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Are there neighborhood effects on young adult neighborhood attainment? Evidence from mixed-logit models

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ABSTRACT

Studies of racial residential attainment show an intergenerational transmission of racial contexts from youth to adulthood, but it is unclear why this transmission is so robust. It is possible that experiences in racial contexts during youth have lasting effects on neighborhood selection in adulthood, but evidence for this claim has come from research using statistical methods that suffer from problems of ecological dependence and conflation of other neighborhood characteristics. In this study, we address these limitations using mixed-logit models, a form of discrete choice analyses, allowing us to control for differences across metropolitan areas and for multiple characteristics of neighborhoods that may affect the selection of destination neighborhoods. Data for the analyses come from the National Educational Longitudinal Study, the 1990 and 2000 Censuses, and other sources. We find that most of the intergenerational process results from young adults moving to neighborhoods short distances from their origin ones, but the models also suggest a contextual effect of youth experiences in racial compositions on neighborhood selection. The latter finding indicates that policies promoting integration among youth can have long-lasting effects on residential attainment.

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The Fair Housing Act of 1968 outlawed racial discrimination in housing markets, but since 1970, the segregation of whites from African Americans has declined only modestly and the segregation of whites from Latinos has increased (Charles, 2003; Frey, 2012). This racial segregation has pernicious effects on African Americans and Latinos because it concentrates poverty in their neighborhoods and reduces their life chances (Massey and Denton, 1993). Understanding the persistence of racial residential segregation may help identify policies that can lead to greater integration.

Sociologists attempting to understand the persistence of residential segregation rely heavily on residential attainment models. In these models, researchers use a characteristic of movers' destination neighborhoods as a dependent variable (such as percent white) in a regression model to answer questions about who tends to move to desirable or undesirable neighborhoods. This research shows that whites move to much "whiter" neighborhoods than those of African Americans and Latinos and that these racial differences cannot be completely explained by differences in income, wealth, education, or English fluency (e.g., Alba and Logan, 1993; Charles, 2003; Crowder et al., 2012; Crowder et al., 2006; South et al., 2005). Researchers suggest that two factors usually unobserved in these studies, preferences for neighborhood compositions and

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racial discrimination in housing markets, may also contribute to racial differences in residential attainment (See Charles, 2003 for a review).

We contribute to this literature in two ways. First, we investigate how individuals' histories may also contribute to aggregate levels of residential segregation. We focus on these histories because research has shown that individuals experience similar racial and social class contexts in their neighborhoods across generations. Goldsmith (2010) estimates an intergenerational elasticity coefficient of 0.74 between the percent white in people's neighborhoods during the high school years and at age 26 in a sample of young adults. Similarly, Sharkey (2008) estimates one of 0.64 for income contexts between youth and adulthood with a sample containing a larger age range.

In particular, we examine whether or not part of the intergenerational continuity of racial context results from a neighborhood effect from the racial compositions experienced in adolescence. According to perpetuation theory, the experiences that youth have in racial compositions in places like neighborhoods and schools lead them towards neighborhoods (and other institutions) with similar racial compositions in adulthood (Braddock, 1980; Braddock and McPartland, 1989; Stearns, 2010; Goldsmith, 2016; Gamoran et al., 2016). If experiences in racial compositions have effects as perpetuation theory predicts, then it may be possible to reduce residential segregation by pursuing policies that increase racial integration among youth in their schools and neighborhoods. It may also be that past efforts to desegregate these institutions have had long-term effects on the individuals that were integrated. In addition, it suggests that racial segregation is particularly damaging for youth, making it more difficult for them to move into integrated neighborhoods in adulthood.

Second, we contribute by replacing the often used residential attainment models with a form of discrete choice analyses (DCA) called mixed-logit models (Train, 2003). As we explain below, residential attainment models may overestimate the continuity of racial contexts. Mixed-logit models are better suited for the analyses because they can completely account for ecological differences across metropolitan areas and for numerous characteristics of destination neighborhoods that movers may consider (Bruch and Mare, 2012; Quillian, 2015). We use data on large samples of Latinos, African Americans, and whites from the National Educational Longitudinal Survey (NELS), which follow individuals from 8th grade to about age 26. Studying residential mobility during these ages is ideal because nearly all people move at least once when they transition from their parental home to independent, adult residence (Schachter, 2001). We link the NELS to information about neighborhoods in the 1990 and 2000 Censuses and other data sets. With these data, the mixed-logit models allow us to use multiple individual and neighborhood characteristics to estimate the probability of individuals moving to each of the neighborhoods in their metropolitan area.

1. Theoretical explanations

Conceptually, residential segregation results from two processes. The first includes macrolevel, historical, and current factors related to urban planning that produce a metropolitan area's housing market. The second includes factors affecting microlevel decision makers who search for housing within a set of opportunities and constraints in the existing housing market. In our study, we focus our attention on the second, or microlevel set of mechanisms. We begin by discussing alternative explanations for the intergenerational transmission of racial context (distance, spatial assimilation, preferences, and discrimination) and then turn to perpetuation theory.

Distance matters because many residential moves cover short distances. The median distance moved for homebuyers is only 12 miles (National Association of Realtors, 2011). Sharkey (2008, 2013) contends that short distance moves are common because of an 'inheritance of place' where many neighborhood residents have attachments to the people and places where they grew up. These include emotional or sentimental bonds to physical spaces (Gieryn, 2000). For example, when young people engage in culturally shared processes that require numerous personal interactions (such as schooling), they assign an emotional meaning to the buildings and neighborhoods where they took place, thus increasing their attachment to a geographical space (Cuba and Hummorn, 1993). Local social capital is also reduced with long-distance moves (Kan, 2007). Distance moved relates to the intergenerational inheritance of context because neighborhoods with the same racial composition are usually clustered together in metropolitan areas. When racially similar neighborhoods are near each other and many moves cover short distances, it is likely that many people will be moving to and from similar neighborhoods (Shuttleworth et al., 2014).

To understand how distance and the intergenerational transmission of neighborhood contexts are related, researchers have compared this transmission for people who live short and long distances from where they grew up. They do this by estimating correlation coefficients or slopes in regression models among people who do and do not live within their original neighborhood or other spatial unit. They find that this transmission is very high among those nearby and weaker but still often present among those far away (Britton and Goldsmith, 2013; Goldsmith, 2016; Sharkey, 2008).

Researchers have also investigated whether or not spatial assimilation produces the intergenerational transmission of neighborhood racial compositions. The spatial assimilation model (Alba and Logan, 1993; South et al., 2005) maintains that individuals with more income and education are more likely than their less privileged counterparts to move to predominantly-white neighborhoods, which contain more amenities and are of higher quality. The spatial assimilation model also contends that acculturation to Anglo culture, especially by learning English, promotes mobility into predominantly white neighborhoods. Spatial assimilation may account for the intergenerational transmission of racial context because the socioeconomic status and cultural background of young adults will correlate with that of their parents, increasing the chances that young adults live in similar neighborhood contexts in youth and adulthood. However, research suggests that little of the

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