

Race, Adolescent Exposure to Segregation, and Adulthood Residential Mobility into and out of Lower-Poverty Neighborhoods

Abstract: Little research has sought to understand the association between adolescent exposure to segregation and Black-White differences in mobility into and out of neighborhoods of greater economic resources in adulthood. Prior research has typically adopted a narrow conception of neighborhood economic resources, specifying neighborhoods with poverty rates below 20% as non-poor vis-à-vis poor neighborhoods that possess poverty rates of 20% or more. Research using this conception has shown that Blacks are more likely to reside in poor neighborhoods than Whites. However, neglecting segregation's association with mobility into more economically-advantaged communities misses how segregation structures exposure to opportunity for Blacks and Whites. We assess this theme using data from the Panel Study of Income Dynamics linked to population censuses. We demonstrate that adolescent segregation, measured aspatially with the dissimilarity index and spatially with the index of spatial proximity, decreases Blacks' probability of moving to lower-poverty neighborhoods—neighborhoods that we define as having poverty rates of less than 10%—and raises their chances of migrating into higher-poverty neighborhoods in adulthood—neighborhoods with poverty rates greater than or equal to 10%. Whites' mobility patterns suggest that adolescent segregation increases their probability of moving into and out of lower-poverty neighborhoods as adults. Our findings provide insight into the mechanisms that perpetuate Black-White stratification, while pointing to potential policy changes to ameliorate racial differences in exposure to areas of greater economic advantage as well as improving the equitability of investment in higher-poverty communities.