Racial Residential Segregation in Urban America
Robert M. Adelman* and James Clarke Gocker
University at Buffalo, The State University of New York

Abstract
There are numerous causes and consequences of racial residential segregation in American metropolitan areas, and a long-standing literature is filled with debates about them. We provide an overview of the trends and patterns regarding racial residential segregation, focusing primarily on blacks and whites. We pay special attention to the competing arguments about race and class in the context of residential stratification. We then discuss the many causes of residential segregation, and its social and economic consequences. After the overview, we identify key gaps in the literature. We discuss three broad substantive areas of research that expand the study of racial residential segregation: (i) the everyday experiences of race, class, and gender disadvantage as they are related to segregation; (ii) contemporary immigration streams and their impact on black–white residential dynamics; and (iii) the power of political-economic forces to transform residentially segregated spaces, with a particular emphasis on processes related to gentrification and home mortgage lending.

Introduction
Racial residential segregation, and more generally residential stratification, remains a dominant theme for scholars interested in racial and ethnic inequality. There are numerous causes and consequences of residential segregation in American metropolitan areas, and a long-standing literature is filled with debates about them (for extensive reviews about residential segregation and other neighborhood processes, see, e.g., Charles 2003; Fong and Shibuya 2005; Pattillo 2005; Sampson et al. 2002). Because residential segregation – at its most basic level – ‘is the degree to which two or more groups live separately from one another’ in American metropolitan areas (Massey and Denton 1988, 282), most social scientists agree that racial residential segregation creates and perpetuates harsh conditions for particular groups, especially poor African Americans, who are spatially segmented and separated.

The neighborhood context in which people live has a substantial impact on an array of outcomes and opportunities, including one’s exposure to poverty and crime (see Sampson et al. 2002; Wilson 1987), effective schools (see Orfield and Eaton 1996), as well as job networks and...
availability (see Wilson 1987; 1996). The unequal nature of these exposures, embedded in one’s neighborhood and larger urban environment, underscores the significance of studying residential segregation. Especially pertinent is the continued disadvantaged position of African Americans relative to other racial and ethnic groups. However, race also interacts with other statuses making the continued study of residential segregation important but complicated.

We begin by providing an overview of the trends and patterns regarding racial residential segregation, focusing primarily on blacks and whites. We pay special attention to the competing arguments about race and class in the context of residential stratification. We then discuss the many causes of residential segregation, and its social and economic consequences. After the overview, we identify key gaps in the literature. Some of what we focus on has begun to attract significant attention from sociologists, while other foci have not. We discuss three broad substantive areas of research that expand the study of racial residential segregation: (i) the everyday experiences of race, class, and gender disadvantage as they are related to segregation; (ii) contemporary immigration streams and their impact on black–white residential dynamics; and (iii) the power of political–economic forces to transform residentially segregated spaces, with a particular emphasis on processes related to gentrification and home mortgage lending.1

Racial residential segregation

Patterns and trends

Duncan and Duncan (1957, 105–106) found that Chicago had developed a residentially segregated black ghetto as early as 1910. When Burgess wrote (1928) about the concentric zone model of Chicago in the 1920s, he showed a ‘Black Belt’ in his ‘Zone in Transition’. By the 1940s, Drake and Cayton estimated that the majority of the 337,000 blacks in Chicago lived in the ‘Black Belt’ (1946, 174), and that segregation affected all blacks in Chicago, including those in the upper and middle classes (p. 382). In 1965, Taeuber and Taeuber confirmed that there was ‘strong and consistent support for the conclusion that Negroes are by far the most residentially segregated large minority group in recent American history’ (p. 68). Like others before and after them, they noted that segregated areas quickly developed in Northern and Midwestern cities as the Great Migration brought blacks to Northern cities in the first few decades of the 20th century.

By the time Massey and Denton published American Apartheid in 1993, they argued that residential segregation had largely been sidelined not only within academia but more importantly within the larger American discourse about racial inequality.2 Since American Apartheid, numerous scholars have produced a rich and ever-changing literature about residential
segregation. These scholars have found that through 2000, black-white segregation remains high although it has slightly decreased over time (see, e.g., Farley and Frey 1994; Iceland 2004; Logan et al. 2004; Massey and Denton 1993). Moreover, in 2000, the average white person in a given US metropolitan area lived in a neighborhood that was 80% white while the typical black person lived in a neighborhood that was about 50% black (Logan et al. 2004, 8–9) (note that in 2000, blacks made up about 12.5% of the US population).

The dominant measure of segregation, the Index of Dissimilarity, shows that black-white segregation across metropolitan America went from a score of 74 in 1980 to 65 in 2000 (Logan et al. 2004; table 1). However, scores above 60 indicate high levels of segregation that means that black-white segregation continues. Other measures of segregation such as the Theil Index (Fischer et al. 2004) also show high but decreasing black-white segregation over time. Indeed, there are a variety of measures used in the measurement of segregation. Generally these measures represent different dimensions of segregation; for example, the Index of Dissimilarity taps into a dimension known as evenness: how two groups are distributed across a metropolis, usually by examining census tract data (Massey and Denton 1988).

Massey and Denton (1988) document five dimensions of segregation (e.g., evenness; exposure; concentration; centralization; clustering), and at least 20 accompanying measures (for a more recent analysis, see Wilkes and Iceland 2004). Examinations of 1980, 1990, and 2000 census data show that millions of African Americans across metropolitan America live in hypersegregated environments (Denton 1994; Massey and Denton 1989; Wilkes and Iceland 2004). That is, a large proportion of blacks are severely segregated across several dimensions of segregation meaning that African Americans are uniquely disadvantaged, compared to other racial and ethnic groups, when it comes to neighborhood stratification (Wilkes and Iceland 2004, 34; Massey and Denton 1989).

Spatial isolation does not only occur in the cities of metropolitan areas but also in American suburbs. Although blacks and whites are less segregated in suburbs than in central cities, racial segregation continues in these parts of metropolises. Furthermore, black suburbanization does not necessarily mean residence in the idyllic suburban neighborhood (Massey and Denton 1993, 69; see also Fischer 2007; Logan and Schneider 1984). In fact, many inner-ring suburbs are in serious decline and are often linked with increasing poverty, inadequate schools, and nonfunctional public services (Logan and Schneider 1984; Jargowsky 2003). Consequently, residential segregation and many of its concomitant consequences are not relegated to the central city, although that is often where the starkest experiences thrive.

Scholars also assess the segregation trends associated with middle- and upper-class blacks, and, more generally, seek to understand how segregation...
impacts the lives of nonpoor blacks. In other words, social scientists ask about the ways in which social class interacts with race to generate patterns of residential segregation. As far back as 1957 – and perhaps even farther back to DuBois’ criticism of the concept of the undifferentiated black mass in *The Philadelphia Negro* ([1899] 1990) – Duncan and Duncan (see also Taeuber and Taeuber 1965) found that there was enough socio-economic differentiation among black neighborhoods in Chicago to warrant a separate analysis of class-based segregation, apart from their larger study of black-white residential differences. These results prefigured a debate among scholars over the salience of race-based versus class-based factors in explaining the rise of a residentially segregated black urban underclass. Indeed, Massey and Denton (1993, 84) have asked: ‘Is what appears to be racial segregation actually segregation on the basis of social class?’ Their answer is that ‘race clearly predominates’ (p. 85).

Wilson (1987; see also 1978) advanced a different perspective, arguing that the departure of middle- and working-class blacks from inner-city neighborhoods worked to consolidate durable forms of spatially concentrated black urban poverty. That is, because middle-class blacks were able to escape the confines of segregation, they left poor blacks isolated. However, scholars have criticized Wilson’s evidence and conclusions, pointing out that because there are very poor black neighborhoods does not mean that working-, middle-, and upper-class blacks are racially integrated in white neighborhoods. It could be that, as Pattillo (2005; Pattillo-McCoy 1999, 2000) argues, middle-class blacks occupy neighborhoods adjacent to lower-income black neighborhoods. She contends that ‘high rates of poverty among African Americans ensures’ the out-migration of middle-class blacks, but ‘segregation ensures that black middle class neighborhoods are continuously reincorporated into the ghetto’ (Pattillo-McCoy 1999, 6; see also Haynes 2001, 150). A series of quantitative articles generally support Pattillo’s contentions (Adelman 2004; Alba et al. 2000; Iceland et al. 2005; Massey and Fischer 1999), but there is considerable debate about these processes (see, e.g., Massey et al. 1994; Quillian 1999; South and Crowder 1997).

**Causes**

On the whole, most social scientists contend ‘that a complex array of factors are responsible for the persisting patterns of segregation’ (Krysan 2002, 524). These include factors directly related to race, such as racial discrimination in the housing and lending markets, racial hostility and prejudice, and the neighborhood preferences of individuals and families from different racial and ethnic backgrounds. There are other forces at work too, those that are related to social class as well as race; for example, income inequality, job locations, and housing and job information also impact the spatial manifestation of American neighborhoods (for more
exhaustive accounts, see Galster 1988; Krysan 2002). Thus, race and class matter in understanding neighborhood composition. But, scholars disagree about the relative impact of these factors.

Many social scientists argue that race matters more than class in explaining American-style residential segregation, but that class is an important factor to consider (for additional reading, see, e.g., Darden and Kamel 2000; Denton and Massey 1988; Erbe 1975; Farley 1995; Fischer 2003; Massey and Eggers 1990; St. John and Clymer 2000). But, these arguments have not gone unchallenged: Clark and Ware (1997, 841), for one, argue for a ‘link between increased SES [income and education] and increased integration’ in five counties in the Los Angeles area (see also Clark 2007). Moreover, there are a number of scholars who contend that rather than race per se, and related issues like discrimination in the housing and lending markets, it is the residential preferences of whites and blacks that maintain racially segregated metropolitan areas (e.g., Clark 1986, 1991, 1992).

In a review piece of the literature on the causes of racial residential segregation, Clark (1986, 122) argues that pointing to discrimination as the cause of segregation ‘is simplistic and unwarranted’. Clark highlights residential preferences and economic factors in his account of residential segregation (see also Patterson 1997; Thernstrom and Thernstrom 1997). Other researchers contend that it is the array of factors described above, including preferences, which create segregated cities (Krysan 2002, 524; see also Bobo and Zubrinsky 1996; Farley et al. 1997, 766; Galster 1988; Krysan and Farley 2002; Massey and Denton 1993; Yinger 1995). In direct response to Clark, Galster (1988, 108) contends that ‘Market forces [incomes, preferences, job locations, information] remain significant contributors to segregation, but the equally significant role of private acts of discrimination in the housing market cannot be denied by an objective observer of the evidence.’ Thus, while Clark and others point to economic factors and residential preferences, Galster (1988) and others emphasize racial discrimination in the lending and real estate markets, white stereotypes of blacks, as well as the residential preferences of whites. Moreover, this camp of scholars considers black preferences to be rooted in white hostility (Krysan 2002, 537; Massey and Denton 1993, 90).

The role of the state has also garnered attention in understanding the causes of racial residential segregation. In particular, Kenneth Jackson (1985) emphasizes the early federal subsidization and encouragement of suburbanization, which, in turn, reinforced racial residential segregation. For example, the Home Owners Loan Corporation, the Federal Housing Administration, and the Veterans Administration institutionalized a system of ‘redlining’ by which inner city, predominantly black neighborhoods were denied mortgages and other lending services. In addition, the placement of public housing, what Jackson calls the ‘Ghettoization of Public Housing’ (p. 219), in central cities ‘reinforce[d] the image of suburbia as
a place of refuge for the problems of race, crime and poverty’ (p. 219; see also Briggs 2005). Today, large public housing facilities are being destroyed, but this means that former residents search for housing in a race- and class-based housing market (see Popkin and Cunningham 2005; Rubinowitz and Rosenbaum 2002; Tegeler 2005). Consequently, the state – as an arm of white privilege – has played a key role in the development of large-scale residential segregation. However, scholars have also looked to public policy as the means through which housing discrimination can best be confronted (e.g., Briggs 2005). In particular, while HUD contributed to the early development of racial residential segregation, it can also play an important role in ‘dismantling the ghetto’ by more aggressively pursuing punishment against acts of housing discrimination (Massey and Denton 1993, 229).

Consequences

A number of scholars show that racial residential segregation produces social inequality and disadvantage. For example, Massey and Denton’s (1993, 9) argument – ‘that racial residential segregation – and its characteristic institutional form, the black ghetto – are the key structural factors responsible for the perpetuation of black poverty in the United States’ – remains as salient today as it did in the early 1990s. Moreover, Darden, Duleep, and Galster (1992, 491) make the important point that ‘[racial] discrimination and segregation in one arena have implications for other arenas, creating a reinforcing structure that imposes huge social costs.’ Perhaps the most severe consequence is the concentration of poverty, particularly the concentration of poor blacks and Latinos.7 Research demonstrates the critical role that racial residential segregation has played in the development of high poverty, mostly black, neighborhoods in American cities (Massey and Denton 1987; Massey and Fischer 2000; Sampson and Morenoff 2006; South and Crowder 1997; see Wagmiller forthcoming for research on joblessness and segregation).8

Jargowsky’s (1994, 1996, 1997) analyses about economic segregation and poverty concentration in US metropolitan areas between 1970 and 1990 show ‘a pronounced trend toward increasing economic segregation’, especially among African Americans and Hispanics in the 1980s (1996, 990). Although his recent work (2003; see also Kingsley and Pettit 2003) shows a dramatic reduction in poverty concentration among blacks (and all groups) through 2000, this outcome of residential segregation remains problematic. Dramatic levels of inner-city poverty – neighborhoods in which over 40% of individuals are impoverished – translate into high crime rates, lack of jobs, poor city services, and less-than-adequate schools, among other problems. While Jargowsky tends to emphasize the role of economic or class segregation, relative to racial segregation, in explaining poverty concentration, the end result is that the most vulnerable
residents of US cities, in particular children, do not have equal opportunities or realize commensurate outcomes relative to other Americans. In the end, the ways in which residential segregation has disadvantaged African Americans means that the intergenerational transmission of racial inequality continues into the 21st century.

**New directions and existing gaps in the segregation literature**

*Everyday experiences of segregation*

Whereas the sociodemographic research described above focuses more on overarching structural constraints, such as labor market trends, political upheaval, and institutionalized discrimination, other research concentrates on rich description and street-level experiences of segregation, considering the role that language, culture, and symbolic boundaries play in shaping subjectivity and group interaction (see Goldberg 1998). Thus, some scholars seek to better understand fine-grained social and spatial variations in exposure to, and experiences of, discrimination and segregation across population subgroups (Allen and Turner 1996; Squires et al. 2002) or at the intersection of different levels of power and types of identities (Chapple 2001; Gilbert 1998; Massey and Lundy 2001; Peake 1997; Roy 2004; Wright et al. 2003). In some instances, scholars rely on new data (e.g., Ellis et al. 2004) or develop new conceptual and methodological approaches (e.g., Grannis 2005; Johnston et al. 2003; Mateos et al. 2006; Noonan 2005; Sui and Wu 2006) in an attempt to capture important features of the ‘new segregation’ (Goldberg 1998). For instance, Grannis’ (2005, 297) study of racial clustering within tertiary communities (‘t-communities’) – spatially bounded networks of pedestrian streets – provides an alternative way of studying segregation as it relates to the built environment (see also Noonan 2005).

Chapple’s (2001) and Gilbert’s (1998) work on poor African American women’s mobility and economic opportunity outcomes highlights the gendered dimensions of residential segregation (see also Johnston-Anumonwo 1997 and Peake 1997). Gilbert finds that poor African American women experience ‘spatial entrapment’, a combination of restricted, daily mobility patterns and downgraded employment opportunities, due to their residential segregation and the segregated clustering of their racialized social networks.

Indeed, as Massey and Lundy’s (2001) research makes clear, poor African American women experience more pervasive forms of discrimination in their search for rental housing compared to either white middle-class men and women or lower-class black men, thereby circumscribing their residential opportunities to segregated spaces.

Chapple (2001) and Gilbert (1998) reflect on the complexity of racially marginalized women’s experiences of segregation. Both consider the
possibility that there are positive features embedded within segregated residential environments; in other words, they seek to understand ‘how women use rootedness in their [everyday] survival strategies’ (Gilbert 1998, 616). Place-based attachments (i.e., local social ties, access to transportation, informal employment, and childcare opportunities) can operate as meaningful resources for identity construction, household reproduction, and the realization of greater economic security.

Trudeau's (2006) recent research of a court-ordered residential mobility program in Buffalo, New York, stands out because it illustrates the complexity of marginality. Employing a ‘context-sensitive perspective’, he finds that the decisions of lower-income, female-headed black households to remain within segregated neighborhoods, even when given a choice to relocate to the suburbs, are often mediated by the gendered psychological, social, and economic support infrastructures that the inner city can provide (Trudeau 2006, 40). Black female heads of households perceived inner-city neighborhoods as safe spaces – free from the harmful effects of overt, interpersonal racial hostility (p. 39). And, these same women valued inner-city locales for their proximity to public transportation routes and place-based social networks, with each playing a critical role in daily household reproduction. The potential empowerment of black women in the central city nevertheless is also made contingent by the realities of social and economic disadvantage.

According to Ellis et al. (2004, 620), the failure of segregation research to fully explore ‘the daily variation in the spatial separation of groups ... creates false impressions of urban areas’ ethnic and racialized spaces as fixed.’ Research on residential segregation has emerged that moves beyond the analysis of fixed places to the examination of patterns and experiences of daily mobility per se. This research probes dimensions of race, class, and gender disadvantage as they intersect with the imperatives of daily movement (e.g., childcare; work) within and across the boundaries of segregated space (see also Anderson 1999). Scholars examine this form of mobility in relation to participation within formal (Ellis et al. 2004) and informal sectors of the economy (Duneier 1999), child rearing strategies (see, e.g., DeSena 2006; Montgomery 2006; Roy 2004), school-based social ties (Mouw and Entwisle 2006), and suburban police work (Bates and Fasenfest 2005), among others. Roy’s (2004) work, for example, documents how poor, black, single fathers’ criminal histories and gang ties constrain their daily movement within segregated Chicago neighborhoods. As a result, these men struggle to negotiate consistent parenting routines and reciprocal parental responsibilities with their children’s mothers.

Both DeSena (2006) and Montgomery (2006) consider how middle-class households in segregated, gentrifying, and declining neighborhoods pursue social, cultural, and educational advantages for children outside of local neighborhood contexts (see also Lacy 2004). In DeSena’s study, white, middle-class mothers, often the gentry, select schools external to the
neighborhood, which maintains the social stratification of the families within the neighborhood. In other words, the daily movement of white, middle-class children into institutional environments outside of their residential neighborhood works to undermine community cohesion, racialize social privilege, and reproduce social inequality. Montgomery (2006) finds that several of the same consequences accompany residentially segregated middle-class black households’ daily mobility strategies. For middle-class black parents, segregated space possesses a contradictory character. Black neighborhoods are often perceived as both ‘spaces of risk and advantage’ (Montgomery 2006, 446; see also Lacy 2004; Pattillo-McCoy 1999). According to Montgomery (2006, 446), in the daily pursuit of advantage and opportunity for children outside of segregated neighborhoods, middle-class black parents incur significant costs in ‘time, money, and stress’. These and other scholars should continue seeking a better understanding of the day-to-day struggles associated with segregation and its many consequences.

Immigration

Another area of segregation research centers on immigration. Researchers examine how changes in patterns and processes of residential settlement are connected to continuing waves of immigration. Researchers assess how these dynamics relate to the persistence and transformation of residential segregation, and to social inequality at different geographic scales (at the regional scale, see, e.g., Wright and Ellis 2000; at the household scale, see, e.g., Ellis et al. 2006). Much of this research focuses on immigrant gateway cities such as New York (Crowder 1999; Rosenbaum and Friedman 2007), Chicago (Newbold and Spindler 2001), Los Angeles (Li 1998), San Francisco (Pamuk 2004), and Miami (Boswell and Cruz-Baez 1997), and comparisons between these cities (see, e.g., Clark and Blue 2004; Johnston et al. 2003; Poulsen et al. 2002).13

For some time, arguments about the assimilation of immigrants have dominated the field of immigration studies (Alba and Nee 2003). One small niche in this argument has focused on spatial assimilation, or the process through which immigrants, particularly white immigrants, have improved their neighborhood conditions (Iceland and Nelson 2007; Massey 1985; Massey and Mullan 1984; Rosenbaum and Freidman 2007; South et al. 2005). In short, the story goes that upon arriving in the USA, immigrants live in ethnic ghettos but that with upward social and economic mobility, individuals and families relocate to new and better areas. Much of this process is intergenerational and the dynamic generally has been shown for whites. Since 1965, though, immigrants have largely arrived from countries in Asia and Latin America (Heer 1996). This has changed the spatial assimilation story: now, scholars ask whether or not this hypothesis applies to Asians and Latinos.14
In terms of residential segregation and stratification, most social scientists contend that whites are at the top of a spatial hierarchy and blacks are at the bottom, but that most Asian groups live in neighborhoods with relatively large proportions of whites and similar characteristics to them, and that most Hispanic groups live in multiethnic neighborhoods that often have similar qualities as those neighborhoods in which African Americans live (Adelman et al. 2001; Iceland 2004; Iceland and Nelson 2007; Logan et al. 2004; South et al. 2005), although these results certainly mask great heterogeneity in the experiences of Asian and Hispanic groups (see, e.g., White et al. 2003). Thus, in contrast to spatial assimilation, scholars work with the idea that there is place stratification among groups (Alba and Logan 1992; Logan and Alba 1993; Rosenbaum and Friedman 2007). For example, Logan et al. (2004, 7) find that while black–white segregation declined from 1980 to 2000, Hispanic–white and Asian–white segregation remained steady with an upward trend. However, and this is key to the place stratification hypothesis, ‘blacks remained much more segregated from whites than were Hispanics and Asians during this period’ (p. 7).

Scholars also find other settlement patterns regarding immigrant groups. Some groups forego time living in the city and migrate directly to the suburbs; for instance, many Chinese immigrants to the New York City metropolitan area often move to any number of suburbs (see, e.g., Alba and Logan 1993; for an analysis of Los Angeles, see, e.g., Li 1998). As a consequence, the entire spatial assimilation framework may be changing. In fact, as immigration changes cities and metropolitan areas into multiracial and multiethnic places, this appears to have an impact on segregation. For example, Hispanic–white and Asian–white segregation tend to increase as the population of these groups increase in an area.15 To the extent that researchers can make even more refined analyses of groups in particular places, more can be learned about the neighborhoods of immigrants. We call for more case studies of immigrants across the country, for scholars to examine Mexican segregation in Houston, Cuban segregation in Miami, and Chinese segregation in Atlanta to name a few examples.

Political-economic considerations

Researchers investigate the political-economic dimensions and determinants of discrimination and segregation in light of emerging trends in capital investment and disinvestment within and between inner-city and suburban areas (see, generally, Cooke and Marchant 2006; Hackworth 2007; Smith et al. 2001). This research moves beyond individual-level analyses of residential preference and ecological models of residential change into examining the social and spatial effects of gentrification (see, e.g., DeSena 2006; Fraser 2004; Lees 2000; Maskovsky 2006; Newman and Wyly 2004; Wyly and Hammel 2004) and mortgage lending (see, e.g., Calem et al. 2004; Newman and Wyly 2004; Williams et al. 2005; Wyly et al. 2006).
Scholars pay particular attention to broader contextual features of the period beginning in the early to mid-1990s and extending to the present. During this time, urban governance experienced a ‘neoliberal turn’ (Hackworth 2007). Management of local social problems and economic development initiatives shifted toward a market-based logic of government deregulation, public-private partnership, and grassroots entrepreneurialism (see, e.g., Maskovsky 2006; Mayer 2003). Additionally, in the early to mid-1990s, the national financial services industry underwent a major restructuring that resulted in an in-flow of investment capital to inner-city areas as well as the segmentation of the home mortgage market into prime and subprime (or high cost) sectors. Since the mid-1990s the subprime sector has expanded rapidly, increasing its overall market share of home mortgage and refinance lending as it reached out to historically underserved low- to moderate-income (LMI) and minority borrowers and neighborhoods (see, e.g., Apgar and Calder 2005; Pennington-Cross 2002). As Wyly and Hammel (2000, 182) argue, these changes combined to transform the process and spatial expression – ‘islands of decay in seas of renewal’ – of race and class segregation within the inner city.

Recent empirical research on gentrification, for example, finds that race and class statuses mediate access to mortgage capital within gentrified urban neighborhoods. For instance, in a preliminary comparative study of 23 US cities, Wyly and Hammel (2004) find that lending institutions discriminate against LMI minority borrowers of home purchase credit within affluent, predominantly white gentrified urban areas. Lenders’ discriminatory practices work to exclude LMI and minority groups from gentrified neighborhoods and in the process reproduce familiar patterns of residential segregation. Furthermore, scholars increasingly recognize that changing processes of gentrification contribute to these exclusionary effects. Since the early 1990s, gentrification has grown in magnitude and intensity, and has diffused more widely across the urban landscape (see, e.g., Hackworth 2007; Lees 2000; Wyly and Hammel 2004). Today gentrification is driven less by small-scale property speculation and the actions of pioneering homeowners than it is by the large-scale redevelopment efforts of corporate capital. Therefore, as a greater share of cities are gentrified, LMI and minority residents often face increased risks of displacement to the urban periphery (i.e., declining inner-ring suburbs; see Smith et al. 2001) or else to the ‘islands of decay’ (i.e., public housing units) that remain precariously situated within ‘seas of renewal’ (Wyly and Hammel 2000; see also Hackworth 2007; Newman and Wyly 2004; Slater 2006). Scholars would do well to continue focusing on the extent to which large-scale gentrification marks a process of re-segregation by race and class, and whether or not there are long-term implications for integration due to more interaction among different racial and ethnic groups as well as classes.
Research on subprime mortgage lending complements scholarly interest in the gentrification/segregation nexus. Generally, this research seeks to understand the relationship between greater access to high cost credit, an emergent feature of a segmented financial services industry, and LMI and minority households’ residential outcomes within urban areas. More specifically, scholars describe how subprime lending is spatially concentrated within LMI and minority neighborhoods characterized by high levels of residential segregation, older housing stocks, and significant amounts of accumulated home equity (see, e.g., Calem et al. 2004; Newman and Wyly 2004). Although as Williams et al. (2005) note, black households at all income levels are more likely than other groups of borrowers to receive loans from subprime lenders.

The theoretical and empirical significance of these descriptive findings remain somewhat limited. However, several studies have established links between the sociospatial expression of subprime lending, predatory targeting of LMI and minority borrowers and neighborhoods, and increasing rates of mortgage default and foreclosure (see, e.g., Campen 2004; Immergluck and Smith 2005; Newman and Wyly 2004; Renuart 2004; Wyly et al. 2006). For example, Immergluck and Smith (2005, 370) find a strong positive relationship between subprime lending and neighborhood foreclosure in Chicago, accounting in large part for a 544% increase from 1995 to 2002 in conventional loan foreclosures within segregated (greater than 90% minority) neighborhoods. Newman and Wyly’s (2004) multivariate results from a case study of pre-foreclosures in Newark, New Jersey, support the conclusion that subprime lenders deceptively market high cost loans to higher risk LMI and minority neighborhoods. Their findings suggest that aggressive subprime lending practices, at the very least, play an indirect causal role in the foreclosure process.

The marginalizing effects, for individuals and neighborhoods, of mortgage default and foreclosure are widely reported in the literature. The connection between subprime lending and mortgage foreclosure, therefore, appears to disproportionately disadvantage racially segregated individuals and neighborhoods, reinforcing neighborhood stratification. Future research should contend with the dynamics associated with subprime lending because high-risk borrowing often translates into high-lending rates but this process is clouded by the predatory practices of subprime lenders leading to serious problems like residential foreclosure.

**Conclusion**

In this paper, we provide an overview of the trends, causes, and consequences of racial residential segregation, and we discuss areas of research that deserve more attention. Residential segregation means that groups of residents in American metropolises live in separate neighborhoods. Clearly, this spatial phenomenon supports social stratification in the USA,
regardless of the exact measurement of residential segregation. Whether by race or class – and usually by combination – Americans of different backgrounds often live in separate worlds. The stratification of neighborhoods imposes costs on those individuals and families who are at the bottom of this spatial hierarchy, and benefits those at the top. Although this is not new or surprising, sociologists should continue to expose these dynamics in order to develop a better understanding of this spatial and social process.

**Short Biography**

Robert Adelman is Assistant Professor of Sociology at the University at Buffalo, The State University of New York. His research is at the nexus of urban sociology and racial stratification. His particular interests are in understanding the patterns, trends, and processes related to residential segregation and neighborhood inequality, the positive and negative consequences of immigration, internal migration within the USA, especially return migration to the South, and labor force differences by race, ethnicity, and nativity, among other topics. He has published articles in a variety of journals, including *American Sociological Review, Demography,* and *Social Forces.* Recently, Adelman, along with a number of colleagues, began a long-term study of residential foreclosures in Buffalo, New York. Adelman sits on the Editorial Board of *City & Community,* one of the leading urban sociology journals. Before joining the University at Buffalo, The State University of New York, Adelman taught at Georgia State University in Atlanta. He holds a PhD in Sociology from the University at Albany, The State University of New York.

Clarke Gocker is a graduate student in the Department of Sociology, University at Buffalo, The State University of New York. His broad scholarly interests lie at the intersection of law and society, race, and urban justice. He is currently developing doctoral dissertation research that examines housing issues in the Buffalo, New York, area.

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**Notes**

* Correspondence address: Department of Sociology, University at Buffalo, The State University of New York, 430 Park Hall, Buffalo, New York, 14260, USA. Email: adelman4@buffalo.edu.

1 Of course, there are many additional research avenues to consider. For example, there are growing literatures across the social sciences about the measurement of segregation (see, e.g., Reardon and O’Sullivan 2004; Wong 2005). However, for the sake of space and for substantive reasons, we focus on the areas described above.
Massey and Denton claimed that ‘During the 1970s and 1980s a word disappeared from the American vocabulary ... The word was segregation’ (1993, 1).

Neighborhoods are usually measured as census tracts that include, on average, about 4,000 persons (Adelman 2004).

Krysan's (2002) work fully explicates this debate; for a recent, special issue about residential preferences see Fossett (2006).

Bobo and Zubrinsky (1996, 904) note these factors reflect individual and institutional discrimination.

See also Gotham (2002), Kimble (2007) and, more generally, Squires' (1994) work on redlining.

For other consequences, see, e.g., Charles, Dinwiddie, and Massey (2004) and Orfield and Eaton (1996).

Residential segregation is not the only cause of concentrated poverty. Among other factors, scholars note that economic change and the out-migration of middle-class blacks helped in this process, particularly in the 1970s and 1980s (see, e.g., Jargowsky 1997; Quillian 1999; Wilson 1987).

For a discussion of Mexican immigrant women see Ellis et al. (2004).

There are other types of mobility analyses offering longitudinal and quantitative analyses (see, e.g., South and Crowder 1997).

For a more general theoretical discussion of ‘using space’ in modes of adaptation and resistance see Gotham (2003).

For a more explicit analysis of the social construction of race and gender among residentially segregated, low-income African American women see also Peake (1997).

For cities in Canada, see Hou (2006); for a review of multiethnic cities in Canada and the USA, see Fong and Shibuya (2005).

As should be no surprise by now, scholars are in general agreement that this hypothesis does not apply to African Americans nor to those persons with African heritage generally (see, e.g., Adelman et al. 2001; Crowder 1999; Freeman 1999, 2002).

For a fuller discussion of these points see Fong and Shibuya (2005); see also Iceland (2004); Iceland and Nelson (2007); Logan et al. (2004); Fischer et al. (2004).

For historical and contemporary accounts of foreclosure as a mechanism of racial transition and segregation see, e.g., Gotham (2000) and Lauria and Baxter (1999).

References


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