting the demographic center of Black America from rural communities to urban cores (Leibbrand et al. 2020; Price-Spratlen 2008). Some of these changes are documented in the early decades of the twentieth century, precisely the extent to which The Great Migration impacted the residential dynamics of American cities (Burgess 1928; Hirsch 1998[1983]; Leibbrand et al. 2020; Lieberson 1963; Logan et al. 2015; Osofsky 1966; Rothstein 2017).

In addition to the shifts in the demographic characteristics of cities in the North, current research underscores the unique segregation Black Americans faced in these new destinations (Davis et al. 2024). African Americans migrating out of the American South were quick to realize that these Northern cities, though free from lynch mobs, were equally invested in maintaining the racial hierarchy, particularly in institutions that impacted their social and economic outcomes in general and their residential settlements in particular. Tracing the disadvantaging of African Americans migrating North, Purnell et al.'s (2019) *The Strange Careers of the Jim Crow North* argued that in the liberal North, legal systems supported and upheld practices of segregation and that "legacies of the Jim Crow North continue to influence contemporary political and social arenas, such as policing, housing, education, and employment" (p. 3). Moreover, they maintained that, in the Jim Crow North, "racial discrimination and segregation operated as a system" (p. 5). This "system" – the interaction between racial discrimination and segregation – as a result of the growing Black population in cities hastened segregation in housing as a result of "white flight" to the suburbs and the redlining of Black neighborhoods by the federal government (Boustan 2007, 2010; Frey 1980).

Through policies like the Interstate Highway System that aided "white flight" away from cities, the federal government played a decisive role in the segregation of its Black population in cities (Mahajan 2024). As a result, during the period between 1940 and 1970, the U.S. witnessed a significant upsurge in segregation by race (Cutler et al. 1999). African Americans' concentration in cities also resulted in unique forms of economic and residential disparities. The mid-20th century, which marked the beginning of the Civil Rights Movement, offered opportunities to redress racial inequalities – it sowed a seed of change in race and segregation in the United States. Specifically, the impact of World War II and the growing awareness of racial inequality offered

new language and opportunities to confront the dominant racial structure (Jenkins 2023). These "confrontations" led to successful Supreme Court decisions (e.g., *Brown v. Board of Education*) and civil rights and housing initiatives (e.g., *Civil Rights Act* and *Federal Housing Act*) and signaled a shift toward improvements in the economic and residential conditions of African Americans.

While *de jure* segregation is now outlawed in American society, we have made the transition to *de facto* segregation, which "began as an allegation and then morphed into a defense" (Glass 2018; Rothstein 2017). Notably, the consequences of redlining on Black communities remain (Pearcy 2020), while the remnants of restrictive covenants, the persistence of neighborhood steering by real estate agents, and landlords' unwillingness to rent to Black Americans continue to shape the housing and residential experiences of both lower- and middle-class Blacks (Lacy 2007; Logan 2013; Pattillo-McCoy 1999). The pervasiveness of segregation confounds the legislative successes of the mid-20th century. Scholars have called into question whether the Federal Housing Act is being effectively enforced and whether it is living up to the standards of promoting racial integration and addressing ongoing affordable housing challenges (Massey 2015; McGrew 1997). Nevertheless, segregation brings to bear how systemic racism intersects with place and history in perpetuating a system of disadvantages for African Americans and other minoritized groups (Bonilla-Silva 2021; Dickerson 2021; Elias 2024; Franz et al. 2022). It also shows how the legacies of the past continue to shape the present, including the theoretical and methodological challenges for understanding and addressing segregation in its current form (Bhambra 2014; Jargowsky 2018; Julian 2018; Piekut et al. 2019; Roithmayr 2004; Weyeneth 2005).

Defining and Measuring Segregation

Existing research on segregation tends to emphasize its multidimensionality, given the complex interplay of factors such as individual preferences, economic disparities, discriminatory practices in housing markets, and social networks. Segregation is understood to vary along five distinct axes: unevenness, exposure, concentration, centralization, and clustering (Massey & Denton 1988). Thus, a group is "segregated if it is highly centralized, spatially concentrated, unevenly distributed, tightly clustered, and minimally exposed to majority members" (Denton & Massey 1989: 283). Segregation, then, is taken to be a "global construct that subsumes these five underlying dimensions of measurement, each corresponding to a different aspect of spatial variation, which refers to the differences in the distribution of groups across a given area" (Massey & Denton 1988: 282).

The multidimensional perspective underscores the persistent challenges in defining segregation based on how we categorize populations and define geographical areas (Iceland 2004). Since segregation prioritizes the distribution of groups across units within larger areas, defining larger areas and their component parts is essential. However, the choice of areal units is relatively arbitrary, which is an unavoidable problem (Massey & Denton 1988). The spatiality of segregation reveals patterns of incommensurability because segregation measures vary across distances (Logan & Martinez 2018). These challenges constitute the broader theoretical and methodological disarray within the field, resulting in efforts to improve comparability. For example, Massey & Denton (1988) suggest a "battery of indices" that uses multiple measures to capture distinct aspects of segregation and provide a comprehensive understanding. Still, the choice of metric impacts findings because different metrics have different interpretations and meanings (Bemanian & Beyer 2017). While divisions over how to define and measure key features of segregation remain, a

variety of definitions and techniques have been proposed to move the discussion forward (Iceland 2004; Park & Kwan 2018).

One approach defines segregation as a key mechanism of social stratification, implicated in intergroup relations and larger processes of individual and group social mobility (Charles 2003; Roberto 2018). For example, Charles (2003: 167) has argued that segregation "undermines the social and economic well-being of individuals regardless of their personal characteristics because it inhibits neighborly relations, separates public and private facilities, and allows prejudice to be expressed." Others take segregation at its most basic level to result from mobility decisions (Iceland 2004), while some restrict segregation to the domain of structural racism, allowing for the operationalization of the geography of structural racism, i.e., the spatial distribution of resources, opportunities, and power that perpetuate racial inequality (Tabb et al. 2024). A more recent perspective considers the built environment in structuring segregation and shaping how it is experienced (Roberto 2018; Roberto & Korver-Glenn 2021). Thus, the discourse on conceptualizing segregation emphasizes its processuality, where historical, economic, and social forces intersect.

One way that the complexity of contemporary segregation and the factors that shape its existence persists in the ongoing debate is over the "choice/constraint" perspective. This perspective emphasizes the interplay between individuals' preferences and the structural limitations they face in realizing those preferences (Briggs 2005; Charles 2003; Krysan & Crowder 2017; Krysan & Farley 2002; Simpson 2004). The "choice/constraint" perspective recognizes that residential patterns are shaped by a complex interplay of individual preferences and structural limitations, given that some level of self-selection based on shared identity or preferences may occur, particularly among certain immigrant groups. The persistently high levels of segregation,

especially for African Americans, are primarily attributed to systemic constraints such as historical and ongoing discrimination, policy effects, and the self-perpetuating nature of segregation that limits awareness of and access to diverse housing options (Hirsch 1998; Massey & Denton 1988, 1993; Osofsky 1966; Rothstein 2017; Wilson 1984).

Current scholarship places strong emphasis on the interaction between race and class in shaping segregation, given that neither factor operates in isolation (Massey 1990; Massey & Denton 1993; Smelser et al. 2001). This interaction is a key feature of the discourse on identifying the conditions that engender contemporary segregation. Alternatively, the "spatial assimilation" model posits that individuals and groups improve their housing and neighborhood quality as their socioeconomic status (income, education, wealth) increases, often leading to movement out of segregated neighborhoods and into more integrated areas (Charles 2003; Goldsmith 2010; Logan et al. 2004). This model suggests that class is a primary driver of residential outcomes.

Place stratification, however, contends that racial discrimination and prejudice act as significant structural constraints on the housing choices of minority groups, particularly African Americans and Latinos, regardless of their SES (Charles 2003; Goldsmith 2010; Krysan & Crowder 2017). This perspective argues that race, operating through discriminatory practices in the housing market, opposition from neighborhood associations, and exclusionary zoning, limits the ability of even socioeconomically mobile minorities to reside in the same communities as comparable whites (Krysan & Crowder 2017). The literature shows that segregation for Black Americans declines only modestly as socioeconomic status (SES) rises, indicating that race is a powerful barrier to spatial assimilation (Goldsmith 2010; Rosenbaum & Friedman 2006). Thus, the literature provides significant evidence that race predominates over class in shaping residential segregation.

Other strands of the literature have pushed for greater transparency about the severity of the consequences associated with contemporary segregation and its impacts on the life chances of those confined to disadvantaged neighborhoods (Charles 2003; Krysan & Crowder 2017; Park & Kwan 2018). Some scholars have underscored how segregation profoundly impacts the quality of public services and resources (Briggs 2005; Charles 2003; Krysan & Crowder 2017; Massey 1987). Segregated communities often experience higher rates of crime and insecurity (Briggs 2005; Massey et al. 1987). Access to economic opportunities is significantly constrained by segregation, resulting in what scholars refer to as a 'spatial mismatch' (Briggs 2005; Charles 2003; Krysan & Crowder 2017; Wilson 1984, 1996, 2012). Thus, the literature documents how residential segregation has far-reaching adverse consequences that perpetuate inequality across numerous dimensions of life. In many ways, the more subtle displays of segregation might be conceived of in Anderson's (2011) *Cosmopolitan Canopy*, where interactions in public and quasi-public spaces between individuals occur on "islands of civility in a sea of segregation" but become problematic "when the color line gets drawn." The most egregious consequence of segregation, however, is in Sharkey's (2013) assertion that the American ghetto should be thought of as inherited. Overall, the body of scholarship tracing the pervasiveness of segregation in contemporary America underscores the multidimensional nature of this phenomenon, thereby illustrating how each conceptualization has been constructed to fit particular interests within segregation studies.

Like the challenge of defining segregation, measuring segregation also presents its own set of challenges. An important point of contention within the broader literature on measuring segregation is the split between *aspatial* and *spatial* approaches. Aspatial measures of segregation, for example, are defined by what they do not include: geographical information or spatial

relationships between different areas (Wong 2002, 2003). These measures mainly rely on attributes or population data associated with predefined areal units (i.e., tracts or neighborhoods) without considering their locations relative to one another (Wong 2003). Aspatial approaches to segregation that prioritize population distribution tend to assess segregation by examining how different population groups are distributed, focusing on the evenness of this distribution (Bemanian & Beyer 2017; Echenique et al. 2006; Massey & Denton 1988).

Equally, the literature promoting aspatial measures of segregation tends to rely heavily on aggregate counts of different population groups within each areal unit and the total population of these groups in the entire study area (Echenique et al. 2006; Simpson 2004; Tabb et al. 2024). However, aspatial measures have significant limitations because they fail to account for the spatial arrangement or relative position of these areal units (Roberto 2018; Wong 2002, 2003). This overreliance on aspatial approaches, therefore, leads to issues like the checkerboard problems, where different spatial arrangements of neighborhoods within the same population composition yield the same segregation score (Roberto 2018). They also do not consider the spatial interaction or separation between population groups across the boundaries of these units (Wong 2002, 2003). In essence, spatial measures of segregation provide quantitative assessments of the evenness of population distribution across predefined areas, but they abstract the spatial context and the geographical relationships that can significantly influence the lived experience and understanding of segregation (Brown & Chung 2006; Park & Kwan 2018).

The development of spatial measures, however, aims to overcome these limitations by explicitly incorporating geographic information into the measurement of segregation (Wong 2002, 2003). Spatial measures vary in the types of spatial information considered. Some measures consider spatial relations, which include “adjacency,” i.e., areal units that are next to each other or

share a common boundary (Wong 2002, 2003; Wong & Chung 2013). Others incorporate the area, perimeter, and length of shared boundaries to account for how size and shape influence interactions (Wong 2002, 2003). Advocates of the spatial perspective argue that the geographic coordinates or centroids of areal units or individual locations matter for distance-based measures and the overall spatial distribution of groups (Wong 2002, 2003). Lastly, they emphasize the importance of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) for computing segregation measures because they provide the tools to store, retrieve, analyze spatial data, and extract spatial information (Wong 2002, 2003). Hence, the spatial perspective on segregation represents an advancement in the field by moving beyond simpler counts of people in areas to consider the geographical relationships and context of where people live. It also provides a more accurate and comprehensive understanding of how different groups are separated by accounting for the spatial structure and interactions between them (Wong 2002, 2003). Outlined below are some of the aspatial and spatial approaches that have been used to investigate the dynamics of segregation.

One prominent aspatial framework developed by Massey and Denton (1988) is the five distinct dimensions of segregation previously discussed. "*Evenness*," the differential distribution of two groups among areal units in a city, uses the index of dissimilarity (D) as a key measure to represent the percentage of one group that would need to move to achieve an even distribution (Charles 2003; Echenique et al. 2006; Logan et al. 2004). Scores over 60 are often considered extreme segregation (Charles 2003; Krysan & Crowder 2017). "*Exposure*" is concerned with the potential contact between groups and measures the percentage of the same race in the average group member's neighborhood (Charles 2003; Echenique et al. 2006; Massey & Denton 1988; Tabb et al. 2024). "*Concentration*" refers to the relative amount of physical space occupied by a minority group (Massey & Denton 1988; Echenique et al. 2006; Tabb et al. 2024), while

"*centralization*" examines the extent to which a minority group is located near the center of the urban area (Massey & Denton 1988; Roberto 2018; Tabb et al. 2024). "*Clustering*" assesses the degree to which minority group members live in contiguous areal units or clusters (Massey & Denton 1988; Echenique et al. 2006; Tabb et al. 2024).

The index of dissimilarity (D), an aspatial measure, has dominated segregation studies for decades after Duncan and Duncan (1955) demonstrated its comprehensive nature and formalized the index (Logan et al. 2004; Massey & Denton 1988; Wong 2002, 2003; Wong & Chong 2013). However, the field experienced a period of disarray, with debates over the best measures and what came to be known as the "index wars" (Massey 1988; Smith 2001). The index wars have led to a more systemic evaluation of various indices, culminating in recognition of the multidimensional nature of segregation (Bemanian & Beyer 2017; Massey & Denton 1988). For example, it gave rise to two additional indices: (1) the interaction index, initially developed by Bell (1954) and reintroduced by Lieberson (1980s), and (2) the isolation index, introduced by Massey and Denton (1988). These indices were initially presented as alternatives to the D index as a way to assess the degree of potential contact between groups but have since become complementary measures that provide a more nuanced understanding of segregation than the dissimilarity index (Bemanian & Beyer 2018; Farley 1984; Fineman 2020). These two indices further help to contextualize the dissimilarity index by revealing whether the levels of segregation observed can be attributed to isolation within one group or by a lack of interaction between groups (Reardon & O'Sullivan 2004; Wong 2002). Thus, aspatial measures of segregation offer insights into the uneven distribution of ethnic and racial groups as well as rates of isolation and interaction (Charles 2003; Massey 2001; Massey & Rugh 2014).

The inherent limitations in aspatial measures of segregation have pushed segregation scholars to develop and implement more spatial approaches to assess the processes of contemporary segregation as they unfold. Some scholars emphasize the usefulness of GIS tools and other spatial analyses that go beyond simply calculating aspatial indices (Brown & Chung 2006; Logan & Martinez 2018; Lee et al. 2008; Park & Kwan 2018; Wong 2002, 2003; Wong & Chong 2013).

Advocates of GIS and other spatial techniques stress the need to visualize, analyze, and model the spatial dimensions of segregation. Spatial approaches, however, recognize that how the neighborhood is conceptualized influences the scales of analysis such that smaller, more homogenous neighborhoods might show higher segregation than larger, more diverse neighborhoods. This recognition has led to alternative spatial segregation measures, such as the "spatially adjusted dissimilarity index," where modifications of the traditional Dissimilarity Index (D) incorporate spatial adjacency and stresses the idea that spatial separation reduces interaction among groups (Wong 2002, 2003; Wong & Chung 2013). Another spatial approach is the "spatially weighted information theory index," which refines the traditional entropy index (the information theory index (H), which is the measure of evenness in segregation) by considering the proximity-weighted racial composition of the local index, i.e., measuring segregation at different geographic scales by varying the size of these local environments (Lee et al. 2008). The "spatial proximity and connectivity (SPC) method" focuses on the built environment, particularly road network distance, and considers physical barriers to assess segregation by measuring the connectivity between locations and how these factors influence the separation of groups (Roberto 2018; Roberto & Korver-Glenn 2021).

Nevertheless, while spatial approaches are helpful for situating segregation within its spatial dimensions, the issue of scale is crucial to the overarching debate. The phenomenon of the modifiable areal unit problem (MAUP) demonstrates the centrality of geographic scale in spatial measures of segregation because spatial analyses have the potential to change based on the size and shape of the spatial units used in the analysis, for example, census tracts, block groups, or neighborhoods (Lee et al. 2008; Logan & Martinez 2018; Roberto 2018). Concerns about MAUP are important to the discussion pushing for spatial analyses of segregation because it underscores how larger units can mask segregation that exists at a finer scale and vice versa. The scale problem in spatial measures of segregation is implicated in the concept of the "neighborhood," given that scholars of segregation have taken diverse approaches to the term – administrative, natural boundaries, or social constructs such as perceived neighborhood boundaries (Guo & Bhat 2007; Krysan & Crowder 2017; Lee et al. 2008; Rich 2009; Sampson 2012).

A more recent development in segregation studies is the critique leveled at the overreliance on quantitative approaches to study segregation. While segregation indices and GIS techniques, mainly quantitative, are valuable for understanding the dynamics of segregation, the relatively few qualitative studies on segregation have offered novel insights about the reasons behind residential preferences and people's perceptions of neighborhoods. In Krysan & Farley's (2002) qualitative analysis of segregation in Atlanta, Boston, and Los Angeles, they examined open-ended responses from Black individuals about their willingness to move into predominantly white areas and revealed how factors like "cultural differences" reflected a desire to live in neighborhoods with a shared Black identity and culture. Similarly, in-depth interviews in Chicago explored current neighborhood experiences, ideal neighborhood characteristics, perceptions of different areas, and experiences with housing searches and discrimination (Krysan & Crowder 2017). Alternatively,

qualitative approaches to segregation have been instructive in illustrating the processes and logic of this phenomenon, as well as allowing scholars to examine the meaning of physical barriers from the perspective of residents. Roberto & Korver-Glenn (2021) interrogated quantitative analysis using the Spatial Proximity and Connectivity (SPC) method with a multi-site ethnography and in-depth interviews in Houston. Their qualitative findings revealed how residents understood the built environment, including highways and railroad tracks, as both physical impediments and symbolic markers of ethnoracial difference, limiting social and physical connectivity.

Furthermore, qualitative approaches to segregation that complement quantitative findings can offer important insights into how residents perceive segregation and identify potential mechanisms linking segregation to various outcomes, such as health (Bemanian & Beyer 2017). Combining quantitative spatial analyses with qualitative methods could allow researchers to pinpoint where and to what extent spatial segregation occurs and how it matters for residents in a geographically specific way (Roberto & Korver-Glenn 2021). Indeed, scholars of segregation studies have called for typological methods. While not purely qualitative, typological methods offer a way to categorize neighborhoods based on numerical indices, using predefined boundaries to describe them in "normative" terms, such as "diverse" or "predominantly ethnic" (Bemanian & Beyer 2017).

The proportion of neighborhood types can then serve as a summary metric, thereby bridging quantitative measurements with qualitative descriptions. As such, quantitative methods provide measures of the extent and patterns of segregation, while qualitative methods offer "thick descriptions" of the social and experiential dimensions of segregation, including residents' reasons, perceptions, and the meanings they attach to their residential environments and the barriers that may shape them (Roberto & Korver-Glenn 2021). Because these qualitative insights

can significantly enrich our understanding of the complex phenomenon of segregation, additional research is needed to streamline these tools and techniques to bring us closer to describing the intended goal(s) of research on segregation. The remainder of this essay discusses potential avenues – (1) the Black immigrant experience and (2) "The New Great Migration" – that could expand existing scholarship on segregation and their potential to help bridge the qualitative and quantitative divide in segregation research.

Black Immigration and "The New Great Migration": Expanding the Segregation Conversation

Black Immigration

More than fifty years after the passage of the Hart-Cellar Act of 1965, Black immigrants constitute a growing part of the U.S. Black population. The 2020 census revealed that one in 10 immigrants is Black, and 1 in 10 Black Americans is an immigrant (9.9%). With the inclusion of the second generation, 1 in 5 Black people in the U.S. are immigrants or children of Black immigrants (Pew 2022). To date, Black immigrants from the Caribbean account for the largest share, and of the top 10 Black countries of origin, Jamaica and Haiti consistently rank in the top 2 (see Table 1). Despite their numbers, Black immigrants face unique challenges pertaining to immigration and race; they "suffer a 'double invisibility' – as both Blacks and foreigners" (Bryce-Laporte 1972; Okonofua 2013). These immigrants often push to remain distinct from African Americans but "eventually realize they are perceived and governed by the rules created for Black Americans" (Bryce-Laporte 1972: 40).

Table 1. Top Countries of Origin for Black Immigrants in the U.S.

	Estimate	Share
1 Jamaica	759,356	16%
2 Haiti	672,565	14%
3 Nigeria	391,195	8%
4 Ethiopia	262,550	6%
5 Dominican Republic	206,716	4%
6 Ghana	186,244	4%
7 Trinidad and Tobago	184,767	4%
8 Guyana	135,059	3%
9 Kenya	134,270	3%
10 Somalia	98,741	2%
All Other Countries	1,632,539	35%
Total	4,664,002	100%

Source: Immigration Research Initiative (2024) analysis of 2021 ACS 5-Year data.

The residential outcomes of Black immigrants support the view that they are "perceived and governed by the rules created for Black Americans." Black immigrants experience segregation levels similar to those of African Americans, regardless of SES (South & Crowder 1998). They are equally less likely to move out of racially mixed neighborhoods and more likely to move to predominantly Black areas (South & Crowder 1998). Like African Americans, Black immigrants' segregation complicates the "three-generational model" perspective that "segregation is a temporary first stage for ethnic minorities" because of the "saturated levels of hypersegregation" of African Americans and subsequent Black immigrants (Peach 1996). Also, research has shown that neighborhood attainment for second-generation West Indians pales in comparison to second-generation Asians and Hispanics (Tran 2020).

While socioeconomic factors significantly impact Black immigrants' settlement, country of origin has varying impacts on segregation (Corra & Kimuna 2009; Iceland et al. 2016). For example, Iceland's (2016) comparison of national origins found that Black immigrants had among the highest levels of segregation and that Jamaicans had the highest segregation scores. Furthermore, the effect of nativity on segregation can be overshadowed by ethnicity, given that African Americans were found to be less segregated than Black immigrants (Iceland et al. 2016). Thus, place of origin structures Black immigrants' settlement patterns and operates through the racial dynamics and historical context that have disproportionately impacted African Americans.

Geographic locations have been shown to influence immigrants' settlement, as they present varying challenges to residential incorporation (Hall 2013; Iceland & Scopilliti 2008; Pais 2012; South et al. 2011). In the case of Black immigrants, they tend to concentrate in the Southern (42%) and Northeastern (36%) regions, with New York and Florida accounting for the largest shares (see Figure 1). The extent to which "preferences" and available opportunities explain Black immigrants' settlement is underexplored, given that factors including visa categories can impact location choices (Ellis et al. 2006; Hall 2013; Hamilton et al. 2018; Jones 2010; Laukova et al. 2022). Regardless, Black immigrants' geographic distribution illustrates how segregation remains contextual and locational and how race and geography intersect to reinforce inequalities (Coulter et al. 2016; Crowell & Fossett 2022; Iceland & Scopilliti 2008; Pais et al. 2012; South et al. 2011; Winstanley et al. 2010). They also provide support for existing claims that race remains a central component of where Black immigrants reside, sometimes overriding their SES (Iceland & Scopilliti 2008).

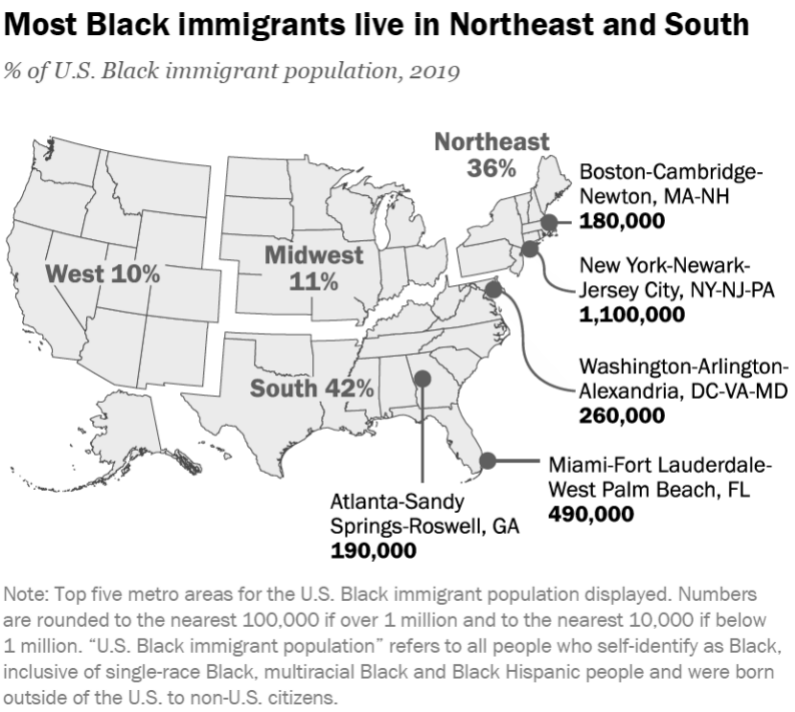

Figure 1. Geographic Distribution of Black Immigrants in the U.S.
Source: Pew Research Center tabulations of 2019 American Community Survey (1% IPUMS). "One-in-Ten Black People Living in the U.S. Are Immigrants."

In many ways, Bryce-Laporte's earlier assertion of Black immigrants' "double invisibility" and Tesfai's (2019) claim of a "double minority" status in shaping residential, social, and economic outcomes have been well supported (Benson 2006; Hamilton et al. 2018; Massey & Hamilton 2019). The residential isolation of Black immigrants and their children, as well as the varying degrees of racial and housing discrimination, substantiate these claims (Foner 2018; Ifatunji 2017; Martin & Gozdziak 2005; Model 2008; Singer et al. 2008; Vickerman 1999). Whether and how existing approaches to segregation have fully captured Black immigrants' "double minority" status remains to be seen. However, to unpack Black immigrants' perceptions of place and segregation means to make central how macro-level structures shape micro-level outcomes. It also means situating the Black immigrant experience within the broader African American experience.

That race intersects with national origin and geography to shape the residential outcomes of Black immigrants remains relevant to segregation studies (Hall 2013; Iceland et al. 2016; Kim & Kim 2024; Lichter et al. 2010). Race has been and continues to be one of the dominant factors shaping Black Americans' life chances because "Blackness" tends to eclipse other features (Denton & Massey 1989; Iceland et al. 2016). Thus, research documenting Black immigrants' segregation contends that their racialization, regardless of SES, serves as a key feature in their likelihood to be segregated from non-Hispanic whites compared to other nonwhite immigrant groups. These patterns are often explained by existing racial discrimination in housing markets, where practices like redlining, racial steering, and lending discrimination persist (Been et al. 2009; Bolt et al. 2010; Christensen & Timmins 2022; Kim & Kim 2024; Roscigno et al. 2009; Wahl & Gunkel 2007; White et al. 2021). While the findings in the segregation literature reveal crucial insights about the settlement patterns of Black immigrants and how their experience often mirrors that of African Americans, much about the Black immigrant segregation experience remains unexamined.

Firstly, there is a lack of meaningful attention to how race, nativity, and SES interact to create the settlement conditions that have been observed. While nativity can play a role in segregation, its effects have been minimized (Iceland et al. 2016). Thus, the combination of nativity and ethnicity in shaping segregation needs further examination. Additionally, the experiences of specific subgroups remain understudied, given that much of the research on the socioeconomic attainment of African immigrants, for example, prioritizes the experiences of men. This overemphasis on men leaves a gap in understanding the experiences of Black African women and how gender inequality and national origin structure social and residential outcomes, which holds for groups like Jamaicans and Haitians (Hall 2013). Other aspects of segregation worth

interrogating include the characteristics of segregation in new destinations. Hall argued that while immigrant dispersion to new destinations has been studied, relatively little is known about how residential processes manifest in these new destinations for Black immigrants and whether residential "integration" follows.

The current literature has offered much for understanding the mechanisms that drive segregation and how Black immigrants are implicated in this phenomenon. However, very little has been said about the residential outcomes of upwardly mobile Black immigrants and whether segregation is re-created or amplified as a result. The extent to which natives in these areas express greater hostility and act on these attitudes through residential choices and whether Black immigrants in these areas self-segregate for support or as a buffer against native populations should intrigue sociologists (Hall 2013). Notably, Black immigrants' segregation in non-metropolitan areas remains relatively understudied. While Wahl & Gunkel (2007) have examined Black-white segregation in micropolitan areas, they did not specifically focus on Black immigrants.

Still, these findings revealed that socioeconomic gains have not provided Black Americans with the same spatial mobility as other minority groups, raising questions about whether "place stratification" similarly affects Black immigrants in these non-metropolitan contexts. Thus, more research is needed to investigate the role of racial bias, housing discrimination, and self-segregation for Black immigrants in these areas (Wahl & Gunkel 2007). However, this requires moving beyond the "quant-qual" binary and employing pragmatic approaches that incorporate spatial and qualitative techniques. It also means providing a structural analysis of segregation rather than offering statistical analyses of the categories that comprise segregation.

Black Suburbanization & The Back-to-the-South Movement

Black Americans' settlement and mobility patterns remain crucial to segregation studies, as there is evidence supporting a dramatic shift in their residential dynamics. The suburbanization of Black Americans, for example, signals a significant change in the racial geography and residential patterns of the U.S., marking the most substantial change since The Great Migration (Rogers 2024). For the first time in 2020, more than half (54%) of the Black population in the largest metropolitan areas now resides in suburbs. This trend has been accelerating in recent decades, showing a 17.2 percentage point increase and the largest increase of any ethnoracial group (Lichter et al. 2023). Frey's (2022) analysis of the 2020 census revealed substantial changes in the settlement of Black Americans between 1990-2020, with the South and West being the most rapidly growing suburbs in the nation and the most racially diverse. The trends further illustrate that "Black flight" from primary cities has increased, with net gains of Black residents in the 1990s shifted to losses between 2000 and 2020 (See Table 2). Surprisingly, over three decades, Black residents comprised the largest minority share of suburbanites in nine of the 31 metropolitan areas that experienced increased suburbanization of minority populations. Equally, Black suburbanization was heavily located in the Southeast. For example, in Atlanta, Black residents made up roughly one-third of the suburban population and have contributed the most to suburban gains in Baltimore, Memphis, Tenn., and Birmingham, Ala. (Frey 2022).

Table 2. *White and Black population change: Primary cities and suburbs, 1990-2020.*
(56 major metro areas with populations greater than 1 million)

	Cumulative Change		***Areas with Losses***	
	White Pop.	Black Pop	White Pop.	Black Pop.
Primary Cities				
1990-2000	(1,857,202)	652,633	42	13
2000-2010	(847,304)	(389,136)	40	24
2010-2020	102,830	(102,803)	25	30
Suburbs				
1990-2000	3,443,684	2,548,965	12	2
2000-2010	740,648	2,902,982	20	4
2010-2020	(2,226,212)	2,014,571	25	3

Source: Reproduced from William H. Frey's analysis of 1990-2020 U.S. decennial censuses.

The increase in Black suburbanization further complicates the discussion on residential segregation. While metropolitan-level Black-white segregation has declined, patterns in the suburbs remain uneven (Lichter et al. 2023). Notably, Black exposure to white neighbors in inner-ring and outlying suburbs had decreased even as overall Black-white segregation had declined in the suburbs (Lichter et al. 2023). These findings illustrate that the Black suburban population is growing most rapidly in neighborhoods where the white population is decreasing. They further suggest that Black suburbanization might be leading to greater economic segregation among Black Americans.

Studies show that a higher proportion of high-earning Black Americans resided in suburbs, while low-income Black Americans were increasingly isolated in central cities; yet the political ramifications are still being explored (Rogers 2024). Citing the theory of a "Black suburban political sort," Rogers suggested that the social and economic distinctions associated with neighborhood type could lead to an urban-suburban divide in political opinion. Still, Rogers's analysis revealed more opinion convergence than divergence between suburban and urban Black residents on racialized issues. Also, the persistent racial hardships faced by Black Americans

across the metropolitan landscape tended to coalesce their views, with subtle differences in opinions about local institutions and neighborhood quality (Rogers 2024). Still, the growing presence and diversity of Black suburbs underscore the need for research focused specifically on these communities and the lived experiences of their residents (Douds et al. 2021).

One approach has been to challenge the stigmas attached to Black neighborhoods by emphasizing their socioeconomic diversity. For example, scholars have shown that upwardly mobile Black Americans often are not moving to under-resourced neighborhoods (Douds et al. 2021). However, Black neighborhoods are often perceived as socially and economically disadvantaged because of the concentration of Black people (Douds et al. 2021; Quillian & Pager 2001). These assumptions often neglect the reality of Black neighborhoods that are "economically advantaged" and have the potential to become self-fulfilling because they equate concentrated Blackness with poverty (Douds et al. 2021). Likewise, they overlook the economic variations in these neighborhoods, thereby increasing the likelihood that upwardly mobile Black Americans might be discouraged from moving to these neighborhoods (Lacy 2007).

Underscoring the economic heterogeneity of Black neighborhoods is important, but it does not fully reconcile the effects of segregation. Segregation for Black Americans cuts both ways: At one end, economically deprived neighborhoods experience unique levels of segregation that seem to exist beyond most Americans' imagination. For upwardly mobile, middle-class Black Americans, neighborhood attainment becomes dicier. On the one hand, those choosing Black neighborhoods have to contend with existing stigmas, while Black Americans seeking residence elsewhere may have to reside in white suburbs with neighbors whose SES is lower than theirs (Alba et al. 2000; Pattillo 2005). Middle-class Black Americans who reside in white suburbs often engage in "strategic assimilation" and "boundary maintenance" to distance themselves from

stereotypes associated with low-income Black Americans (Lacy 2007). These patterns lend support to existing research on the "hidden cost of mobility" (Cole & Omari 2003; Lacy 2007; Sanchez et al. 2011; Waters 2001) and the need for more nuanced approaches for evaluating the sociodemographic differences among Black suburbs (Douds et al. 2021).

An alternative approach for interrogating Black mobility and settlement patterns is illustrated in the movement of Black Americans to the South, often referred to as "The New Great Migration." This phenomenon represents a significant demographic reversal in the U.S. (DeWaard et al. 2016; Frey 2004; McHugh 1987). After nearly a century of net out-migration of Black individuals from the South to other regions, the South began to experience a net in-migration of Black people starting in the 1970s, a trend that has continued into the present (Goyke & Dwivedi 2018; Obinna 2023; Pendergrass 2013). These patterns contrast sharply with The Great Migration of the early and middle 20th century, during which millions of Black southerners left the region seeking opportunities in the North, Midwest, and West and escaping racial oppression (Alexander et al. 2017; Curtis 2018; Frey 2004; Goyke & Dwivedi 2018; Hunt et al. 2008; Leibbrand et al. 2019; Pendergrass 2017). Research on "The New Great Migration" has emphasized factors such as timing and magnitude: the reversal began in the 1970s, with net in-migration in subsequent decades (Fuguitt & Fulton 2001; Goyke & Dwivedi 2018; Pendergrass 2013). As shown in the Figure below, the South experienced a small net gain in 1970-75, which grew to over 100,000 in 1975-80, almost 200,000 in 1985-90, and an unprecedented net in-migration of over 300,000 during 1990-95. The 1995-2000 period completed a long-term reversal of the Black population's out-migration from the South (Frey 2004). Southern gains in the late 1990s roughly doubled those of the 1990 census and tripled those of the 1980 census (Frey 2004).

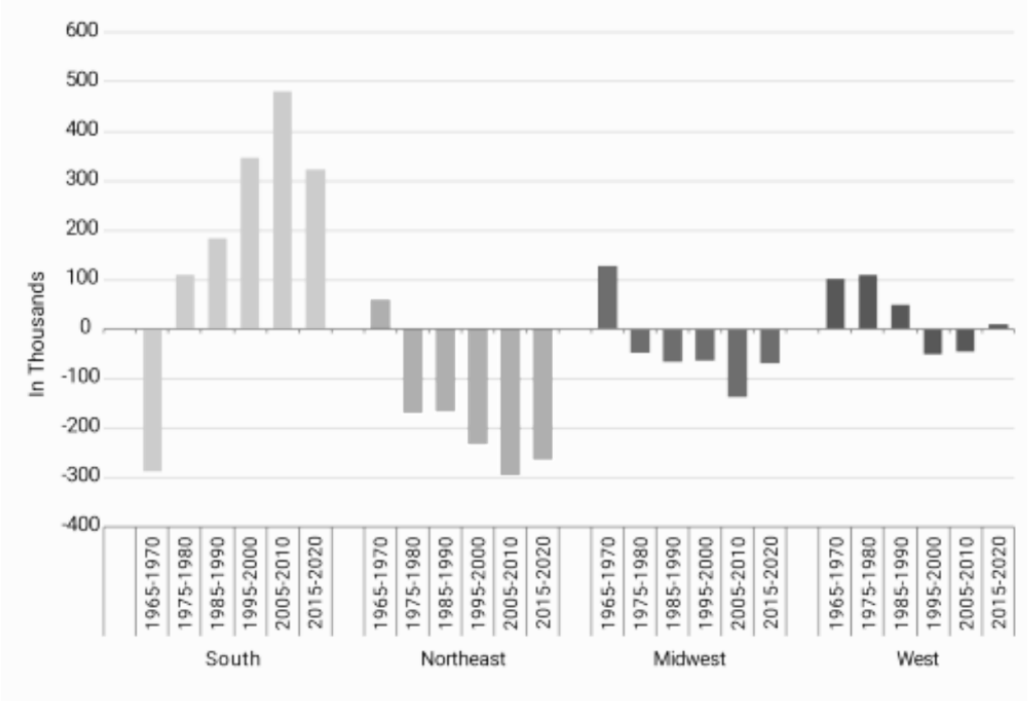

Figure 2. Black Net Migration to U.S. Regions, Selected Periods 1975-2020
Source: William H. Frey (2022) analysis of Decennial Censuses, 1970-2000 and Census Bureau American Community Surveys 2006-2010 and 2016-2020.

"Pull" factors in the South served as a key driving force for Black out-migration. On the one hand, the restructuring of the American economy led to industrial and other economic expansion in the Sunbelt, creating additional opportunities for Black Americans in the South (Cromartie & Stack 1989; Curtis 2018; McHugh 1987; Obinna 2023). The tremendous growth in service-sector jobs and continued expansion of the manufacturing sector in several southern cities during the 1970s attracted newcomers (Cromartie & Stack 1989). As a result, the economic dynamism of Southeastern states like Georgia, Florida, Virginia, and the Carolinas, as well as Texas, made them primary destinations (Frey 2004). Because the Civil Rights Movement led to improved social conditions for Black Americans in the South, the South became a place where these returning migrants found greater opportunities and increased participation in the various aspects of social life (Hunt et al. 2008; McHugh 1987; Obinna 2023).

Marked declines in the Black/white wage gap and improvements in education among Black Americans also contributed to these patterns (Hunt et al. 2008). Other studies, however, have paid particular attention to kinship ties and familiar settings in the South in shaping the reversal. Many of the newcomers during the period were returning to familiar settings and activating previously established familial or social ties (Cromartie & Stack 1989; Curtis & DeWaard 2011; Curtis 2018; Frey 2004; Goyke & Dwivedi 2018; Obinna 2023). Thus, the cyclical migration patterns of African Americans maintained ties to southern communities where extended family members were located (Cromartie & Stack 1989).

The existing literature has also documented the "push" factors from the North/West in driving the patterns of reversal observed for African Americans to the American South. For example, the literature cited deteriorating conditions in Northern cities, where declining social and economic conditions in these cities propelled the Black migration reversal (Curtis 2018; Obinna 2023). The decline of well-paying blue-collar jobs in northern inner cities had negative consequences for Black male employment (Curtis 2018; Hunt et al. 2012, 2013). Contrastingly, return migration contributed to noticeable declines in racial inequality and poverty, where Black male-headed households experienced the most significant declines in poverty rates (63%) compared to Black female-headed households (37%) (Curtis & DeWaard 2011). The impact of deindustrialization in the destruction or relocation of jobs that Black urban residents had filled has been implicated, as well as the high cost of living in northern and western cities (Hunt et al. 2013; Obinna 2023). Importantly, scholars have emphasized African Americans' disillusionment with the "Promised Land" in northern cities that did not fully live up to their expectations (Obinna 2023).

The literature discussing this particular aspect of African American mobility within the U.S. has distinguished between returnees and non-returnees whose movement includes both African Americans returning to their birthplace in the South and those born outside the South moving there (Cromartie & Stack 1989; Curtis 2018; Hunt et al. 2012). Initially, research suggested that a majority of Black migrants to the South in the late 1970s were nonreturnees (Cromartie & Stack 1989). Later, research revealed that Black migration was predominantly return migration, often to home or locations of relatives, and a noticeable increase in primary migration, including foreign-born migrants (Hunt et al. 2012). The changes in migrant streams have led to the emphasis on "reverse," rather than "return," migration because the stream also includes non-returnees (Hunt et al. 2012). Other characteristics of migrants to the South include age and education. Black migrants disproportionately consist of upwardly mobile, young professionals and college-educated individuals seeking job and education opportunities. There is also a component of older Black "baby boomers" approaching retirement and returning South (Curtis & DeWaard 2011). In terms of gender, research has shown that the patterns of return of Black Americans involve a greater share of females, which noticeably contrasts with the early stages of The Great Migration, which were male-dominated (Hunt et al. 2013).

Similar to the overarching discussion on Black residential settlement patterns, scholarship on "The New Great Migration" of Black Americans to the South has detailed their destinations in the South. Southern metropolitan areas, notably Atlanta, have led the way in attracting Black migrants (Frey 2004). Other appealing metropolitan areas include Dallas and Houston. However, there is also a notable flow of Black migrants to rural places in the South, often reflecting returns to homeplaces with family ties because many are returning to communities of their grandparents and parents, often locales of their childhood (Cromartie & Stack 1989; Curtis & DeWaard 2011;

Goyke & Dwivedi 2018; Hunt et al. 2013). These destinations sometimes include areas with large Black populations and high levels of unemployment and poverty, as well as economically prosperous areas (Cromartie & Stack 1989). Migrants have especially moved to states with historically and contemporary high African American populations, particularly the Black Belt region (Goyke & Dwivedi 2018).

Black migrants are not necessarily settling in the "Deep South" states that saw the most significant out-migration during The Great Migration (Frey 2004). These newer Southern destinations for returning and non-returning Black Americans, including foreign-born residents, further underscore the need to shift the language away from "return migration" to one emphasizing a "reverse migration" as this approach more accurately reflects the changing nature of the migrant stream (Hunt et al. 2012; Obinna 2023). Still, this phenomenon emphasizes the combination of structural and economic shifts, improved conditions in the South, and the enduring pull of family and cultural ties, alongside the challenges and changing circumstances in other regions that are driving these patterns of in-migration (Curtis 2018; Frey 2004; Hunt et al. 2013; Obinna 2023). It also signals a new chapter in the history of African American migration and the reshaping of the nation's demographic and geographic landscapes.

"The New Great Migration" offers crucial insights about Black mobility within the broader context of place and class stratification and alerts us to how the (re)migration to the American South characterizes the search for a "Black Mecca," which had been a motive for those migrating from the South a century ago. The current literature advances the notion that The New Great Migration symbolizes how Black Americans are engaging in the process of redefining their ethnic identity through migration (Obinna, 2023). Still, what remains unexplored in the emerging literature on Black "reverse migration" is whether and how these patterns of mobility impact the

pervasiveness of residential segregation (Hunt et al. 2008). In other words, the literature remains uncertain about whether the increasing movement of Black Americans to the South will lead to a reconstitution of racial and spatial segregation patterns reminiscent of the older South or today's North (Hunt et al. 2008). One perspective is that during The Great Migration, white migrants to the North often moved to rural and small-town areas, becoming more geographically isolated from Black Americans than in the South prior to their movement (Hunt et al. 2008). In contrast, Black migrants concentrated in urban slums in the North, leading to spatial separation (Hunt et al. 2008). Now, with Black individuals, native- and foreign-born alike, moving to a South that has undergone significant social and economic changes, the patterns of settlement and interaction may differ (Hunt et al. 2008).

Furthermore, the scant literature on how Black reverse migration impacts residential segregation indicated that Black migrants in The New Great Migration are targeting particular parts of the South, such as states where Black individuals constitute a larger share of the population (Goyke & Dwivedi 2018; Hunt et al. 2012). However, Black migrants' destinations within the South could influence the extent and nature of segregation (Hunt et al. 2012). Additionally, it is important to note that the South has been undergoing demographic changes, including white in-migration and new immigrant growth (Hunt et al. 2008). The interaction between these groups and the returning Black population will likely shape the evolving patterns of racial interaction and segregation in the region (Marrow 2009). Some research even suggests that Hispanic newcomers in the South, for example, perceive a greater social distance from Black Americans than from whites, potentially reinforcing a black/nonblack color line (Marrow 2009). Thus, if these movements are important enough to be dubbed "The New Great Migration," then we ought to take seriously Hwang & McDaniel's (2022:412) assertion that "neighborhood change/stability depends

on how surrounding neighborhoods are changing and the options in other neighborhoods […], given that the residential mobility/immobility resulting from these change can produce segregation while restructuring it into new forms, dimensions or scale."

Addressing these gaps can empower sociologists to develop new insights about the factors propelling Black Americans' move to the South, thereby constructing new knowledge about the residential conditions that continue to impact Black Americans' life chances. Not to mention, Black immigrants from the Caribbean are increasingly choosing the South as their place of residence in the U.S. (Pew Research 2022). This trend contributes to the demographic growth and diversification of the South, adding another layer to the region's evolving racial and ethnic landscape (Obinna 2023) and necessitates further investigation in general and, in particular, for immigrants who are relocating to the South from other regions across the U.S.

In this essay, I have drawn attention to the dynamic manifestations of racial residential segregation, whereby place stratification significantly impacts the residential mobility and settlement patterns for Black Americans in general. Current trends in Black internal mobility offer novel approaches for understanding how Black residential changes mitigate or further exacerbate segregation in regions across the U.S. Similarly, the internal migration of foreign-born Black individuals should be considered within this broader stream of Black migration to understand the mechanisms driving these trends. Moreover, to situate "The New Great Migration" within the context of segregation means wrestling with the important question that Anna Livia Brand (2019: 14), a scholar of race and Black geographies, raises, "If racialization is and has always been geographical, how might resistance also be geographical, territorial, and spatial?" To interrogate the (re)migration of Black Americans to the American South and the extent to which these movements challenge the existing structure of segregation requires that we problematize how "the

logic of racial oppression [has been and continues to be] spatial – it is Cartesian, mappable, knowable, rational, linear, and ahistorical" (Brand 2019: 16). In other words, this spatial logic continues to rely on Cartesian divisions, is visible in geography, operates according to a distorted sense of rationality, and often masks its historical origins by presenting current spatial inequalities as fixed and natural. However, racial segregation should be conceived of beyond social or ideological phenomena but as deeply intertwined with how we understand and organize our space. Hence, a critical examination of the spatial structures and narratives that perpetuate racial injustice means interrogating how racial inequalities are created, maintained, and challenged through the organization of our environments, from the scale of the neighborhood to the global.

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