

Black Immigrants and Native-Born Blacks in the U.S.:

Similar or Divergent Residential Patterns?*

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Extended Abstract Submission for the 2006 Population Association of America Meetings, Los Angeles, CA, March 30-April 1, 2006

*This work was developed under a subcontract with Sabre Systems, Inc. and utilizing funds provided by the Census Bureau.

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Abstract

High levels of Black-White residential segregation have been observed in U.S. metropolitan areas. Yet little is known about the residential patterns of foreign-born Blacks and only a moderate amount about the segregation between Blacks and other minority groups. This analysis examines the settlement patterns of Black immigrants to determine the usefulness of spatial assimilation theory for explaining their residential patterns. We compute dissimilarity and isolation indices using restricted long-form data from the 2000 Census and address the following four questions. How segregated are foreign- and native-born Blacks from other race/ethnic groups? Are foreign-born Blacks segregated from native-born Blacks or do they inhabit similar places? In addition, what is the role of socioeconomic factors in explaining the residential patterns of foreign-born Blacks? Lastly, is country of origin an important factor shaping the residential patterns of Black immigrants?

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Introduction

High levels of Black-White residential segregation have been observed in U.S. metropolitan areas. Yet relatively little is known about the residential patterns of Black immigrants in the United States, as the focus of immigration research has centered on Asian and Latino immigrants. The differing racial histories and cultural backgrounds of native- and foreign-born Blacks in the U.S. suggest that they may occupy separate residential places and exhibit differing residential patterns in the United States.

The flow of Black immigrants to the United States is substantially smaller than the flow of Hispanic and Asians. However, estimates suggest that one-quarter of Black population growth during the 1980s can be explained by Black immigration (Djamba and Bean as cited in Bean and Stevens 2003). Current Population Survey estimates show that in 2000, Blacks comprised 13.0 percent of the total population and 6.3 percent of Blacks were foreign-born (Schmidley 2001). Research not distinguishing Blacks by nativity reports that the segregation of Blacks from non-Hispanic Whites declined from 1980 to 2000, yet Blacks are more segregated from Whites than any other racial group (Iceland, Weinberg, and Steinmetz 2002). Although Blacks with higher levels of socioeconomic status (SES) are less segregated from Whites than lower SES Blacks, they are still highly segregated from Whites (Iceland, Sharpe, and Steinmetz 2005). This is of concern because Whites tend to occupy safer neighborhoods with more resources, and the high level of residential segregation suggests that Blacks may be closed off from residential areas available to Whites.

Although prior research shows that Blacks are highly segregated from non-Hispanic Whites in U.S. metropolitan areas, we know little about the residential patterns of foreign-born Blacks, and only a moderate amount about the segregation between all Blacks and other minority groups. This analysis examines the settlement patterns of Black immigrants to answer the following questions:

1. How segregated are foreign- and native-born Blacks from other race groups?
2. Are foreign-born Blacks segregated from native-born Blacks or do they inhabit similar places?
3. What is the role of socioeconomic factors in explaining residential patterns of foreign-born and native-born Blacks?
4. Is country of origin an important factor shaping the residential patterns of foreign-born Blacks?

Theories of Segregation

A major theory used to explain the integration process of immigrants is spatial assimilation theory. Spatial assimilation theory posits that immigrants enter the United States and settle in ethnic enclaves. As their socioeconomic status increases, they become acculturated, their children become integrated into American institutions, and they move out of ethnic enclaves and into surrounding areas occupied by natives. Spatial assimilation theory was formulated in the context of European immigration to the U.S. Researchers have suggested that spatial assimilation theory does not adequately describe the residential patterns of African Americans, and by extension, Black immigrants. Whereas spatial assimilation theory stresses the importance of the nativity and the length of time in the United States, place stratification

theory argues that racial discrimination is the dominant feature shaping the residential patterns of minority groups. Spatial assimilation and place stratification theory are the main theoretical perspectives informing this analysis.

Spatial Assimilation Theory

Spatial assimilation theory posits that when immigrants enter the U.S. they exhibit preferences for communal life with fellow co-ethnics and settle in ethnic enclaves. As they adopt characteristics of the core culture and become structurally assimilated into core institutions, they move out of ethnic enclaves and into surrounding areas occupied by the majority group, which is generally defined as non-Hispanic Whites. The overarching view of assimilation theory is that spatial distance is reflective of social distance (Park, Burgess, and McKenzie 1925).

Although extensively criticized, spatial assimilation theory is one of the dominant theoretical frameworks guiding immigration research on residential patterns. This analysis examines the extent to which spatial assimilation theory describes the residential patterns of Blacks. Spatial assimilation theory emphasizes the importance of nativity and socioeconomic status. If Black immigrants follow the outline prescribed by spatial assimilation theory, foreign-born Blacks should be more segregated from Whites than native-born Blacks because of their lower levels of acculturation and presumably lower levels of socioeconomic status. The latter is questionable however, as it has been found that Africans and Afro-Caribbeans tend to have higher levels of education and household income, and lower levels of unemployment and impoverishment in comparison to African Americans (Logan and Deanne 2003).

Spatial assimilation theory focuses on integration into the “dominant” group and does not directly address residential segregation between minority groups. If the process of integration begins with residence in ethnic enclaves and immigrants experience structural and cultural assimilation to the extent that their children become fully assimilated into “mainstream society” we should see lower levels of segregation between native-born groups than between foreign-born Blacks and native born minority groups. For example, the level of segregation between native Blacks and native Hispanics should be less than the level of segregation between Black immigrants and native Hispanics.

Research has found some support for spatial assimilation theory among Hispanics and Asians but only limited support among Blacks. Freeman (2002) used data from the 1990 Census to examine the residential patterns of Black immigrants in New York and Miami. The analysis found mixed support for the spatial assimilation model. As predicted by spatial assimilation theory, Black immigrants settled in enclaves and Black immigrants fluent in English were less segregated from Whites than were less fluent Black immigrants. However, more recent Black immigrants did not have lower levels of Black-White segregation than earlier arrivals. Freeman (2002) did find lower levels of segregation between foreign- and native-born Blacks than between Blacks by nativity and Whites, suggesting that race is an important factor in the residential patterns of Black immigrants in New York and Miami.

Freeman’s (2002) analysis was limited by the data available in Summary Tape File 4A. As noted by Freeman, segregation indices were not tabulated separately by socioeconomic status, most notably education, and more recent data from the 2000 Census is available. This analysis will use restricted long-form data to extend Freeman’s work by calculating segregation scores by SES. Additionally, we will use data from the 2000 Census to calculate indices for a wider range

of metropolitan areas. Preliminary analysis suggests that approximately 133 Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs) and Primary Metropolitan Statistical Areas (PMSAs) contain enough foreign-born Blacks in 2000 to calculate reliable estimates of residential segregation.

Place Stratification Theory

Place stratification theory focuses on the role that prejudice and discrimination play in restricting residential options for minority groups. It is predicated on the view that the host group differentiates people into racial groups based on perceived phenotypic or physiognomic similarity. The experiences of racial and ethnic groups depend on their place within this racial and ethnic hierarchy. Residential segregation research on metropolitan areas finds that Blacks and African Americans are most highly segregated from Whites, followed by Hispanics, Asians and Pacific Islanders, and American Indians and Alaskan Natives (Iceland et al. 2002) suggesting a possible racial hierarchy with Blacks and African Americans placed at the bottom.

Research on Blacks in the United States has found support for place stratification theory. Blacks have high levels of segregation and tend to live in less desirable neighborhoods that have higher rates of poverty and crime (Massey, Condran, and Denton 1987). Charles (2003) notes that on average, Blacks live in neighborhoods that are 15 to 20 percent less affluent than similar groups. Middle-class Blacks are more likely to live in lower status neighborhoods than similar middle-class Whites, suggesting that race is important in shaping their residential location (Alba, Logan, and Stults 2000).

This analysis will not directly examine place stratification theory. However, if racial prejudice and discrimination are the overriding factors shaping residential patterns we should see low levels of segregation between foreign- and native-born Blacks and similar levels of

segregation between foreign-born Blacks and other racial groups as we find between native-born Blacks and other racial groups.

Data and Methods

Data from the 2000 Census long-form restricted files will be used to examine the residential patterns of Black immigrants in the United States. Individuals living in institutionalized group quarters or residing outside a metropolitan area are excluded from the analysis. The terms "immigrant" and "foreign-born" are used interchangeably. Both terms refer to residents in the United States, legally or illegally, who were not U.S. citizens at birth. Dissimilarity and isolation indices will be computed using tract-level information in all metropolitan areas in the United States that contain at least 1,000 racial/ethnic group members.

The majority of immigrants live in metropolitan areas. Current Population Survey estimates indicate that 94.9 percent of the foreign-born and 79.3 percent of the native born population resided in metropolitan areas (Schmidley 2001). The first part of the analysis examines the segregation of foreign- and native-born Blacks from other race groups. Dissimilarity and Isolation scores will be calculated for foreign- and native-born non-Hispanic Blacks respectively in reference to native-born non-Hispanic Whites, non-Black Hispanics, Black Hispanics, and Asians/Pacific Islanders. We expect to find differences in levels of segregation between foreign- and native-born Blacks and other native-born racial/ethnic groups. In line with spatial assimilation theory, foreign-born Blacks should be more segregated from these groups than native-born Blacks. However, it is likely that nativity is not the only important factor shaping the residential patterns of Black immigrants. If race is an important factor, as is overwhelmingly found in the literature on residential segregation, the difference in levels of

segregation between foreign- and native-born Blacks may be smaller than suggested by spatial assimilation theory.

The second portion of the analysis examines the segregation between foreign-born and native-born Blacks to determine whether nativity is important in shaping the residential patterns of Blacks in the United States. A household may contain both foreign-born and native-born Blacks, especially if the householder is foreign-born and has native-born children.

Approximately one in six children in the United States live with a foreign-born householder and 77.7 percent of those children are native-born (Schmidley 2001). The inclusion of all individuals in the calculation of an index of segregation between foreign-born Blacks and native-born Blacks would therefore be biased because of the presence of native-born children in households headed by foreign-born individuals. Thus, the calculation of the dissimilarity index between foreign-born and native-born Blacks is restricted to householders. If nativity and possible cultural/ethnic differences are important, we should find moderate to high levels of segregation between Black immigrants and native Blacks. If, as suggested by place stratification theory, race-based prejudice and discrimination is the dominant factor shaping residential patterns, native- and foreign-born Blacks should share neighborhoods.

Thirdly, indices will be computed by characteristics such as education, income, English language fluency, and time in the U.S. An examination of the role of spatial assimilation theory must take socioeconomic differences between groups into account. Research suggests that foreign-born Blacks may be more affluent than native-born Blacks. Net of socioeconomic differences, spatial assimilation posits that we should see the largest levels of segregation between foreign-born Blacks and native-born racial/ethnic groups, but little variation between native-born groups. If we find high levels of segregation even among individuals with similar

characteristics, however, it is likely that race or residential preference are playing an important role in determining residential location.

Lastly, indices will be calculated for foreign-born Blacks by country or region of origin where sufficient sample sizes allow. This will allow us to examine the role of ethnic differences in residential patterns. Foreign-born Blacks are a heterogeneous group. Therefore, the settlement patterns of immigrants may differ based on their country of origin.

Previous work examining the residential patterns of Black immigrants has been limited by data availability. This analysis will contribute to existing work by utilizing access to restricted Census data and computing dissimilarity and isolation indices by nativity and socioeconomic characteristics of Blacks in the U.S. The use of multiple comparison groups will also add to our understanding of the spatial distribution of race/ethnic groups in U.S. metropolitan areas.

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