

PATTERNS AND CONSEQUENCES OF SEGREGATION:  
AN ANALYSIS OF ETHNIC RESIDENTIAL SEGREGATION AT TWO  
GEOGRAPHIC SCALES

By

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A DISSERTATION

Presented to the Faculty of  
The Graduate College at the University of Nebraska  
In Partial Fulfillment of Requirements  
For the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Major: Geography

Under the Supervision of Professor J. Clark Archer

Lincoln, Nebraska

August, 2008

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University of Nebraska, 2008

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American cities are diverse, with people from various ethnic backgrounds calling the city their home. Instead of having numerous culturally mixed neighborhoods, many residential areas are segregated by ethnicity. Also, social opportunities, such as access to jobs and quality education, are not evenly distributed in urban space. In short, separate living spaces may not mean equal living spaces. What are the impacts of living in White or African American or Hispanic or Asian neighborhoods? Thus, it is worthwhile to investigate the patterns and consequences of ethnic residential segregation.

This dissertation employs several cartographic, geographic information system (GIS), and statistical techniques to analyze ethnic residential segregation at two geographic scales: nationally and locally. At the national scale, segregation levels (dissimilarity index) were mapped and statistically categorized into different regions. Cities in the Northeast are the most segregated, followed by cities in the South, and then by cities in the West. Multiple regression equations reveal regional differences in socioeconomic characteristics that explain segregation within each region. For example, what explains White-African American segregation in the Northeast is different than what explains White-African American segregation in the West.

Locally, a case study of Omaha, Nebraska investigates the patterns and consequences of segregation within a city. In 2000, African Americans predominantly reside in North Omaha, Hispanics in South Omaha, and Whites and Asians in the suburbs of western Omaha. A comparison of the characteristics of ethnically-concentrated neighborhoods reveals several social inequalities. Segregated African American and

Hispanic neighborhoods generally have lower socioeconomic characteristics, such as lower education and income, than segregated White and Asian places. A positive outgrowth of African American and Hispanic segregation is the development of ethnic businesses, community organizations, churches, and festivals. Nonetheless, ethnic residential segregation in Omaha benefited some groups over others. Overall, this dissertation finds that social inequality and spatial inequality appear to be linked in American urban society.

PREVIEW

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my family, parents Roy and Mina and sister Jean, for all of their love and support over the years. This dissertation would not have been possible without you. I am also grateful for the encouragement from my extended family in Nepal and here in America. Growing up with two cultural traditions has positively shaped my development as a person and is a major reason why I found the discipline of geography so appealing.

My heartfelt gratitude goes to the committee members who have influenced my academic research and future teaching career. Special thanks to my adviser Dr. Archer, your expert guidance on the formation and completion of this dissertation cannot go unrecognized. Thank you Dr. Wishart and your family—the care and support you gave from my undergraduate days to the completion of my graduate degree is much appreciated. Thank you Dr. Lavin and Dr. Cantarero for all of your support, both within the classroom and with various research projects.

My sincere gratitude goes to my “other” family, my fellow graduate students who have offered encouragement and well-needed humor that made the graduate school experience so enjoyable. Special gratitude goes to Ezra Zeitler, Matt Engel, Becky Buller, and Ryan Weichelt—I cannot express in words how much each of you mean to me. Thank you my Geography “peeps”: Mel, Katie, Paul, Matt, Darcy, Lesli, Cyndi, Nataliya, Molly, Ken, Kim, Jason, Melinda, Kristi, Angela, Roberto, Sateesh, Naikoa, Marcela, Dan, Dr. Johnson, Dr. Amedeo, Jeff, Chad, Kyle, and Ashley. Thank you to my “peeps” in Anthropology: Missy, Benjamin, Damita, Brennan, Cynthia, Erin, Katie, Tim, Amy, Michaela, Bill, Drew, Andrew, Stephen, and Albert. Thanks to my b-ball “peeps”: Alaine, Tomomi, Michael, Travis, Andy, and my man Nolan. A special thank you goes to all of my students here at the University of Nebraska—you have been a major part of my dream to teach. The final thank you goes to Joyce, Kathy, and Barbara—I will probably miss you the most—as you have made every day in the department extremely enjoyable.

One World!

**PEACE!**

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

### **Introduction**

Diversity characterizes American cities, with people from various ethnic backgrounds calling the city their home. Many Americans see the inclusion of all ethnic groups into one society as an ideal the nation should strive towards. Yet, the residential patterns found in our cities often do not reflect this goal of societal unity. Instead of having numerous culturally mixed neighborhoods, many residential areas are segregated by ethnicity. Social opportunities, such as access to jobs and quality education, are not evenly distributed in urban space. Some ethnically segregated neighborhoods are found in places that offer poor services, while other neighborhoods overlap with places that provide good services. Thus, where you live may limit your chances to succeed in America. In short, separate living spaces may not mean equal living spaces. An important social issue in America is the ethnic residential segregation found in many cities which has been described as “America Apartheid” (Massey and Denton, 1993). Therefore, it is worthwhile to investigate the patterns and consequences of ethnic residential segregation in urban America.

Three major sets of explanatory causal factors have been hypothesized to explain ethnic residential segregation in urban America (Kaplan and Woodhouse, 2004): housing discrimination, socioeconomic status (SES) differences, and ethnic group preferences. The first set of explanatory causal factors suggests that persistent segregation is due to discrimination in housing markets, such as through banks denying mortgage loan applications, or real estate agents steering prospective homebuyers to segregated neighborhoods. The second set of explanatory causal factors suggests that

socioeconomic differences between ethnic groups are the underlying causes of ethnic segregation. This hypothesis implies that ethnic group differences in income level and educational attainment promote ethnic separation into ethnically homogeneous neighborhoods. The third set of explanatory causal factors suggests that ethnic residential segregation arises from the ethnic groups' own preferences for residential settings. This explanation asserts that ethnic residential segregation exists because people choose to live near others with the same ethnic background. Overall, an analysis at several geographic scales is needed to test the relative importance of these hypothesized explanatory causal factors in accounting for ethnic residential segregation in American cities.

The geographic distribution of people in an American city is important, for the "city must be seen as a reflection of the society that maintains it" (Knox and Pinch 2000, 2). If American metropolitan areas displayed residential inequalities, what does that say about our presumed egalitarian society? Ethnic residential segregation is a very complex issue that many scholars have used as an indicator of social equality in America. If American cities are experiencing a decline in segregation, with members of various ethnic groups moving away from ethnically clustered into ethnically mixed areas, then can social mobility be equated with spatial mobility (Knox and Pinch, 2000)? By understanding the reasons, meanings, and impacts of segregation, urban scholars can recommend policies that could alleviate many potential social injustices found in urban America.

### **Research in Urban Geography**

Research activities in urban geography can be categorized by their geographic scales of analysis. At a broader scale, urban topics can be analyzed across entire

metropolitan areas, while at another more local scale urban issues can be investigated within metropolitan areas. The former perspective treats cities as points, while the latter treats cities as areas. As Brain Berry (1964) summarized, research in urban geography investigates cities both as points and as areas, or in Berry's memorable title phrasing, "as systems within systems of cities." Thus, to more fully comprehend the complexity of ethnic residential segregation in urban America, it is useful to analyze segregation at both interurban and intra-urban geographic scales.

Segregation at both the national and local geographic scale are analyzed in this dissertation. The national scale investigation features analysis of metropolitan areas throughout the U.S. (cities as points) and the local scale case study features analysis of neighborhood level segregation within a particular city (city as an area). The national scale of analysis includes 331 metropolitan statistical areas (MSAs) in America, and the local scale of analysis focuses of the city of Omaha, Nebraska. Most previous local scale research on ethnic residential segregation has investigated patterns in larger cities with populations over one million, to the neglect of "smaller" cities with populations of less than one million. Omaha, Nebraska was chosen as the case study site because of its appropriate characteristics, and because of its spatial accessibility to the researcher which has facilitated the collection of in-depth information about the city and its neighborhoods.

### **Purpose of the Dissertation**

The goal of this dissertation is to further understand the patterns and consequences of ethnic residential segregation, both for the nation and for a particular city. At a broader geographic level, ethnic residential segregation is analyzed across all metropolitan areas in the U.S. Are there differences between metropolitan areas in their

levels of ethnic segregation? If so, are there regions in the U.S. where cities have relatively higher or lower segregation scores? Do segregation levels vary by ethnic group? What characteristics explain these geographic patterns? Overall, one major objective of this project is to analyze the variations in segregation levels among American cities. Meeting this objective will provide information on national trends in patterns of ethnic residential segregation.

At another geographic scale, ethnic residential segregation can be analyzed within a particular metropolitan area. At the local level, ethnic residential segregation is examined across all of the neighborhoods within a particular city. If different ethnic groups live in different sections of the city, what are the factors that influenced these geographic patterns? What are the impacts of living in ethnically segregated neighborhoods on their residents? Do these consequences benefit some groups more or less than others? Overall, a second major objective of this study is to answer such questions about ethnic residential segregation at the local level, which will aid in better understanding why people live where they do.

It is important for this dissertation to investigate ethnic residential segregation at two different geographic scales, for analysis at one scale can compliment analysis at the other scale. By only examining segregation levels between cities, little would be known about the positive and negative consequences of living in segregated neighborhoods at the local scale. Does a high city scale segregation score mean that ethnically concentrated neighborhoods have poorer services or quality of life? A case study of ethnically segregated neighborhoods within a city can overcome this shortcoming. But conversely, by investigating segregation patterns for one city only, nothing would be

known on how that city compares to other cities. This comparative context is provided by also investigating segregation between metropolitan areas, which offers an overview of segregation trends throughout urban America. In general, the overall goal of this research project is to investigate the patterns and consequences of ethnic residential segregation. The analysis of ethnic residential patterns may show if the levels of ethnic residential segregation can be used as indicators of social equality in American cities.

### **Organization of the Research**

To address the research questions posed above, this dissertation on the patterns and consequences of ethnic residential segregation at two geographic scales is divided into seven chapters. Following this introductory chapter, the second chapter provides a review of current ethnic residential segregation literature by focusing on historical and current causes of ethnic segregation in American cities. The third chapter examines the methods which have been used to measure ethnic residential segregation and addresses related issues dealing with quantitative geographic research. The fourth chapter formalizes the structure of the research design of the dissertation, including how the study areas are defined and how the research questions are analyzed. The next three chapters detail the results and analyses, starting with chapter five on the patterns of segregation among American metropolitan areas. The sixth chapter deals with the patterns of ethnic residential segregation that are observed for Omaha, Nebraska. Chapter seven provides an analysis of the consequences of segregation for residents living in ethnically concentrated neighborhoods in Omaha. The final chapter summarizes the significant findings and provides suggested policy recommendations arising from the results of this research. Overall, the goal of the analysis chapters is to analyze the patterns and



consequences of ethnic residential segregation in American cities at both the national and local scales.

### **Summary**

America reaching the population milestone of 300 million people (United States Census Bureau 2006) is a reminder of the changing demographics characterizing our society. An important component of this changing demography is an increase in ethnic diversity. This diversity predominantly affects urban America, especially the ethnic mosaic of residential areas. The purpose of this study is to analyze the patterns and consequences of ethnic residential segregation through a mixture of cartographic and statistical techniques. An analysis of ethnic segregation across metropolitan areas and within a particular city can illuminate whether American society is becoming more or less socially just. The results of this geographic research will have urban policy implications. By understanding the complexity of ethnic residential segregation, policy makers can more effectively construct strategies to alleviate the negative consequences and to enhance the positive impacts of living in segregated neighborhoods.

## **CHAPTER 2: RESEARCH ON ETHNIC RESIDENTIAL SEGREGATION**

### **Introduction**

A plethora of previous research on ethnic residential segregation research has come from various fields of study: urban geography, sociology, demography, psychology, and planning. Each discipline has provided unique insights into the patterns and consequences of segregation, and the goal of this chapter is to survey historic and current segregation research. The first section of this chapter summarizes the conceptual framework and theoretical implications of ethnic residential segregation. The second section investigates the strong points and drawbacks of the various proposed causes of segregation. The third section reviews the patterns of segregation in America at two geographic scales: national and local. The final section of the chapter summarizes the studies that emphasized the impacts of ethnic residential segregation. This brief literature review of previous segregation studies provides the foundation upon which this dissertation research hopes to build.

### **Conceptual Framework**

What implications can be drawn if members of an ethnic group are residentially segregated or residentially dispersed in a city? Are there connections between residential location and social status? Four theoretical models have attempted to link social mobility with spatial mobility. The first two conceptualizations, called place stratification and spatial assimilation, analyzed the changes in the residential locations of certain ethnic groups over time as an indicator of social ranking. It is important to note that these “two theoretical models are not inherently antagonistic to one another” (Alba and Logan 1991, 434), in that both can be applicable at the same time. The third conceptualization, called

heterolocalism, criticizes and builds upon the previous two concepts by providing a modern discourse for ethnic residential distributions. Another conceptualization has addressed the meanings of segregation, in reference to the formation of ethnic enclaves or ghettos, respectively. These conceptual frameworks provide the context within which to interpret statistical results that measure ethnic residential segregation levels for various ethnic groups in American urban settings.

### **Place Stratification**

The place stratification construct indicates that social barriers have limited the suburbanization of ethnic groups, which has thus created an ethnically segregated city. For example, the lack of certain ethnic residents in suburbs contrasted with concentrations in the inner city would indicate that this group has not been socially integrated into the larger society. The place stratification process:

“[E]nvisions that racial and ethnic minorities are sorted by place according to their group’s relative standing in society, and this limits the ability of even the socially mobile members of these groups to reside in the same communities as comparable to whites.” (Alba and Logan 1993, 1391)

It is asserted that this social inequality is apparent in the segregated spatial patterning of certain ethnic groups within American metropolitan areas.

If place stratification has occurred, “one would expect that members of some ethnic and racial groups may not be able to convert socioeconomic and assimilation gains into advantageous residential situations” (Alba and Logan 1991, 433). For example, no matter the increase in income levels for a certain ethnic group, there could remain barriers (e.g. housing discrimination) that did not allow members of this group to move to more expensive homes that they could afford financially. Due to this process, ethnic enclaves have persisted over time in which high-income members of the group lived next

to low-income members of the group because most high-income members were not “allowed” to move out. It has been inferred that place stratification is “associated with more or less favorable life chances and quality of life” (Alba and Logan 1993, 1391), due to the difference between the resources available in the suburb and those in the central city, respectively. Thus, high segregation scores for a certain ethnic group indicate a place stratified ethnic group. This model accounted for the formation and continuance of ethnically concentrated neighborhood, but does not account for ethnic groups “making it” by “moving out” of ethnically clustered spaces.

### **Spatial Assimilation**

The spatial assimilation construct indicates that some members of an ethnic group may be able to move into the suburbs, and thus spatially assimilate into the larger society. With spatial assimilation, fewer social barriers inhibit ethnic movement to the outer fringes of the city. Spatial assimilation asserts that:

“As members of minority groups acculturate and establish themselves in American labor markets, they attempt to leave behind less successful members of their groups and to convert socioeconomic and assimilation progress into residential gain, by ‘purchasing’ residence in places with greater advantages and amenities. This process disperses minority-group members, opening the way for increased contact with members of the ethnic majority, and thus for desegregation” (Alba and Logan 1993, 1390).

There are two facets to the spatial assimilation model: residential mobility follows individual acculturation and social mobility; and residential mobility is a step towards complete assimilation (Alba and Logan 1991, 432). Therefore, the spatial distribution of ethnic group residential locations within an urban area can be regarded as an indicator of social equality.

Following spatial assimilation, an examination of residential patterns would indicate the ethnic diversity of the suburbs and no comparative residential concentration in the inner city. Thus, there would be low-to-no segregation between ethnic groups in the city and suburbs combined. For spatial assimilation to occur, “movement to the suburbs occupies a key position in the processes that connect residential assimilation with social mobility” (Alba and Logan 1991, 433). Historically, when ethnic-group members moved to the city from elsewhere, there were ethnic concentrations in the central city that fostered support and acculturation into the society. Under this model, upon achieving socioeconomic success, people would “forsake urban ethnic enclaves for more ethnically mixed suburbs” (Alba et al. 1999, 447). This movement over time to the suburbs indicates the assimilation of that group into American society.

In summary, the place stratification and spatial assimilation models have used the residential locations of certain ethnic groups as key indicators of the social acceptance of those groups. Also, the two conceptualizations have used residential space as a marker of social standing (Espino 2005, 147). However, these two models did not indicate that the residential location of ethnic groups, by itself, accounts for social equality. Residential location is just one of many facets of assimilation into the overall society. Generally, place stratification has occurred if various ethnic groups are concentrated in the inner cities of America. Spatial assimilation emerges if the inner city ethnic concentrations have disappeared over time, and the suburbs have diversified by including members of a variety of ethnic groups.

The spatial assimilation model followed the melting pot analogy of America, by describing an American society that has fused people with different ethnic heritages.

Thus, the goal is to have people of various ethnic backgrounds living in close proximity with one another without ethnic residential segregation. The place stratification model, with ethnic residential segregation taking place, can be interpreted through the lens of pluralism. The pluralistic viewpoint states that various ethnic groups should maintain their heritage and that these differences should be celebrated. A possible consequence of pluralism could be the development of some ethnically-concentrated urban spaces, in which segregation levels would increase or remain high over time.

### **Heterolocalism**

One major drawback of the spatial assimilation and place stratification models is that residential location may not always indicate social integration or isolation for all ethnic groups. In other words, members of an ethnic group may not live in an ethnically concentrated area and yet not have assimilated into the larger society. Since residential location may not overlap with other ethnic meeting places (e.g. ethnic churches, shopping centers, and restaurants), relating spatial mobility to social mobility would not necessarily be applicable to all ethnic groups. Part of the shortcomings of the spatial assimilation and place stratification models involves advances of communications technology (e.g. internet, telecommunications, etc.) and transportation, as ethnic group members might stay “connected” while not residing near one another. The spatial assimilation (cultural assimilation) and place stratification (pluralistic) models may have been useful in describing ethnic residential patterns and their meaning in the past, but do they do well in describing the patterns found today?

A new conceptualization was needed that described recent ethnic residential spaces and their meanings, as more ethnic immigrant groups (many from Asia and Latin

America) were moving to the U.S. after 1965. Newer immigrants may have different ways to maintain ethnic cohesion (e.g. web sites and ethnic community organizations).

Wilber Zelinsky and Barret Lee (1998) introduced a heterolocalism construct, which applied:

“to recent populations of shared ethnic identity that enter a given area from distant sources, then promptly adopt a dispersed pattern of residential location, all the while maintaining strong social cohesion by various means, despite the lack of propinquity” (Zelinsky and Lee 1998, 293).

For example in Chicago, the lack of a South Asian Indian residential enclave did not mean a lack of social cohesion as there were several ethnic gathering places; including Hindu temples and South Asian businesses along Devon Avenue. Unlike the past, when residences and workplaces necessarily were proximate to each other, modern transportation has allowed people to live further away from where they work or shop. An outcome of heterolocalism could be a lack of ethnic residential segregation, but also a lack of assimilation into the larger American society. This countered the spatial assimilation model which indicated that mobility of ethnic groups into the suburbs necessarily related to social assimilation.

The concept of heterolocalism mainly focuses on the residential patterns of new ethnic immigrants, and as such, may not be applicable to the residential patterns of every ethnic group. For example, some ethnic groups were concentrated in residential space, with employment and ethnic community organizations still located geographically in these enclaves. The tenet of heterolocalism is that new immigrants are able to afford to live where they want and yet still keep connected with other ethnic group members in a city or region. If members of an ethnic group cannot afford or chose where they want to live, then living near members of the same ethnicity would be the best way to keep

socially connected with your ethnic group. The result would be the formation, or continuance, of ethnically concentrated spaces in the urban landscape. Given that ethnic residential segregation may still exist for certain groups, there can be multiple interpretations of the impacts of the clustering of ethnic group members in urban space.

### **Ethnic Enclave vs. Ghetto**

There are positive and negative implications of living in ethnically concentrated areas which are conceptualized in the dichotomy of the ethnic enclave-ghetto paradigm. As Ceri Peach (1996) has noted, there are “good” and “bad” segregation, where living in the former provides support for group members while living in the latter hinders future life chances for group members. The main difference between the ethnic enclave and ethnic ghetto is choice. If ethnic group members choose to live in segregated spaces, then this would be an ethnic enclave. But if ethnic group members did not choose to live in segregated spaces with their social and spatial mobility constrained, then this situation would be categorized as an ethnic ghetto.

Ethnic enclaves, or the “good” segregation, have been represented historically in the forms of Little Italy, Chinatown, and the like, where these urban places have provided community support for people with similar ethnic backgrounds. For immigrants, residential segregation created “ethnic enclaves that can provide social support and a semblance of the old world now lost to them” (Mayadas and Segal 2000, 208). The enclave generated social contacts, preserved ethnic culture, offered support to group members, and created ethnic businesses (Van Kempen and Özüekren 1998). In essence, the ethnic enclave was a “home away from home” for immigrants that made transitioning into another society easier. However, no matter the social support, the ethnic enclaves