

Chapter 1 | The Historical Roots of Segregation in the United States and the Need for a New Perspective

IN THE DEBATE leading up to the passage of the Fair Housing Act in 1968, Senator Edward Brooke of Massachusetts offered a concise summary of the then-current state of segregation:

We make two general assertions: (1) that American cities and suburbs suffer from galloping segregation, a malady so widespread and so deeply imbedded in the national psyche that many Americans, Negroes as well as whites, have come to regard it as a natural condition; and (2) that the prime carrier of galloping segregation has been the Federal Government. First it built the ghettos; then it locked the gates; now it appears to be fumbling for the key. Nearly everything the Government touches turns to segregation, and the Government touches nearly everything.¹

At the time, Brooke was reflecting on the fact that black Americans faced an almost insurmountable set of housing policies and practices intentionally designed to restrict their housing opportunities and maintain the geographic separation of blacks and whites. Across the country, blacks were confined—through legal statute, local practices, and violence—to the poorest and most underserved parts of metropolitan areas as residential segregation reached its apex.

Certainly, much has changed since 1968. Although it offered only feeble enforcement provisions, the Fair Housing Act officially outlawed discrimination by race and provided an important legal tool for dismantling de jure systems of American apartheid. Moreover, recent decades have seen

dramatic softening of racial attitudes and the emergence of a significant black middle class. Populations in most metropolitan areas of the country have also become increasingly diverse, helping to at least complicate the traditional black-white systems of social stratification. All of these changes have helped to erode residential segregation in many metropolitan areas and led to the emergence of many stably integrated neighborhoods.

At the same time, much of what Senator Brooke said nearly a half-century ago still applies today. Segregation remains virtually unchanged in many of our largest, most populated metropolitan areas and is still stubbornly high in most places where large groups of racial and ethnic minorities live. Although a glimmer of hope is provided by recent Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing (AFFH) directives from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) that municipalities do more to enhance residential opportunities, the federal government has remained “fumbling for the keys to the gate,” failing to maintain a modicum of consensus on the necessity and method to dismantle the complex set of discriminatory forces that help to maintain segregation, much less seriously tackle the Fair Housing Act’s mandate to affirmatively further desegregation. And segregation appears to be just as entrenched in the national psyche as it was decades ago; most Americans, and many legal actors, seem to have simply come to accept that cities and their suburbs are organized around racial lines to a degree that resembles a natural order.²

Also consistent with Senator Brooke’s description of “galloping segregation,” there remains a substantial amount of momentum behind the on-the-ground residential processes that drive segregation. To be certain, the drivers of segregation have changed, but racial and ethnic groups still exhibit starkly different patterns of residential mobility, typically remaining in, and moving between, largely separate sets of neighborhoods.³ As a result, racially stratified patterns of residential advantage and disadvantage are passed on from one generation to the next, and despite substantial population churning, segregation is continually replicated and sustained from decade to decade within most metropolitan areas.⁴

Most importantly, as was true at the time of Brooke’s testimony, segregation retains a key role in the maintenance of broader systems of stratification. Neighborhoods occupied by racial and ethnic groups are not only geographically separate but qualitatively different, so that members of different groups face dramatically different life chances as a function of differential exposure to educational and employment opportunities, pollution and other physical threats, crime, and social disorganization. There is strong evidence that these racial disparities in neighborhood opportunity structures—all rooted in persistent segregation—contribute in substantial

ways to sharp racial differences in education, income, wealth, health, and general well-being.

For those interested in explaining the maintenance of racial stratification and the inner workings of cities, an important question has persisted: in the context of significant social change, demographic shifts, and improvements in the economic plight of at least some racial and ethnic minority groups, how can we explain the considerable and sustained momentum of residential segregation by race? In recent decades, this question has been the subject of thousands of articles and books, most of which have focused on three main explanations for the maintenance of segregation. According to the first explanation—and the one most widely adopted in the general public—residential segregation reflects group differences in racial residential preferences. That is, members of different groups end up living in separate residential spaces because they prefer to live near their own group. In contrast, the second theoretical explanation holds that segregation reflects the persistence of racial and ethnic differences in socioeconomic resources. Here the idea is that individuals sort themselves into neighborhoods based on their ability to pay for the most attractive residential options; so, for example, black Americans end up living in separate and more disadvantaged locations because they have lower average levels of education, income, and wealth than do whites. Finally, the third popular explanation focuses on the persistence of subtle but insidious forms of discrimination—including biased zoning provisions, discriminatory lending practices, the geographic concentration of subsidized housing, and a variety of other exclusionary and non-exclusionary forces—that effectively restrict the residential options of members of some groups.

Although all of these factors are surely important, we argue that a different set of forces—less clearly articulated in the existing literature—are important in maintaining the momentum of segregation. Our central argument is that while segregation in America was created out of a series of conscious efforts to ensure separation of the races, it is now maintained not just by overt segregationist efforts, socioeconomic differences, and racial preferences, but also by the social and economic repercussions of segregation itself.

The central goal of this book is to outline a new theoretical lens—the *social structural sorting perspective*—through which we might understand the forces that continue to drive the cycle of residential segregation. As we will argue, this theoretical frame has three central features that distinguish it from traditional perspectives on segregation. First, it starts from the realization that segregation is maintained through the continual reinforcement of racially disparate mobility decisions, and that understanding the momentum of segregation requires explicit attention to the processes

through which members of different racial and ethnic groups search for, and select from, different residential options. Second, the social structural sorting perspective focuses on the fact that individuals approach the housing search with considerable biases and perceptual blind spots, the operation of which contradict implicit assumptions in our traditional perspectives about how processes of racial residential sorting operate. Third, this new perspective focuses on the ways in which segregation by race has become self-perpetuating, driving systems of economic stratification, shaping neighborhood perceptions, circumscribing social networks and systems of neighborhood knowledge by race and ethnicity, and creating patterns of mobility and immobility that differ sharply across racial and ethnic groups. In essence, the perspective suggests that residential moves are structurally sorted along racial lines, with individuals' perceptions and knowledge of residential options shaped by lived experiences and social interactions within a racially segregated social system. The racialized patterns of mobility and immobility that emerge from these structural conditions continually reproduce the system's segregated social and spatial structure. As a result of these self-perpetuating forces, segregation has declined much more slowly than might be expected based on changing patterns of economic stratification, shifting racial attitudes, and the abatement of the most overt forms of exclusionary discrimination. Variations in these forces also help to explain why segregation has declined sharply in some metropolitan areas but remained virtually unchanged in others.

To set the stage for building this new theoretical frame, we begin with a brief description of some of the main political, economic, and social forces that, historically, created segregation in metropolitan areas and the evolution of these forces since the passage of the Fair Housing Act. We then discuss the need for new ways of thinking about the problem of segregation in light of the fact that it is maintained even in the face of broader integrative forces, and in ways that are not adequately explained by existing arguments. As we will argue, the need for a new conceptual framework goes hand in hand with a need for new methods and analytical tools to describe and study segregation and its causes. Because the processes we highlight have largely been ignored in the literature on segregation, much of the evidence for our new approach comes in the form of unexplained patterns and is circumstantial. We then draw out a set of policy implications based in the idea that real progress toward desegregation and equality of neighborhood-based opportunity structures is impossible without recognition and systematic dismantling of these self-reinforcing processes. We will conclude by suggesting how research approaches must be retooled in order to fully test the new framework presented in the book

and develop a stronger understanding of the drivers of segregation and its self-perpetuating nature.

SEGREGATION'S INTENTIONAL ROOTS: THE POLICIES THAT SET THE GALLOP IN MOTION

Although segregation has a long history in America, the extreme forms of neighborhood-based racial isolation that characterize many of our cities really emerged in the middle decades of the twentieth century.⁵ As has been well documented by Douglas Massey, Nancy Denton, and others, this intensification of segregation in increasingly diverse metropolitan areas was affected by a multitude of racially biased community practices, policies, and public projects, all consciously designed to separate racial and ethnic groups into distinct residential spaces.⁶

During the initial buildup of neighborhood segregation, efforts to restrict black access to white neighborhoods were overt and fully sanctioned by local governments. In the early stages of the Great Migration, for example, many cities and towns of the North restricted the residential options of black residents with zoning laws expressly designating neighborhoods as all-white or all-black. During the 1920s and 1930s, community and neighborhood organizations increasingly employed protective covenants and “codes of ethics” to compel property owners to maintain segregation by refusing to sell or rent to black home-seekers. When those strategies failed to maintain the desired residential color line, local residents employed violence and intimidation to expel black pioneers in white neighborhoods and to deter future interlopers.

A series of federal policies in the ensuing decades exacerbated the impact of these local measures and provided a legal endorsement of efforts to maintain residential separation of racial groups.⁷ Most overt were the explicit efforts to maintain segregation in public housing. As Richard Rothstein has pointed out, even the most liberal supporters of the original New Deal programs never envisioned that public housing would be integrated; from an early stage, federally funded public housing projects were designed for either black or white residents, not for a mixture of these groups. Public housing projects were intentionally and consciously placed in neighborhoods already dominated by one group or the other.

Perhaps more wide-ranging and ubiquitous were the effects of the lending rules adopted by the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) at its inception in 1934. These rules explicitly barred lending that might foster integration. Specifically, the FHA adopted “redlining” strategies that designated neighborhoods with more than a few black residents as risky locations for federally insured loans. At the same time, loans to individuals that

would allow for the “ingress of undesirable racial or nationality groups” into the neighborhood were prohibited.⁸

The combination of these rules had several key effects. The designation of black and integrated neighborhoods as “hazardous” prompted the flight and avoidance by white residents, who, at any rate, were only able to gain federally guaranteed loans in all-white neighborhoods. Meanwhile, the combination of rules effectively prevented blacks from obtaining federally secured loans; they could not get loans in white neighborhoods because their presence would upset the existing “racial integrity” of the area, and they could not secure loans in integrated or black neighborhoods since such areas were considered too risky for FHA protection. In fact, in the first three decades of the FHA, only 2 percent of all federally insured home loans went to nonwhite applicants. An additional pernicious impact of these rules was that black neighborhoods were essentially cut off from investment. In effect, these federal rules severely limited opportunities for integration and confined the growing black population to city neighborhoods that were increasingly isolated and increasingly disinvested. Importantly, this isolation of the black population away from the white population was the conscious and intended purpose of these policies.

FHA lending rules were important but certainly not the only federal policy that solidified racial segregation in the middle of the twentieth century. Not to be underestimated is the role of the federal government, with help from local partners, in financing and facilitating the separation of black and white populations across city-suburb lines. In the face of growing prosperity and the combination of increasing population diversity and housing shortages in many American cities, the federal government in the middle decades of the twentieth century adopted measures to facilitate the redistribution of the white population to outlying areas. The 1956 Federal-Aid Highway Act—originally billed as a public safety measure—established the federal Highway Trust Fund, which diverted federal tax dollars to the creation of the first interstate highway system. As it developed, this highway system dramatically reduced the effective commuting distance into and out of central cities, opening up vast expanses of previously inaccessible land for development. Taking advantage of these opportunities, developers adopted new methods for mass-produced housing, spawning the first real suburban subdivisions, all with state and federal funds paying for roads, sewers, schools, and other infrastructure. Federal rules already in place helped builders fill these developments by guaranteeing millions of private mortgages for new white suburbanites. Mortgage programs through the FHA and the Veterans Administration (VA) allowed new home-buyers to purchase a home with very little money down and a monthly payment that was, in many cities, lower than the average monthly rent for a smaller

unit in the central city. As Kenneth Jackson and many others have related, aggressive marketing, often with explicit racial overtones, helped to define a move away from increasingly diverse cities and to the suburbs as a standard component of the American dream.⁹

For tens of millions of white families in the postwar period, this dream became a reality, but explicit racial bias in federal lending policies continued to restrict opportunities for black home-seekers and provided a crucial endorsement of local segregationist policies. During this period, the vast majority of suburban developments had restrictive covenants, and many cited FHA rules directly to justify this discrimination.¹⁰ At the same time, federal lending guidelines severely limited opportunities to secure loans for property in central-city neighborhoods, helping to throw these neighborhoods into a downward, self-reinforcing spiral of disinvestment and deterioration that made them undesirable to those with the means to afford alternatives.¹¹ Thus, the growing population of African Americans was continuously confined to deteriorating and increasingly isolated central-city neighborhoods, a problem exacerbated by the fact that public housing serving the poorest African Americans continued to be placed almost exclusively in the poorest, most racially isolated parts of most cities.¹²

By the 1960s, inequality of housing and neighborhood context was recognized as a central pillar of racial stratification and a key target of the civil rights movement. Yet, only after the civil unrest following the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in 1968 was the Fair Housing Act enacted, making discrimination in the housing market illegal, including the discriminatory policies that the FHA had relied on for years to maintain segregation. Subsequent amendments to the law, coming through executive order, required state and local governments to develop plans to “affirmatively further” fair housing goals by identifying discriminatory practices and other barriers to integration, developing plans to demolish these impediments, establishing strategies to actively promote patterns of development that would offer opportunities for integration, and monitoring the effectiveness of these efforts.¹³ The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, the successor to FHA, was tasked with monitoring compliance with these provisions and withholding federal funds to state and local governments that failed to develop—and make good progress on—these plans.

Yet the uneven implementation and poor enforcement of the Fair Housing Act since its passage has clearly reflected the weak commitment of policymakers to utilize the law to end the segregation that federal, state, and local policies had played such a strong role in creating. State governments and the federal government have relied on irregular and often ineffective methods to detect discrimination and require evidence of a lengthy pattern of blatant discrimination before meting out what typically amount

to fairly minor sanctions.¹⁴ Moreover, HUD has often failed to hold state and local governments to their responsibility to “affirmatively further fair housing,” showing a persistent willingness to continue to provide development funds even to locations with poor records in this regard.¹⁵ Between new HUD rules and a surprising Supreme Court ruling in June 2015, there are now signs of reaffirmation of the affirmative-integration aspect of the law. These events were met with cries from some that such requirements are tantamount to social engineering, an ironic twist given decades of federal and local policy designed to engineer and reinforce segregation.¹⁶

The central point is that modern forms of segregation have not emerged out of benign patterns of residential choice or individual resources, as is assumed in popular explanations, nor are the roots of segregation “unknowable,” as has sometimes been claimed by justices of the Supreme Court.¹⁷ In reality, modern segregation has its roots in conscious decisions and public policy. Local, state, and federal agencies undertook strategies that intentionally separated blacks and whites and limited opportunities for integration. It was on this legal scaffolding that the segregationist activities of millions of individual actors—builders, real estate agents, lenders, local governments, neighborhood groups, and individual residents—hung their own discriminatory strategies, completing an impressive set of multilevel factors that bolstered and maintained segregation even as our metropolitan areas became increasingly diverse.

THE CONTEMPORARY SCENE AND THE NEED FOR A NEW PERSPECTIVE

A common narrative today is that the discrimination that limited residential opportunities for African Americans and other people of color is in the past. Certainly, since the passage of the Fair Housing Act, the levels of the most overt forms of discriminatory treatment have declined.¹⁸ Yet barriers to residential access remain. Audit studies continue to highlight the persistence of fairly traditional forms of discrimination, including racial steering, higher application rejection rates, and higher rates of nonresponse from landlords and real estate agents dealing with home-seekers of color. Also important are what the sociologist Vincent Roscigno and his colleagues refer to as non-exclusionary forms of discrimination: poor treatment that does not technically exclude individuals from gaining access to a particular neighborhood but that nevertheless creates hostile living conditions that individuals are likely to factor into their housing decisions.¹⁹ Moreover, there is ample evidence that segregation is bolstered by discriminatory features of urban development strategies and biased housing market dynamics, such as local zoning ordinances that exclude low-income and minority

populations from large segments of the metropolitan area and continued concentration of publicly subsidized housing and voucher holders in poor and racially isolated areas.²⁰ Moreover, government policies and infrastructure decisions continue to spawn the displacement of low-income and minority households from integrated areas, and predatory lending practices still concentrate subprime loans in minority-populated areas, creating the context for the disproportionate concentration of foreclosures in these areas and generating patterns of neighborhood change that have, at the very least, slowed the decline of segregation.²¹

Given these dynamics, it might be tempting to believe that segregation would disappear if we somehow did away with the racial biases built into our housing markets and urban development strategies—that is, if we eradicated discrimination in the housing market, fully enforced the Fair Housing Act, and ended public policies that help to maintain segregation. Reality, of course, is much more complicated. In fact, there is ample evidence that, once established, the deep segregation that characterizes many metropolitan areas tends to perpetuate itself with no overt discrimination required. This is not to say that modern forms of discrimination play no role in the maintenance of segregation. Available evidence clearly indicates otherwise. However, even in the absence of intentionally segregationist policies, residential stratification by race would surely persist well into the future, owing to a host of factors that maintain segregation—on a daily basis and at the individual level—in ways that are not fully appreciated in existing research on the topic.

Many of the most important social forces shaping residential stratification remain hidden from view because they shape segregation indirectly through other, seemingly benign features of residential sorting. Segregation is so deeply entrenched in our metropolitan areas that it has, in many ways, become self-reinforcing. That is, the separation of different racial and ethnic groups into distinct and qualitatively different residential spaces produces sharp racial differences in sociodemographic characteristics and life experiences that, in turn, shape profound racial differences in residential search processes and neighborhood outcomes. The resulting racial stratification in patterns of residential mobility and immobility continually perpetuates residential stratification into subsequent generations and across time, even in the absence of overt efforts to maintain the residential color line. We suggest that although the stability of segregation over time has the appearance of inertia, the underlying processes are dynamic—involving the continual mobility of people within and between neighborhoods—and so the image of momentum is more apt, since segregation is maintained by the churning forward of racially disparate residential mobility patterns. Our challenge is to understand why these dynamic individual-level processes continue

in such a way as to reinforce segregation. Indeed, illuminating these self-reinforcing features of segregation is crucial if we are to develop stronger explanations of residential stratification and advance public policy to address its multidimensional effects.

The virtual blindness of existing research to the self-perpetuating features of segregation suggests the need for a new conceptual frame through which to view the drivers of segregation. In developing the social structural sorting perspective, we move beyond ardent adherence to traditional explanations of residential stratification. This new perspective draws attention to the fact that *social* dynamics, including the operation of social networks, life course experiences, residential histories, daily activities, and media exposure, shape individual patterns of neighborhood knowledge and perceptions, and that these patterns, in turn, create the decision-making *structure* that results in neighborhood selections and residential outcomes.

Again, the social structural sorting perspective starts with the well-established assumption that racial residential segregation is maintained by racially disparate patterns of mobility and immobility, and with the less-accepted recognition that these patterns of mobility reflect individuals' perceptions of the quantity, quality, and accessibility of residential options in their housing market. In so doing, it calls into question the implicit assumptions of existing segregation research: that people weigh the relative costs and benefits of all the possible options along a range of characteristics (convenience, safety, cost, attractiveness, and so on) and make the optimal selection from these options. The operation of this cost-benefit analysis as the cornerstone of the residential selection process is a fairly standard, albeit largely implicit, assumption of the traditional explanations of segregation. In essence, these arguments assume that to the extent that discriminatory institutional barriers allow, individuals sort themselves into neighborhoods that match their economic means and residential preferences.

Drawing on insights from geography, sociology, decision sciences, economics, and psychology, the social structural sorting perspective deviates from traditional theories in terms of assumptions about the extent to which this residential sorting is based on complete and reliable information about various residential options and in terms of the kind of decision-making processes that are used. Moving away from naive rational-action models that assume complete information and fully logical utility-maximization, the social structural sorting perspective suggests that residential decision-making occurs in stages that are socially embedded, and it rests heavily on the heuristics—essentially cognitive shortcuts—that individuals use to streamline and simplify decisions about where to search for housing. The perspective points to social processes through which these heuristics are developed and, in particular, how neighborhood racial composition may develop as

a key component of the cognitive shortcuts people use in searching for housing. This more nuanced picture of residential decision-making suggests that racial residential segregation is maintained not just because members of different races are simply sorted into separate neighborhoods—based on some combination of economic resources, preferences, and discrimination—while drawing on a complete list of options. Rather, members of different racial-ethnic groups are, in many ways, operating in drastically different residential worlds and therefore choosing from racially distinct sets of neighborhood options.

Importantly, the social processes shaping residential decision-making are deeply entrenched in broader systems of racial stratification. Partly reflecting the influence of residential segregation, social interactions tend to be racially circumscribed in ways that create substantial differences in both neighborhood knowledge and neighborhood perceptions. As we will argue, segregation tends to perpetuate itself by creating residential histories for members of different racial and ethnic groups that intersect only marginally; by circumscribing daily interactions to distinct social spaces; and by shaping the geographic location of social networks in ways that limit experiences in, and knowledge about, neighborhoods containing other groups. Thus, the social structural sorting perspective provides a framework for understanding why, even in the face of apparent declines in economic disparities, racial animus, and discrimination, segregation is declining only slowly over time in many—though not all—of our nation's large metropolitan areas.

It is important to note that existing literature provides important clues about the dynamics implicated in the social structural sorting perspective. For example, Robert Sampson's seminal work highlights the potential importance of social networks in shaping mobility flows between neighborhoods—flows that continually reinforce segregation by race.²² Other recent research demonstrates the importance of kin location in residential decision-making processes, pointing to one of the key forces through which racially residential stratification is perpetuated from one generation to another.²³ In addition, there is significant evidence of racial differences in the residential processes that continually reinforce segregation, including pronounced variations in patterns of neighborhood knowledge, as well as strong evidence that residential searches are much more restricted than is typically assumed in existing literature.²⁴

Although now dated, empirical studies of housing searches conducted in the 1970s and 1980s also provide crucial insights into the complexity of searches, including their multistage nature, the reliance on limited information, and the sources and kinds of information that are used in different stages.²⁵ More recently, Elizabeth Bruch and her colleagues have pulled together insights from decision sciences and market research, and provided

an innovative conceptual apparatus related to how people make complex decisions, including housing and neighborhood selection. They offer a “cognitively plausible” framework for considering decision processes in diverse contexts, including online dating and neighborhood sorting.²⁶ It is the goal of this book to articulate the importance of these dynamics, and the racial differences therein, for broader patterns of segregation by drawing together these clues into a coherent theoretical framework and placing them within the context of residential stratification processes.

THE PLAN FOR THE BOOK

In the remaining chapters of this book, we articulate the social structural sorting perspective, discuss the evidence related to this new theoretical framework, and explore implications for social policy and future research. In chapter 2, we set the stage with a closer look at variations in patterns of segregation across metropolitan areas and the residential mobility patterns that drive these differences, as well as the social, economic, and political consequences of these patterns. Here we pay close attention to the extent to which variations in residential outcomes can be explained by the factors implicated in traditional theoretical arguments of segregation. More importantly, we focus on the questions left unanswered by this now vast research on the causes of racial residential stratification.

In part II of the book, we lay out the core features of the social structural sorting perspective. First, in chapter 3, we argue that understanding residential stratification requires attention to the various stages of the residential selection process—a process to which traditional arguments are largely blind. By focusing on the residential selection process—and neighborhood selection and housing searches in particular—we bring into clearer focus the shortcomings of the narrow understanding of the traditional theories that have been so readily adopted in past research. In chapter 3, we also describe the diverse sources of the qualitative and quantitative evidence we use to investigate our theoretical arguments.

In the remaining chapters of part II, we focus on specific social processes that affect the stages of the neighborhood selection and housing search processes and, by extension, shape residential segregation. Chapter 4 focuses on the role of social networks in shaping individuals’ knowledge about, and perceptions of, various neighborhood options in the metropolitan area, and the impact of these indirect exposures on residential decision-making. We also examine the extent to which the location of social networks affects actual residential patterns, and racial differences therein, in ways that bolster residential segregation by race. In chapter 5, we examine how residential history and daily activities shape individuals’ perceptions of

neighborhoods in the metropolitan area and, by extension, the decisions they make when searching for and selecting neighborhoods and housing. Here we focus on how sharp racial differences in residential experiences across the life course help to perpetuate residential segregation by shaping the context of subsequent moves. In chapter 6, we draw on principles of decision sciences and psychology to develop a more complete picture of the residential decision-making process. Building on the scaffolding articulated by Bruch and her colleagues, this description highlights the profound impacts on residential stratification of the reliance on decision-making heuristics in the context of the racially disparate patterns of neighborhood knowledge and perceptions described in chapters 4 and 5. These are ways generally ignored in past research on the topic.

Part III reviews the current state of knowledge about each of the traditional theoretical perspectives and reexamines them through the lens of the social structural sorting perspective. Specifically, we reassess the role of economic resources (chapter 7), racial residential preferences (chapter 8), and discrimination (chapter 9) in the residential decision-making process and, specifically, in patterns of neighborhood perceptions and knowledge. Our purpose is not to negate the importance of discrimination, preferences, and economic factors for understanding patterns of segregation. Rather, we point to the complex roles of these forces, which have been too simply depicted in existing debates about segregation. We suggest that while economics, preferences, and discrimination have typically been described as representative of distinct and competing explanations, they operate on the residential selection process in complex and often overlapping ways. Specifically, they are neither mutually exclusive nor exhaustive explanations of segregation; by applying our social structural sorting perspective to each of them, we reveal even more clearly the shortcomings of existing approaches.

In the final section of the book, we bring the insights of the previous chapters together and illustrate the cycle of segregation at the core of this framework. That is, we describe how these drivers of segregation work together to create a self-perpetuating system. To do this, we articulate the implications of our framework in terms of theories of segregation, methods for studying it, and policies for dismantling it.

Because our framework draws attention to new ways to understand both the old and the altogether new dimensions of segregation, these fresh insights into the drivers of segregation might be translated into innovative ideas about social policy. In chapter 10, we argue that our more nuanced understanding of the forces that keep the cycle of segregation moving also affords a broader range of policy levers that might effectively interrupt the legacy effects of segregation, affect greater residential equality, and help to loosen a key linchpin in the maintenance of broader systems

of stratification. We propose these with appropriate caveats related to the circumstantial nature of our evidence, but draw heavily on studies of existing policies that align with this approach and propose fresh ones as well.

With respect to the theoretical implications of our framework, we describe how group differences in economic resources, neighborhood preferences and perceptions, experiences of (and reactions to) discrimination, daily activity spaces, kin location, access to information, and social networks are all affected by segregation in ways that continually reinforce racially differentiated patterns of mobility. All of these individual and neighborhood repercussions of segregation affect the profound racial differences in mobility processes and outcomes, which, in turn, continue the cycle of segregation. These reciprocal factors help to maintain the momentum of segregation, explain the slow pace of change, and maintain dramatic variations across metropolitan areas in terms of a trajectory toward integration, so that segregation remains stubbornly high in some of our largest metropolitan areas, which also contain the lion's share of our minority populations.

Although the central tenets of the social structural sorting perspective are consistent with a good deal of past research and supported by our qualitative and quantitative evidence, many of the implications of the theory are difficult to assess with current sources of data. Thus, chapter 11 describes the research implications of the perspective. Here we highlight the ways in which the basic premises of the model alter how we adjudicate the relative efficacy of existing theoretical arguments and interpret our results. We also outline a significant set of questions raised by the perspective and describe the unconventional sources of data that will be necessary to answer these questions. The central theme is that, in light of the underappreciated forces that help to drive segregation—including the complex interactions between forces implicated in conventional arguments, as well as forces completely outside of these traditional arguments—social scientists must drastically revise the standard approaches to studying group differences in residential outcomes, processes of neighborhood change, and broader patterns of segregation. By extension, the more complex and nuanced picture of how people come to live in certain types of places should change how we think about residential selection in the assessment of neighborhood effects. Accomplishing these goals will require a considerable amount of work to collect and analyze new qualitative and quantitative data that will permit tests of arguments about the complexities and trajectories of residential stratification.