

Re-Thinking Our Understanding of Racial/Ethnic Spatial Patterning in US Cities:
Columbus Ohio MSA, 1990-2000

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The vast differences between the US city of today, compared to that of a quarter and half century ago, call for a **rethinking** of frameworks that are generally considered to be explanations of clustering/segregation along racial/ethnic lines -- **Assimilation, Stratification, and Resurgent Ethnicity**.

In carrying out this exercise, we empirically consider a **single mid-sized MSA**, Columbus Ohio, an approach which in itself should yield rich insights. More commonly, residential patterning and change therein are examined by cross-MSA analyses where observations are urban areas, the dependent variable is a measure of clustering/segregation, and independent variables pertain to aspects of the conjectured conceptual framework or process. The lack of a direct link to segregation/clustering, as it occurs at ground level, is obvious. Hence, the three major constructs are sensible, but the link between hypothesis and evidence tends towards the circumstantial, even though persuasive as social science. Further, given that each construct is rooted in a historical moment, albeit modified subsequently, it is likely that today's reality is a combination of the three and, as posited here, a fourth distinct form that has yet to be fully articulated.

To get a different view of clustering/segregation dynamics, then, this research examines a single urban area, Columbus Ohio MSA, beginning with local measures of segregation/clustering such as Local Moran's I and Location Quotients applied to US Census block groups for 1990 and 2000. This enables a direct, ground level view of segregation/clustering and its change through time. Considering the three processes, and a fourth tentatively called **Market-Led Pluralism**, involves cartographic analysis, regression with selected independent variables for 1990 and 2000 at the block group level (both highly informed by considerable knowledge of Columbus), information on "market makers" and neighborhood characteristics from secondary (e.g., web) sources, and qualitative case studies that draw on an in-depth consideration of selected neighborhoods, individuals in those neighborhoods, and institutional entities such as developers, real estate agents, and community leaders or planners. An exemplar for this approach is Gotham's (2002) study of Kansas City in terms of stratification processes (though not identified as such), which provided rich insight into its mechanisms.

This synopsis continues by first describing the assimilation, stratification, and resurgent ethnicity frameworks. We then step back from these and propose a fourth, Market-Led Pluralism, framework. Attention then turns to the results of empirical research undertaken thus far, with more to follow.

The Three Frameworks

Assimilation, closely associated with the melting pot ideal (Alba 2000), stems from the urban ecology school of the 1920s. Immigrants, having adapted to US society, then move into established neighborhoods that generally are spatially more distant from the CBD. In the context of today, the idea is similar in that racial/ethnic minorities relocate to higher status areas and in closer proximity to the majority Caucasian population, but the melting pot ideal is considerably less central. In this regard, **structural assimilation**, measured by socio-economic characteristics such as income and education, is differentiated from **cultural assimilation**, measured by indicators such as English language ability and length of residence in the US (for immigrants) (Gordon 1964; Massey 1985). Empirical analyses include Alba and Logan (1993), Hwang and Murdock (1998), and Massey and Denton (1985).

Stratification holds that structural forces associated with housing discrimination, racial stereotyping, and prejudicial preferences lead to segmented housing markets and a stratification of neighborhoods within urban areas (Farley and Frey 1994; Logan and Molotch 1987; Yinger 1995). Disadvantaged groups in terms of race/ethnicity are relegated to particular places, and (upward) spatial mobility to other locations is impeded. Place stratification theory hypothesizes that the resulting racial/ethnic location patterns persist, even though judicial, legislative, and societal changes in the latter half of the twentieth century have moved current practices far afield from earlier ones -- a view consistent with the occurrence of inertia effects on the socio-economic landscape (Brown, Lee, Lobao, and Chung 2004). Empirical analyses in addition to Gotham (2002) include Digemans (1979), Galster (1990), and Myers and Chan (1995).

Resurgent Ethnicity addresses why segregation persists, even after structural forces associated with housing discrimination, racial stereotyping, and prejudicial preferences have been removed or ameliorated. This framework emphasizes racial/ethnic preference in residential choice, sometimes termed “in-group attraction”, but also recognizes there may be racial/ethnic differences in the degree of in-group attraction. A statement of the resurgent ethnicity perspective is provided by Logan, Alba, and Zhang (2002) in their study of Asian and Hispanic immigrants who reside in more affluent areas of New York and Los Angeles, often without cultural assimilation such as language skills.¹ They argue that these racial/ethnic settlements could be better understood as “ethnic communities” driven by preference, rather than as “immigrant enclaves” driven by economic and cultural constraints, so that traditional immigrant enclaves may not play a role as the first shelter for immigrants. The broader hypothesis is that in-group attraction generates segregation or re-segregation, perhaps at an increasing pace -- even though residential integration (Assimilation) is socio-economically feasible and structural forces associated with housing discrimination (Stratification) have abated. This occurrence is possible because the cultural and economic aspects of immigration have become **decoupled**.

In weighing the significance of resurgent ethnicity, it needs to be recognized that studies have given attention only to areas that are high in multi-ethnicity and major immigrant gateways, such as New York and Los Angeles. What would be found for MSAs that are mid-size (e.g., 1.5 to 5.0 million population)? Assimilation and stratification processes are seen as wide spread; is this also true of resurgent ethnicity?

Research also needs to recognize that the appearance of resurgent ethnicity comes about in (at least) three ways. The first is a **spillover effect** as the result of invasion-succession when traditional enclaves and their neighbors are insufficient to hold newcomers. An example is Mexicans in Los Angeles in 1990 (Allen and Turner 1996a: 153) and Puerto Ricans (Massey 1985). A second source of resurgent ethnicity patterning is **chain migration** wherein new immigrants have ties with residentially assimilated relatives or friends, and settle near them. The third process pertains to immigrants with **high socio-economic status**, as depicted above and by Logan, Alba, and Zhang (2002). Japanese nationals who work for Japanese corporations, for example, settle directly in more affluent suburbs (Allen and Turner 1996a: 152); other examples include Chinese and Koreans in Los Angeles (Allen and Turner 1996b). Finally, while the preceding scenarios are sketched in terms of immigrants, the resurgent ethnicity hypothesis applies as well, if not more poignantly, to **native-borns** residing in **traditional racial/ethnic enclaves**, who experience an increase in SES, and choose either to remain in the traditional enclave or to move to another racial/ethnic enclave that is commensurate with their SES.

¹ Massey (1985) uses the term “resurgent ethnicity”, but in a considerably more limited manner.

For both immigrants and native-borns, then, resurgent ethnicity implies two types of racial/ethnic neighborhood -- one that is disadvantaged, and one that is better endowed but spatially and socially separate from comparable neighborhoods -- thus embellishing spatial-social polarization. Traditional enclaves expand, absorbing lower SES, less culturally assimilated immigrants and native-borns. Simultaneously, new racial/ethnic neighborhoods emerge in relatively advantaged areas of the city, providing shelter to entrepreneurs professionals, and the like. *Chain migration* is common to both types of concentration, *spillover effects* apply more to traditional racial/ethnic enclaves, and *socio-economic status* effects to resurgent ethnicity neighborhoods.

Stepping Away and Adjusting our Lenses

A different perspective on viewing residential clustering/segregation in US cities is proposed here, **market-led pluralism**. Among the three longer-standing frameworks, the investigators' experience suggests that resurgent ethnicity is the most applicable for contemporary urban America. But having noted this, the ground-level reality (Brown 1999) of today's mid-sized urban areas (e.g., Columbus Ohio) also suggests that in-group attraction (central to Resurgent Ethnicity) is not pervasively relevant; that discriminatory housing practices (central to Stratification) are illegal, of reduced profitability, and thus, greatly attenuated in their impact; and that heterogeneous neighborhoods *per se* (central to Assimilation) are not necessarily attractive, and might in fact be a marginal or irrelevant criteria in housing choice (Portes 1995). Further, there are inertia effects, as posited by Stratification, but the link is misleading if explicit stratification processes are not a strong element of contemporary residential sorting. Similar reasoning applies to structural assimilation. In both situations that the pattern is evident does not imply that the linked process is dominant, or that its mechanisms are central in bringing about residential clustering/segregation.

Instead, the current reality features "market makers" (e.g., developers) who continually unveil new urban spaces with culturally open communities; information that is both pervasive and fluid (e.g., via the web, e-mail, cell phone); a consumption equation dominated by class-type elements such as affordability and amenities in housing and neighborhood; and well-working market mechanisms.²

Arguably, the current situation could be seen as a variant of resurgent ethnicity. But for clarity and a clean break conceptually, we propose a fourth, co-dominant **Market-led Pluralism** perspective -- reflecting our belief that values and practices central to assimilation and stratification are simply not functional to the degree necessary for those frameworks to be true drivers of residential arrangements today. Market-led pluralism focuses largely on **class**, not culture, as a driving force, and sees the morphology of housing in terms of **structural forces** guided by **market** considerations and implemented by market makers.

² The role of market makers is particularly interesting. Do developers, for example, consciously promote neighborhood diversity?? Do developers have differing agendas in regard to diversity that varies from situation to situation, neighborhood to neighborhood?? To what degree do developer decisions reflect entitlement programs, especially as a source of profit, and visa versa?? Profit mechanisms related to discriminatory housing practices are well known (e.g., Galster 1990); what current-day mechanisms play, or draw, on race/ethnicity issues? To what degree are developer decisions pushed by market saturation among Caucasians? Or is the role of developers benign such that neighborhoods are more the result of their location, surroundings, market forces, and cultural expectations?? Coincidentally, the prime investigator's very early work (e.g. Brown and Longbrake 1970) considered similar questions.

Moving to a more general frame of reference, class and culture (race/ethnicity), manifest through both structure and agency effects, permeate the assimilation, stratification, and resurgent ethnicity frameworks (Charles 2003). Stratification forces are largely structural -- e.g., housing markets, institutional behavior, and societal values regarding others -- and culture driven. Similar forces operate in Assimilation situations, but arguably, because structural artifacts were much less at the fore, this framework appears to be one of agency or individual choice within a constraint set (Brown 1981), where both class and culture play a central role. Resurgent Ethnicity emphasizes individual choice at the conjunction of both class and culture. Market-Led Pluralism focuses largely on class, not culture, but sees the morphology of housing in terms of structural forces driven by market considerations and market makers.⁴

Empirical Findings Thus Far

The imminent task in any case is to move forward towards elaborating Assimilation, Stratification, Resurgent Ethnicity, and Market-led Pluralism with the objective of understanding how they work together to form the mosaic of a contemporary urban area. Studies typically consider one such framework, not all simultaneously; we advocate inclusivity. Studies also tend to focus on one racial/ethnic group; we think comparison may be more advantageous at this time. The role of each perspective is expected to vary within a metropolitan area depending on the racial/ethnic group, neighborhood character, and the like, assuming the MSA is sufficiently large. This is a mixed-method endeavor ideally, as indicated by Gotham (2002), but however carried out, most important is to better understand the complementarities of these frameworks and their functioning in contemporary urban areas.

This goal will be facilitated by examining a single MSA, Columbus Ohio. Secondary data is employed to identify patterns and relationships consistent with the four frameworks; Logan, Alba, and Zhang (2002) provide a guide in their effort to distinguish resurgent ethnicity in Los Angeles and New York. We go beyond this, however, with case studies that draw on in-depth, on the ground views of selected neighborhoods, individuals in those neighborhoods, and institutional entities such as developers, real estate agents, and community leaders or planners. The goal is to better understand, and be able to articulate, housing market mechanisms, neighborhood functionings, and personal preferences as they pertain to assimilation, stratification, resurgent ethnicity, and market-led pluralism; and to more completely articulate the market-led pluralism framework.

Research thus far has examined residential patterning and its change for the 1990-2000 period for African Americans, Asians, Hispanics, and the majority Caucasians using Local Moran's I (LM-I) and Location Quotient (LQ) measures. For all groups, we find **clusters** that are **highly dispersed** throughout the MSA, and a surprising amount of **overlap** in clusters, indicating a noteworthy degree of neighborhood **heterogeneity**. There also is a great deal of change between 1990 and 2000 such that **fluidity** is a very apt descriptor of the ongoing accretion onto existing 1990 clusters and new cluster establishment. Finer grain analyses to detect newly forming concentrations, those falling below the LM-I

⁴ Said another way, Assimilation emphasizes socio-economic status as a force that reduces clustering-segregation via individual choice. Stratification sees prejudice and discrimination as a force that maintains clustering/segregation, largely through structural constraints -- a force that may carry into the future through inertia, even after discriminatory practices have abated. Under Resurgent Ethnicity personal preference leads to segregation even though SES is high and structural constraints are largely absent. Market-Led Pluralism emphasizes openness of the market wherein profit and community drive the market makers and housing amenities within the constraints of affordability drive residential choice.

and LQ radar, also confirm the findings of dispersal throughout the MSA, great fluidity, and neighborhood heterogeneity in terms of both a minority group with Caucasians, but also the local presence of more than one minority group -- paralleling elements of the *heterolocalism* alternative proposed by Zelinsky and Lee (1998). Based on these cartographic analyses, support for the Assimilation and Stratification frameworks is weak; support for Resurgent Ethnicity and Market-Led Pluralization is very strong; and a distinct difference between Resurgent Ethnicity and Market-Led Pluralism is apparent.