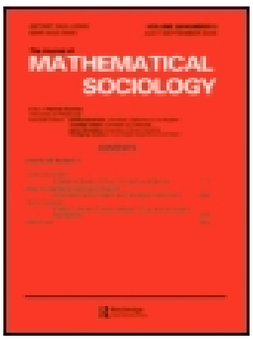

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Shelling Redux: How Sociology Fails to Make Progress in Building and Empirically Testing Complex Causal Models Regarding Race[1] and Residence

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For as long as I can remember, sociology as a discipline has intermittently struggled to answer the question of why the U.S. remains such a highly racially and ethically segregated country. There have been attempts, typically timed to the release of census information, to understand what causes such persistent separation, with notable analyses done by Douglas Massey, Reynolds Farley, and economists such as George Galster.

Mark Fossett has written an interesting, even provocative paper on the issue of what causes these racial disparities in the housing markets of American cities. His vote is for the primacy of preferences. His paper presses the thesis that simulations of preferences can theoretically create a racially segregated world and that we should therefore care more than we do about their causal significance. He tests for the relevance of preferences by using a simulation model (SimSeg) that he has worked on for a decade to show the ways in which just-preferences might predict a segregated world absent other causal influences, most particularly discrimination. This might appear as an intellectual exercise in the genre of work done 30 years ago by Thomas Schelling, except for the analytic critique of other alternative views that he argues have seriously misled us.

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[1]These comments are emerge from several decades of work with segregation, discrimination, fair housing enforcement, and racial preference data as an academic researcher and as manager of research on fair housing issues at the research office of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

This nearly 90-page paper can then be viewed as two distinct if overlapping stories focused on the question of the role of preferences in causing residential racial and ethnic segregation. The first section of the paper, which includes the first 37 pages of text, provides an analysis of his intellectual objective and lengthy critiques of other social scientists who dispute the relevance of a pure preference approach to understanding what continues to cause racial separation. At the conclusion of this critique, he poses the simulation question he aims to test (pp. 35–36): "Can ethnic preferences and social distance dynamics create and sustain significant levels of ethic segregation in a theoretical system where discrimination is absent?"

The second section of the paper, which begins on p. 38, is focused on the author's efforts to create a more "ambitious and capable" simulation model, SimSeg, which simulates the role of ethnic preferences in the selection of residential housing. In 11 pages of text, 24 pages of accompanying colored maps, graphs, and tables, as well as two appendix pages that include a glossary of terms and a flowchart he describes the results of nine different "experimental" simulation runs.[2] While his glossary references housing discrimination, he tests only for the role and importance of preferences/social distance. He defends this election by arguing (p. 4) that "definitive analyses providing quantitative assessments of the relative contributions of discrimination, social distance and preference dynamics, and other factors to residential segregation are difficult to conduct."

In the next sections I focus on the specifics of the Fossett paper, offer comments on recent evidence about the continuing relevance of housing discrimination, and conclude with thoughts about a different role for sociological analysis in this arena.

HIS CASE FOR PREFERENCES

Mark Fossett (MF) has a mission of installing preferences and values at the center of the analysis of racial separation. He follows in the lineage of Thomas Schelling, WAV Clark, the Thernstroms and others who stress the critical utility of preferences in estimating how segregated a world we will live in, a world in which those preferences—virtually single handedly—help us see into our future if not our past. We are creatures, he tells us, of preferences as they powerfully shape the segregated character of our cities and our lives. He argues moreover that sociology has erred in

[2]His definition of discrimination fails to include differential treatment of minority home seekers that appears far more frequently in national audits than exclusion, and differs importantly from redlining and steering that he mentions.

that "social distance and preferences dynamics are not generally seen as playing an important role in ethnic segregation in American cities." (p. 8). They get insufficient respect from scholars such as Douglas Massey and John Yinger, whose work he spends a good bit of time critiquing.

His core simulation goal is therefore to show us that "Ethnic preferences can, under certain theoretically interesting conditions . . . produce high levels of ethnic segregation in the absence of housing discrimination." He tells us on p. 3, ". . . my primary interest in this paper is with the impact that social distance dynamics may have *in the absence of discrimination* . . ." (emphasis in the original). Despite the lack of empirical or simulation evidence on discrimination in his paper, MF argues quite forcefully in the first part of the paper that preferences have the greater impact in affecting segregation patterns (p. 21). "Historical discrimination becomes a distal cause, present day preferences are the proximate cause."

He grounds this intellectual election in ". . . two traditions of what he terms segregation theory—the urban ecological "social distance" tradition in sociology and the "individual preferences" tradition in economics." (p. 1) The reader is then rooted, singularly, in sets of theoretical assumptions that reinforce the belief that preferences and tastes are the more effective and desirable model to test.

We are, in MF's paper, given relatively little sense of the nearly 20-year-old debate on this same set of issues by Galster and Clark. In this analytic debate Clark, like MF, argued that discrimination is a thing from the past and preferences are a better guide to appreciating why there is so little stable integration and so much segregation. Galster carefully refuted the conceptual and empirical errors in Clark's analysis (Galster, 1988, 1989). MF's paper does not appear either a major analytic or methodological advance upon that debate.

Minority Preferences as Key

Central to his preference argument is the assertion that minority housing preferences are not integration promoting. MF states, "Minority preferences regarding neighborhood ethnic mix are unambiguously segregation promoting" (pp. 11–12) and can only be seen as integration promoting through "careless theorizing." He joins a number of conservative analysts who, largely without any new empirical research, assert that persistent segregation can best be blamed "on the strongly held preferences of African Americans."

While on this subject, MF devotes roughly 11 pages to critiquing Krysan and Farley's (2002) empirical research. He concludes (p. 27) that

they "overestimate the role that blacks' concerns about discrimination and white hostility play in shaping blacks' segregation-promoting residential preferences, and they underestimate the segregation-promoting implications of blacks' ethnic preferences that are unrelated to concerns about hostility and discrimination." His review of Maria Krysan and Reynolds Farley work introduces no new disconfirming data, only the author's reasons for not agreeing with them.

It is important to note that Krysan and Farley (2002) indicate agreement with conservative commentators such as the Thernstroms that preferences matter but add the critical clarification, and difference from MF, that it is heavily blacks fears "that if they are among many whites, whites will be hostile, blame them for any troubles that arise, and treat them as unwelcome intruders" (Krysan & Farley, 2002: 970).[3] If there is a preference fulcrum, it is that whites will not move into and stay with larger numbers of minorities. To the extent they matter, whites' preferences are the primary segregation producing agent if only because they have more latitude to exercise their choices and to make use of exclusionary land use policies to reinforce those decisions (Dreier, Mollenkopf, & Swanstrom, 2001). There is then the sense that MF has defined the problem argumentatively.

THE PRESENCE OF DISCRIMINATION

While MF recognizes that "...single factor explanations are likely simplistic..." he has offered us his own. His core empirical supposition, rooted in the notion that segregation has a plethora of overlapping causes, is that "reductions in housing discrimination may not necessarily lead to large declines in ethnic segregation in the short run."[4] There may be discrimination or not, but its decline will not affect levels of racial separation because of the "sufficient" power of preferences.[5] Somehow preferences and discrimination have become analytically unhinged in his overdetermined world.

[3]For lower income black populations, research on housing vouchers and public housing, including the Gautreaux and MTO programs, clearly indicate that many black families when offered the opportunity will elect to move away from isolated, ghetto like conditions. Galster (1986: 133) also reminds us: "The demographic and economic characteristics of the black population itself may also be endogenous if black migration is responsive to variations in discrimination and economic inequality."

[4]He argues that segregation has become "overdetermined"; in which segregation "may be sustained by multiple sufficient causes..."

[5]His argument is directly counter to Galster's (1991) analysis that focused on the consequences of the elimination of housing market discrimination. It shows sizeable declines in segregation.

However, studies of segregation and discrimination released in 2002 reveal that we have had modest declines in discrimination and in black segregation (Turner et al., 2002; Iceland et al., 2002). If MF were correct, the declines in segregation measured from 1990–2000 would not have occurred because preferences would have been so significantly and substitutively segregative. While we do not know if one thing caused the other, it is safe to argue that black preferences for segregation, if they existed and mattered, have not lead to intransigently persistent segregation.

MF's reasoning about the role of housing discrimination is also illustrated by those whose works he cites to argue that discrimination has a marginal role in fostering segregation. He, for example, quotes Orlando Patterson (p. 20) to the effect that "discrimination does not necessarily prevent minority families that desire to live in an integrated neighborhood from doing so." It may be correct to assume that there are exceptions to almost every sociological rule, but to use a few exceptions known only to Patterson to conclude that discriminatory barriers have been eliminated, and are only a distant cause of segregation, takes us considerably beyond where the evidence from the latest national audit studies leave us (Turner et al., 2002). MF, again paraphrasing Patterson, feels comfortable concluding that "minority families who wish to do so usually are able to move to "a" predominantly European-American neighborhood. . ." In this view, anyone can make it in America if only they want to badly enough.

I might wish that this were true, but the evidence contradicts such a rose-colored view of reality. While discrimination in the U.S. no longer happens 100% of the time, nor is it uniformly obvious door-slamming and hate filled, nonetheless forms of discrimination persist in most aspects of social and economic life to unacceptable degrees and with harmful, costly consequences. The fact that door slamming may have ended, along with whites-only signs, does not mean that discrimination has been reduced to an unimportant component in the housing search.

Like degrees of segregation, there are evolving degrees of discriminatory impacts upon local housing and credit market transactions that impede the search of blacks, Hispanics and other protected class members. Although the reports have been available for two years, MF fails to cite the results of the latest 2002 national level audit of housing discrimination funded by the U.S. Department of Housing at Urban Development (HUD). The results from that study disprove the assertion that minorities can easily move into any white area, in part because of the steering of minorities and

whites that occurs at the hands of the real estate industry (Turner et al., 2000).[6]

The 2000 study results, when compared with 1989 data, indicate that "the incidence of consistent adverse treatment against minority home seekers has declined over the last decade" (Turner et al., 2002). For African Americans, the decline was sharpest on the availability measure. Blacks are more likely to be told about similar types of units and similar numbers of units as whites than they were in 1989. These declines occurred across nearly all of the treatment measures except for an increase in steering for African Americans and for Latinos more adverse treatment in terms of receiving financing assistance.

While declines occurred, the HDS 2000 audits found that whites were still more favorably treated than blacks in 17% of sale tests and 22% of rental audits. Roughly one-fifth of all attempts to find equal housing experienced some form of measurable, potentially illegal discriminatory treatment. African American testers were in general able to inspect fewer units, were steered to more units in less predominantly white neighborhoods, were less likely to be prequalified by the agent, more often required to be prequalified before seeking a unit, and less likely to be told they were qualified to purchase a home than comparable white testers. The major obstacle for Latino testers was inferior assistance with financing than comparably qualified white testers. It is useful to also note the results of a national probability sample that found that 14 percent of Americans stated that they had experienced discrimination in housing, which translates into roughly 28 million Americans (Abravenal, 2002).

There is also Fair Housing Act complaint-based evidence of discrimination filed with private agencies and with the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ). The National Fair Housing Alliance (2004), for example, reports that it received more than 17,000 complaints of housing discrimination in 2003. In addition, the DOJ sent identically matched testers, one white and one African American, to look for apartments in a score of cities throughout the U.S. In one case, a white tester went to the Boca Real Apartments in Miami and was told that the rent would be $805 and the unit would be available in two weeks.

[6]There have been three major national research projects using testing (often called "audits") to uncover disparate treatment in housing on the basis of race or national origin. All three audits used sent pairs of identically matched housing applicants to personally measure systematic differences in treatment at the hands of rental and sales agents based on race or ethnicity. The third national housing audit, labeled "HDS 2000," involved 4,600-paired tests in 20 metropolitan areas. Testing was completed for blacks, Hispanics, and Asians.

The black tester arrived shortly after and was told no units would be available until the next year and that the rent would be from $845 to $1,200 a month. In another Florida case, rental agents testified that their firm told them not to rent to blacks and to code minority applications so that they could be distinguished from those of whites. The firm paid a penalty of $1 million for this violation (see also Cashin, 2004: 32–38).[7]

Regarding *racial violence* in housing, MF again cites the work of the Thernstroms,[8] to argue that racial violence has essentially vanished from the housing market. This, too, is disputed in a series of recent fair housing cases. In one case in North Carolina the defendant, accused in 1999, was five years later found guilty by a federal Appeals Court. To cite the press release issued by the DOJ, "The defendants welcomed a bi-racial couple to their neighborhood, "with a sign reading 'No trespassing – Especially N....' After weeks of racial intimidation, they erected and burned a wooden cross near the couple's home. They told the investigators that they did so to 'let the n...know that he wasn't welcome here."[9] In another case in Louisiana, local Klan members were sentenced for another cross burning. As the Justice Department announcement states, "By leading a group of people in the hateful ritual of cross-burning, the defendant orchestrated an ugly and vicious act meant to terrorize innocent people."[10] Six Klan members were

[7]Hispanics too have filed a number of notable claims of discrimination. In Texas, a mobile home operator pled guilty to denying Hispanics access to their homes. In another case in Illinois, the Village of Addison was found guilty of intentionally demolishing homes in a Hispanic community that were then turned over to a private developer for non-Hispanic beneficiaries. In a Delaware case a credit card company was charged with using a separate credit scoring system for credit card applicants who did not speak English and as a consequence, "Spanish language applicants were denied credit on a discriminatory basis." Lastly in Bound Brook New Jersey, the town agreed to a consent decree in which they agreed they had used their housing code and redevelopment plan to "make housing opportunities unavailable to Hispanic residents of the borough." There are pages more of recent cases summarized by the Justice Department that suggest a persistent if non-random set of discriminatory actions by major housing and credit market institutions as well as local jurisdictions, whose actions and often intent is to deny equal opportunity to minorities. None of this evidence suggests representative national trends except that they clearly reveal that cases have not dropped close to zero even under an administration not notable for its focus on domestic civil rights (US v. Camp Riverview, Inc; US v. Village of Addison; US v. Associate National Bank; US v. Borough of Bound Brook, NJ. (See Edsall & Edsall, 1992; Myers, 1997.)

[8]He paraphrases the Thernstrom's who "conclude that the incidence of racial exclusion grounded in violence and the threat of violence has become rare" (p. 20). I do not know what rare means, but Blacks do not need a whole lot of crosses burned to get the point that they are unwelcome.

[9]United States v. May, Department of Justice press release, March 4, 2004.

[10]United States v. Fuselier, April 21, 2004.

found guilty of the cross burning 'with the intent of forcing thee black men, who were renting a house in Longville, out of town."[11]

Such audit and case based material argues for the accuracy of observations from sociologist Larry Bobo (2001: 280) who states:

> "Minorities not only perceive more discrimination, they also see it as more "institutional" in character. Many whites tend to think of discrimination as either mainly a historical legacy of the past or the idiosyncratic behavior of the isolated bigot." (p. 281). Blacks are, in general, more likely to view discrimination as more institutional than episodic and more likely to feel it personally and emotionally (pp. 284–285).

Coupled to this are Camille Charles' (2001) MCSUI study results that indicate that blacks see neighborhoods with lower perceived levels of discrimination as more desirable places in which to live (see also Cashin, 2004: 80). Discrimination appears to affect preferences as well as potentially segregation itself, with ample room for additional empirical research to clarify the nature and strength of these relationships (Dawkins, 2004).[12]

Sociologists should take care, then, that their analyses do not inadvertently and inappropriately side with the white population who believes that discrimination has largely vanished, rather than evaluating the accuracy of the views of minorities who assert that institutional bias matters significantly to their housing futures. Keeping analytic options open and alive to evidence on "both sides" seems, therefore, critically important for the health of sociology's analytic and policy future. It appears inappropriate, then, based upon current evidence to side with those who conclude that discrimination is but a quaint historical remnant of times and systems long gone, that all you need to do is try harder.

Causal analyses of segregation are thought to be in their relative infancy, and their changing forms and levels suggest that we seek to test the hypothesis that multiple forms of causality are at work, including the personal views of residents who are often unaware that

[11]Just to ensure we do not think that racial violence only happens in housing Justice announced a guilty plea from a white supremacist in Missouri who plead guilty to attacking two African Americans in a Denny's restaurant. He and four others agreed that they had beaten, kicked and stabbed one of the black victims. Press release, April 21, 2004 re Steven Heldenbrand.

[12]Dawson (2004: 386) states, "... neighborhoods that are acceptant of minorities are generally more desirable to minority residents and less desirable to whites. This suggests that perceptions regarding discrimination and the perceived attitudes of majority residents likely play an important role in shaping residential outcomes."

their lives have been affected by institutionalized forms of differential treatment.[13]

The fact that Ellen (2004) and others (Rawlings, Harris, & Turner, 2004; Modarres, 2004) also report modest increases in integration as well again suggests a different type of simulated failure since MF argues that minority and white preferences alike are exclusively segregation promoting. Something, and none of us knows for sure what, has caused integration levels to increase, discrimination to decline, and separation levels to drop—all modestly—none of which MF's arguments or expectations capture. I find his wish to see the segregative feelings of blacks as key argumentative and empirically ill formed.

COMMENTS ON HIS SIMULATIONS/METHODS

Regarding his simulations, MF appropriately cautions the reader "... to be clear about the limits of the methodology and avoid extravagant or premature claims about what can be learned from it." They nonetheless have some 'indirect' relevance, he argues, by providing evidence about the implications of various theoretical positions. I elect to see his indirect effects as speculative in part because of the limited urban landscape within which his simulated actors create separate lives.

Spatial Complexity and Scale Matter

MF creates a town, really a hamlet, with roughly 5,000 single family occupied homes, with probably 15,000 people. There are no schools, parks, stores, slums, gang turf, rental housing, garbage disposal plants, factories, employment centers, lenders, geospatial barriers, highways, parking lots or any of the other ecological fixtures central to the urban reality of the bulk of the U.S. metropolitan population.

It is a neat world created instantaneously that is allowed to age somewhere between 15 and 30 years, long before aging, deterioration, abandonment, critically relevant property value depreciation, or other social dimensions of aging housing markets start creating real and hard to simulate pressures on people to value their housing and

[13]MF also notes, on a related issue (p. 6) that: "Existing studies documenting the existence of discrimination. ... cannot separate out the degree to which levels of observed segregation can be attributed *solely* to direct discrimination in the housing market." The argumentative, italicized framing of the test as if singular forms of causality are the correct standard is misguided most especially since Galster (1986) and Galster and Keeney (1988) have tested these relationships some time ago. Sociologists or others using more current audit data have not replicated Galster's efforts.

neighborhood options differently. So the ecologically expected patterns of invasion and succession, keyed to housing deterioration and filtering, never have the opportunity to appear to affect land use options and constraints. This would be a world unrecognizable to the ecological theorists upon whose foundation MF argues he builds.

Since most towns are not built with lower-priced housing in mind (see the Mt. Laurel case) but rather are structured to offer the option of single family housing for those who can best afford it, we never see the interaction of declining neighborhoods (there are so few), declining demand and therefore higher vacancies, abandonment, and all the other housing market pressures associated with the migration of lower income minorities into certain segments of urban housing markets (leaving aside the sitting of public housing projects in these same abandoned areas). MF does use a screen for affordability but it appears to apply only to family incomes so we should assume that the builder of his preference-ville set out to house lower-income homeowners unlike virtually all other places in the U.S.

His town also has a very tight housing market. Only 6% of the units are vacant, and it appears that this vacancy rate remains constant despite the persistent reality of housing/business cycles in demand and supply that are always pressing against stability in vacancies. It is a world in constant equilibrium. In his world of scarce units, he nonetheless allows each family 12 opportunities to search before the program begins to assign families to units, without the typical broker who in the rest of the U.S. matches buyers and sellers in a rationed system.

It is also not a system in which families migrate out to other places and job options, nor does it seem to be a world in which families exit the traditional housing market for homelessness or assisted housing. Many of these bottom-end problems are typically racially identifiable and therefore mark markets with identifiable racial properties that white housing searchers remember and use in selecting housing over a wider set of geospatial options. It is not then a recognizable metropolitan real estate market, nor do the normal dynamics of market and nonmarket actors and functions breathe life into the simulations.

In Fossett's program, the families elected to search for a new home all come from within the town and all appear to have perfect, unbrokered information about all available units in this small town. The town is separated into 112 "neighborhoods," which means that each neighborhood has roughly 50 single-family homes.[14] For many purposes this would become roughly two or three census tracts. To some

[14]In his website SimSeg description, the model has 97 neighborhoods and 4,753 units.

this will appear to be a gated suburban developer-built community that exits in this small state presumably with some very harsh anti-growth ordinances, or because it is located so far from any other center for population that it can resist cycles and normal market pressures for growth, including demands for affordable multifamily housing.

In MF's world, households also do not have to "compromise much on housing quality and neighborhood status in order to act on their ethnic concerns" (p. 48). A world in which equal school quality, comparable housing quality, and equivalent neighborhood services exist has been the dream of integrationists for decades. This is though a dream unfulfilled, and many would argue is in the medium-to long-term unfulfillable.

But MF has intentionally not created a theoretically or sociologically rich urban tapestry upon which to test his model of preferences. We are presented with a simplified, Spartan model of urban land use formation and functional uses for city spaces. His city is a relatively simplistic, blank slate against which he allows families an opportunity to search for housing using some mix of preferences for housing quality, neighborhood status, and ethnic composition (p. 38). All of his families though come with full-fledged American attitudes towards racial distance and preference sets. While in the real world they may also have the full, rich tapestry of hates, prejudices, and dislikes, in this world they have only specified preference targets for in-group and out-group membership (these are outlined in Appendix Table 4 (Fossett, 2006)).

His world is an imaginary one full of people assigned to a life without current forms of discrimination in either lending or housing allocation. We are not told whether employment opportunities are affected by discrimination but can assume that that too has been wished away as well. So his simulated people shop, work, and live in a world none of us have ever seen, and appear unlikely to see in our lifetimes (Smith, 2000). We are not told how long it would take for black and Hispanic families to learn that their lives have been freed from what is palpable in every other place outside of MF's preferenceville but must also assume that it is instantaneous. So peoples' preferences about race have been analytically unhinged from one of their sociologically foundational roots: discrimination. I find this election surreal. Preferences are not immaculately conceived but formed from well-hewn historically formed patterns of abuse, hatred, acts of violence, and a constant world of bias and discrimination. There is no means to surgically separate the evil twins of perceptions of discrimination from preferences for race; MF has simulated a sociologically misleading world of options.

His model also appears limited in that it assumes that housing quality uniformly improves with distance from the city center, such that central city neighborhoods have always "substantially lower quality housing." This of course is at variance with critiques of the centralization measures used in segregation analyses[15] and is at odds with real world changes in the central city areas of such places as Baltimore's Inner Harbor, Boston's new downtown condo developments, New York's growing residential complex at Battery Park City, and the gentrification of Harlem. One also wonders, for example, how other predictable nonlinearities are handled, such as tipping. Again, it is unclear how major geospatial barriers and other land use irregularities (prisons, factories, commercial land use, highways, urban renewal areas, public housing projects) get treated as they predictably create ecologically bundled housing search constraints.

Measuring Segregation with Dissimilarity

MF typically makes use of the index of dissimilarity as the primary tool to measure segregation outcomes from his nine experiments. The use of a single, quite limited measure of segregation or evenness as the primary, although not sole, standard for assessing simulation outcomes is judged by the last several decades of evolution in analytic measurement as a nontrivial shortcoming. The dissimilarity index, while the early focus of social science attention in measuring segregation (Taeuber & Taeuber, 1965), has well-documented limitations that have suggested for some time the critical importance of making use of multiple supplementary measures (Cortese, Falk, & Cohen, 1976; Winship, 1978; White, 1983). Additional measures of the spatial distribution and patterning of race and ethnic groups have evolved over the last 15 or more years to include isolation, exposure measures, and other measures synthesized by Massey and Denton (1988). Important critical analyses of segregation measures by James and Taeuber (1985) and more recently by Reardon and Firebaugh (2002) and Reardon and O'Sullivan (2004) have also suggested the technical standards against which new measures of segregation and diversity measures should be evaluated, including critically important measures that address multi-group comparisons (Modarres, 2004).

It is standard in the measurement of dissimilarity to note that the smaller the scale of the geospatial unit the higher the scores will be, so

[15]It has, for example, been noted for decades that measures of centralization appear analytically limited given the complex patterns of multi-centered metropolitan areas (Alihan, 1964: 166; Taeuber's 1965: 62–63).

that MF's small areas would statistically have higher levels of segregation. Scale issues translate into the more useful and difficult sociological question of what is the most appropriate sociological way to measure "neighborhood" for the purposes of assessing comparative and historical patterns of integration? What is the most analytically sensible basis for defining a neighborhood for purposes of assessing the forms and levels of social interaction; a question lodged somewhere at the sociological core of the meaning of integration and segregation dynamics (Modarres, 2004)? If a census tract is integrated while some of its component blocks are segregated, what do we learn (gain and loose) by using larger geospatial units for temporal and comparative purposes? What do we learn about segregation and integration dynamics by comparing MF's towns' three census tracts with other, larger simulated environments that are constructed with more of the complex rules for housing market behavior noted by Galster (1988)?

A related size concern is embedded in Iceland, Weinberg, & Steinmetz (2002: 13–14), caution about the importance of establishing a cut-off in the minimum size of the minority population in any locality. They chose to focus only upon areas that had a minority population of at least 20,000. In defense of this they state, "...segregation scores for metropolitan areas with small minority populations are less reliable than those with larger ones. Random factors are more likely to play a role in determining the settlement pattern of group members when fewer members are present causing these indices to have greater variability." By electing to simulate dissimilarity in a quite small town MF risks, then, introducing some degree of inappropriate randomness compared with more established settlements with larger number of areas and minorities.

In addition, we know that in such small areas not all transfers will necessarily be counted. As Ellen (2000: 180; note 12), for example, has noted: "It is also true that the dissimilarity index tends to underestimate shifts over time, because it does not change in response to population shifts across neighborhoods that are above or below the average racial composition ... Thus, we would not expect increases in the stability of integrated neighborhoods, even significant shifts, to necessarily be reflected in the dissimilarity index." Accordingly, consideration of transfers and exchanges appears a necessary addition to any future work in this area.

By way of summary, segregation does not occur in simulated small spaces as much as it is practiced and experienced in dense large concentrations in this county's cities and suburbs. Spatial complexity and scale matter, and no amount of algorithmic power can compensate

for the small scale, ecologically and sociologically oversimplified world in which handfuls of families seek out tiny numbers of rental units in a world with perfect information. In the world in which segregation is practiced, neighborhood resistance and defensive localism, which many see in the form of NIMBYism, is rife. Access to and control of space-based resources is contested because there are scarce alternatives, and institutional encouragement of spatial inequalities is part and parcel of urban political decision-making.[16] There are enough exceptions to such seemingly iron clad sociological rules to ensure ample space to argue that some level of choice and preference does matter. The Gautreaux program was based upon this very assumption (Rubinowitz & Rosenbaum, 2000).

SimSeg Editorially and Policy-Wise

After roughly 35 pages of reviews of social science literature, MF presents his nine simulation models in only 11 pages of text so that the "experiments" can appear poorly differentiated and explained. The associated appendix pages of colored maps can appear as an unrelated analytic blur that is not greatly helped by either the one page glossary or the one page flow chart.[17]

We are told that NIH programmers have verified the *internal* validity of his SimSeg program but Fossett does not, because of space limitations, provide full details regarding the functioning of core algorithms. As with all such matters, we can assume that a goodly number of devils are in the unexplicated algorithmic SimSeg details.[18] It is also unclear to me what relevance a SimSeg "lite" program may have as the author speaks of it as "much less ambitious and capable." One might worry that lite versions of a perceptually based world will populate the theoretical space in sociological instruction. Growing like small imperfect clones, their imperfections may be justified by a

[16] Galster (1990: 395): comments: "... whites may not choose to flee in the face of prospective integration, but may 'fight to protect their turf' through the erection of discriminatory barriers."

[17]The reader is told of 'animation sequences' that might in a video version be more understandable. He tells us, though, that the animations "provide an immediate, intuitive appeal ..." The mental templates and value sets that are assumed which permit such intuitions to be sociological validating are not discussed. Such viewer appreciation of animations is likely built upon an unstated set of viewer's racially infused expectations and beliefs that appear unmeasured by MF.

[18]On MF's website (http://sociweb.tamu.edu/faculty/fossett/index.htm#) the reader is told that SimSeg is an educational rather than a research tool that enables students to "explore prevailing theories of residential segregation ..."

"master" program uninterpretable to all but a handful of technophiles. But I am sure I worry too much.

Finally, MF's arguments asserting the primacy of preferences do not occur in a policy vacuum. Preferences interpreted politically, i.e., we all basically just want to live among our own kind, is the stalking horse for such groups as the Heritage Foundation that may well, despite the author's own intentions, welcome this addition to the Schelling cannon of reasons why no federal policies and programs are needed to address racial disadvantage and segregation. Constructing a world in which racial isolation is the prime responsibility of individual blacks (and whites) that are not enthusiastic enough about racial mixing is a standard, politically conservative viewpoint that no one in sociology should mistake when presented with seemingly value-neutral simulations. The policy consequences of reaching for only personal causes for segregation that do not implicate policies, law enforcement mechanisms, the real estate or banking industries is a quite desirable policy contribution that no conservative analyst will mistake.

CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

I do not therefore agree with MF that the simulation experiments have important implications for segregation theory. I see little net benefit to sociology from an analysis which presents such a polarizing, either-or argumentation, with so little new empirical evidence, such a thin description and analysis of his own simulations, and whose conclusions can be readily interpreted as more politically than theoretically helpful. MF's framing of the debate in either-or, single-factor terms leads to polarized argumentation that is unhelpful 30 years after Schelling and in the wake of three major national audits of the extent and forms of housing discrimination.

MF's brief is for a relatively one-sided modeling of preferences and social distance that I find worrying and potentially counterproductive for a mature sociology. No one should confuse MF's desire for theoretical simulations that wish away ecological realities and discrimination with that tradition and form of sociological analysis in which the analyses of institutional structures, inequality, power, and white privilege have helped us understand the ways in which racial inequality is reproduced in the U.S. The inclusion of discrimination, prejudice, institutional interests, income or status effects, public policy inputs (such as ineffective fair housing enforcement, racially exclusionary zoning, and public housing segregation), and preferences has been and remains the necessary first-stage blueprint for causal studies.

Given the clear evidence we now have of persistent if modestly declining patterns discrimination, reductions in segregation, and modest increases in integration, there appears ample reason for sociology to look for more complex, less single-factor, preference driven models of causality. MF's expectations of persistent preference driven segregation appears an inappropriate hypothesis to form the core of theory building in this area. However, how much weight does each factor exert in causing segregation is a critical unanswered question accompanied by a raft of related questions including what are the causes for persistent levels of housing and credit market discrimination and, derivatively, how do declines in discrimination and segregation affect preference options and judgments in specific markets (Galster, 1986; Galster & Keeney, 1988; National Research Council, 2004; Dawkins, 2004: 394)?

The theory would test a world in which fundamental political and neighborhood interests are present, not absent, in which real estate and banking interests are relevant to housing search, and where effects-based racial inequities are not anomalous but expected. It would be a world recognizable to most blacks, and one which whites should appreciate for its tangible yet invisible effects on their lives and housing options. The political economy of urban space cannot just take leave to allow families to search as if institutional patterns, nonlinear pressures, and white privilege have evaporated. To do so risks substituting conceptual idiosyncrasy for helpful, crescive sociological theorizing.

Until we move to empirically model the temporal and spatial sequencing of such institutional, macro and micro level causal influences upon the racial structuring of opportunities sociology has, I would argue, failed to fulfill its full promise as a discipline. It should not risk squandering its intellectual patrimony on micro level ministrations aimed at justifying the status quo as an assemblage of all too tolerable choices. Creating both theoretically and empirically grounded causal explanations of why race continues to plague and frustrate this society appears the necessary gold standard for sociology in the 21st century.

The hypothesis that preferences matter (under some conditions) is of course perfectly sensible but not the assumptions which strip away the empirical and institutional behavior that has formed the core of sociology's intellectual contribution to the study of race. While it may in some ways be pedagogically relevant, it appears not to be a prudent analytic choice to select a modeling process so abstract and distant from the textured and complex forms of urban settlements in which the bulk of the population resides. Espousing a SimSeg view

of the world at the expense of a better empirical sociological understanding would be, then, I argue a major tactical error for sociology.

More Research, of Course, but Empirically

I agree with MF that more research on the links between discrimination and segregation is needed but note Galster's (1986) caveats on measurement issues. I also concur with Dawkins (2004: 386) on the need for new research that will shed light on the nature and power of direct links between ethnic preferences and observed locational choices by whites and minorities. I would add that such a new set of research studies could also examine housing search motivation effectiveness in cities with differing levels of segregation and discrimination. It is, in this vein, essential to pursue more complex, simultaneous models of explanation. Galster (1989: 189), some while ago, has encouraged us to undertake such analytic choices because: "...explaining the present cross-SMSA variation in segregation due to one factor (e.g. preferences) or another by using a recursive model embodying unidirectional causal relationships produces erroneous estimates due to the econometric problem of simultaneity bias (parenthetical added)."

It could not be my argument that complex causal models are either easy to design, test, or interpret. It is though my argument that until that either-or character of race debates recede within sociology, there is little chance to see through to a paradigmatic shift that will enable us to test for both the role and power of discriminatory forces, institutionalized segregative policies, economic-wealth-and status influences, and personal options in a way that resembles the 21st century.

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