

University of Nebraska - Lincoln

DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln

---

Great Plains Research: A Journal of Natural and  
Social Sciences

Great Plains Studies, Center for

---

10-1-2005

# Becoming Neighbors or Remaining Strangers? Latinos and Residential Segregation in the Heartland

Ana-Mari Gonzalez Wahl

*Wake Forest University, Winston-Salem, NC*

Steven Gunkel

*Doane College, Crete, NE*

Bennie Shobe, Jr.

*University of Nebraska - Lincoln*

Follow this and additional works at: <http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/greatplainsresearch>



Part of the [Other International and Area Studies Commons](#)

---

Gonzalez Wahl, Ana-Mari; Gunkel, Steven; and Shobe, Jr., Bennie, "Becoming Neighbors or Remaining Strangers? Latinos and Residential Segregation in the Heartland" (2005). *Great Plains Research: A Journal of Natural and Social Sciences*. Paper 789. <http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/greatplainsresearch/789>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Great Plains Studies, Center for at DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln. It has been accepted for inclusion in Great Plains Research: A Journal of Natural and Social Sciences by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln.

**BECOMING NEIGHBORS OR REMAINING  
STRANGERS? LATINOS AND RESIDENTIAL  
SEGREGATION IN THE HEARTLAND**

**Ana-María Gonzalez Wahl**

*Department of Sociology  
Wake Forest University  
P.O. Box 7808  
Winston-Salem, NC 27109  
wahlam@wfu.edu*

**Steven E. Gunkel**

*Department of Sociology  
Doane College  
1014 Boswell Avenue  
Crete, NE 68333*

and

**Bennie Shobe, Jr.**

*Department of Sociology  
University of Nebraska–Lincoln  
P.O. Box 880324  
Lincoln, NE 68588-0324*

**ABSTRACT**—Debate persists about the dynamics of segregation and their consequences for Latinos as well as others. This paper draws from the most recent census to examine these dynamics and their consequences in three midwestern cities: Omaha, Lincoln, and Lexington. By shifting the focus to new centers of Latino population growth, we clarify the complexities of Hispanic segregation across the United States. Our findings extend and inform previous debates in several ways. Using the index of dissimilarity, we find evidence of *rising* segregation in Omaha and Lincoln while Lexington appears a model of integration, at least at first glance. Class factors, in part, account for these disparate patterns. However, the evidence also points to the continuing significance of race/ethnicity. Most telling perhaps is evidence of white flight across all three cities, suggesting that current debates must be broadened to include micropolitan areas like Lexington as well as metropolitan areas. Though problematic on many levels, the dynamics of segregation that we uncover have not had as devastating a set of

consequences for Latinos in the Heartland as for others. Rather, split labor markets have created a set of job opportunities in the meatpacking industry that in turn provide a measure of economic stability for Hispanic enclaves, at least in the short term. This finding further pushes scholars to theorize the complex ways in which class factors tied largely to local labor markets intersect with cultural barriers as well as racial bias to shape the fate of Latinos across the United States.

**Key Words:** immigration, Latinos, segregation

### Introduction

Residential segregation represents perhaps the most pervasive form of marginalization Latinos face in cities like Chicago, Los Angeles, and New York, where many are confined to neighborhoods that are geographically and socially isolated from majority white neighborhoods.<sup>1</sup> To some extent the “ethnic enclaves” in which Latinos are concentrated sustain cultural traditions and social networks that serve as resources to negotiate the challenges of assimilation. However, many scholars maintain that segregation of this sort can also be problematic, given that it often creates politically and socially marginalized “hyperghettos” plagued with high poverty, school failure, and crime. In many cities, Latino immigrants have been able to escape these high-poverty neighborhoods as they accumulate money, moving from rentals in predominantly Hispanic barrios to homeownership in more integrated and affluent neighborhoods—reminiscent of the patterns of ethnic succession identified by Park and Burgess at the turn of the twentieth century. In the past decade, however, many Latinos have encountered rising levels of segregation, fueled in part by the most recent wave of immigration.

The dynamics and distinct patterns of Latino segregation across time and place remain inadequately understood given two biases in previous research. On the one hand, scholars have emphasized a black-white paradigm (Charles 2003). On the other hand, most research has focused attention on the largest metropolitan areas, largely ignoring midsized cities and small towns. Residential segregation in cities like Detroit, New York, Los Angeles, and Chicago, which rank among the most segregated, provides the focus for the vast majority of studies, both quantitative and qualitative (Glazer and Moynihan 1970; Moore 1978; Hirsch 1983; Wilson 1996; Alba et al. 1997, 2000; Darden and Kamel 2000; O’Connor et al. 2001). The limited scope of this research is particularly problematic given the dramatic growth of the Latino population in recent years coupled with new settlement patterns. According to the most recent census,

the Latino population grew nationally by 60% this past decade—and the most dramatic increases were registered in smaller cities and towns rather than in the largest metropolitan areas. This increase is particularly evident in the Midwest, where the Hispanic population rose from 1,727,000 to 3,125,000 in the last 10 years, a growth rate exceeded only across the South (U.S. Census Bureau 1995a; Gouveia and Saenz 2000; U.S. Census Bureau 2001; Ravuri 2003). In some cities and towns, Latinos now outnumber native-born whites.

This paper draws from the U.S. Census and several other sources to examine the dynamics of residential segregation that Latinos face in both the midsized cities and smaller towns of the Great Plains. More specifically, we examine the segregation of Latinos in three Nebraska cities: Omaha, Lincoln, and Lexington. Nebraska is among those midwestern states that have seen the Latino population increase most dramatically since 1990, rising from 36,969 to 94,425 (U.S. Census Bureau 2001). Most of this growth has been fueled by immigration, as the most recent Hispanic population figures include 30,452 foreign-born Mexicans. Omaha and Lincoln are in many ways typical of the midsized cities that have become home to Latinos across the Midwest, remaining predominantly white even as the number of Hispanics rises. Lexington, on the other hand, is typical of smaller towns such as Crete, Nebraska City, and Schuyler that have seen the Hispanic population, drawn by the lure of meatpacking jobs, grow most rapidly.

The experiences of Latinos across these cities will in large part be shaped by the residential segregation they encounter. We examine this segregation guided by several questions. How do the levels of segregation facing Latinos in these cities compare to the segregation they encounter in larger cities like Chicago? Are the dynamics of segregation similar or distinct? Finally, what are the consequences of this segregation for the neighborhoods in which Latinos are concentrated? These issues are central to understanding the diversity of Latino experiences across the United States and the conditions that contribute to residential integration in some cases and marginalization in others.

### **Residential Segregation, Ethnic Enclaves, and Urban “Ghettos”**

In general, scholars and the public alike are more mixed in their assessment of residential segregation than other forms of segregation. To some extent, residential segregation has been romanticized through its link to ethnic enclaves. Ethnic enclaves—or neighborhoods built along ethnic lines with distinctive ethnic identities—are typically traced to the struggles of those immigrants who poured into cities like Chicago at the turn of the twentieth century.

In these cities, newly arrived immigrants from the same country settled in the same neighborhoods as a way to negotiate the challenges posed by language barriers, job discrimination, and, more generally, anti-immigrant hostility. The social networks that emerged in these neighborhoods provided not only social support but also “social capital”—or access to job networks, lending networks, and other economic and political resources that made survival, economic security, and in time, upward mobility possible. Today the many “Little Italies,” “Chinatowns,” and other ethnic enclaves that emerged from this struggle are widely treated by scholars, politicians, and the public as testament to the resourcefulness and resilience of immigrants faced with difficult circumstances (Lieberson 1963, 1980; Portes and Jensen 1989; Zhou and Logan 1991; Waters and Eschbach 1995).

More broadly, these histories of early-20th-century immigration and ethnic enclaves provide the foundation for the spatial assimilation model that has dominated studies of residential segregation (Charles 2003). In general, this model ties segregation as well as integration to class and culture. From this perspective, ethnic enclaves reflect the preferences and choices of newly arrived immigrants whose residential options are limited by social class and cultural barriers. At least initially, immigrants choose to settle in neighborhoods that are home to others of similar national origin given that they typically arrive in the United States with few economic resources, limited cultural and language proficiency and limited job networks. Kinship as well as other ties to immigrants of similar national origin draw them willingly into ethnic enclaves that provide a sense of community as well economic and social capital. As they accumulate capital, most immigrants move from these ethnic enclaves into more integrated neighborhoods as part of a broader process of assimilation. Homeownership is central to this process, as immigrants use the economic resources they accumulate as they experience upward mobility to buy homes in predominantly white neighborhoods. As a result, ethnic enclaves have historically proven to be “fleeting” and “transitory” (Massey and Denton 1993).

A less optimistic analysis of residential segregation is offered by the place stratification model that emerges in more recent research. This model shifts the focus from socioeconomic status and acculturation levels to the role of racial prejudice and discrimination in housing markets, based largely on the experience of African Americans (Charles 2003). From this perspective, segregation reflects a set of racial biases that have historically fueled “white flight” as neighborhoods become racially integrated. Discriminatory lending on the part of banks, racial steering, redlining, and several other forms of institutional racism have further contributed to residential segregation in cities like Chicago,

New York, and Los Angeles. For Massey and Denton as well as others, racism of this sort generates racially homogenous “ghettos” that face a set of social and economic problems not typical of ethnic enclaves.

For most scholars, the segregation facing Latinos in metropolitan areas more closely reflects the dynamics emphasized by the spatial assimilation model than the place stratification perspective (Charles 2003). Massey and Denton (1993) perhaps most forcefully draw this distinction between the history of Hispanic enclaves and spatial assimilation and the history of black ghettos and residential segregation. First, they point to a broad set of statistical measures that indicate Hispanics are much less segregated from whites than are blacks, even in cities like Chicago and New York. More importantly, they claim that Latino enclaves, like earlier ethnic enclaves, should serve as “springboards for broader mobility in society” while residential segregation traps African Americans “behind an increasingly impermeable color line” (1993:33). Consistent with this claim, they provide compelling evidence that Latinos are more fully able to convert gains in socioeconomic status into spatial mobility. More specifically, they find that affluent Latinos are less segregated from whites than are middle-class Latinos, who in turn are less segregated than poor Hispanics. In contrast, African Americans remain highly segregated from whites regardless of social class. Los Angeles represents only one of the many cities Massey and Denton cite to illustrate these differences. In this city, which is home to the largest Latino barrio, “the poorest Hispanics were less segregated than the *most affluent* blacks” in 1980 as well as 1990 (Massey and Denton 1993; Massey and Fischer 1999).

The differences that distinguish Latino segregation from black segregation are presumably rooted in their distinct experiences with racial bias and housing discrimination. Many Latinos, according to this account, face limited housing options due to limited financial resources but do not face the discriminatory practices that restrict the housing options of even the most affluent blacks. Given this, Latinos are more readily able to use the economic resources they accumulate to rent apartments and buy homes in neighborhoods that at the same time exclude blacks. Similarly, Latinos are less likely to encounter the white hostility and white flight that blacks have routinely encountered as they move into predominantly white neighborhoods. These claims rest on a limited but important set of studies. On the one hand, research that examines attitudes towards residential integration consistently finds that whites indicate a much greater willingness to live in neighborhoods that include Hispanics than neighborhoods that include blacks. In fact, Emerson et al. (2001) find that the percentage of Hispanics does not significantly influence neighborhood preferences among whites, once we control for the effects

of other neighborhood characteristics like crime, property values, and the quality of public schools. In contrast, their willingness to buy homes in neighborhoods that include blacks declines as the percentage of blacks rises, even if other factors are held constant, consistent with a long line of studies that connect this antipathy to white flight from city to suburbs (see Charles 2003). On the other hand, several scholars find that Latino and black encounters with housing discrimination also differ, if less dramatically. Drawing from housing audits as well as lending audits, Yinger (1995) and others (Squires and O'Connor 2001) report that Hispanics are less likely to encounter racial steering in their transactions with realtors and less likely to be denied home loans.

According to this research, the differences that distinguish the dynamics of segregation for blacks and Latinos also result in dramatically distinct consequences. The "hypersegregation" that African Americans face necessarily gives rise to "hyperghettos" that are plagued with poverty rates ranging from 20% to 80%. High poverty rates are coupled with high unemployment, which generates many other problems for the neighborhoods in which blacks are concentrated, including the concentration of female-headed households, welfare dependence, high crime, school failure, and a cycle of disinvestment and decline (Wilson 1987). With few exceptions, these problems are much less common across the ethnic enclaves in which Hispanics reside (Massey and Mullan 1984).

Recent research, however, suggests that these analyses do not adequately capture the complexities of Latino segregation in the past two decades. One of the most interesting developments is the convergence of segregation levels for Latinos and blacks since the 1980s, as black segregation declined while Latino segregation held steady nationally (Charles 2003). This historical development is coupled with significant variation in Latino segregation across metro areas that differ in ways not fully articulated by spatial assimilation models. Frey and Farley (1996) find that Latino segregation was highest in "multiethnic" cities and predominantly white cities where Latinos but no other minorities were overrepresented. Similarly, Iceland (2004) as well as Frey and Farley (1996) find that Latino segregation increased where the Latino population grew most dramatically, while segregation declined in many other cities. In general, the growing complexity of Latino segregation highlighted by this research is tied to the most recent wave of immigration. Iceland and others speculate that high levels of Latino immigration increase segregation by fueling the growth of ethnic enclaves. The expansion of these enclaves may in part reflect the economic constraints and cultural barriers facing recently arrived Latinos who, according to some, are more disadvantaged than earlier cohorts (Borjas 1994). Alba et al. (2000), however, suggest that the rapid influx of Latino immigrants may set in motion a set of processes more consistent

with place stratification models than spatial assimilation models. More specifically, the dramatic increase in the size of the Latino population in recent decades could “heighten the social boundary between the majority and new groups, leading to greater discrimination against the latter” (Alba et al. 2000: 593), consistent with Blalock’s (1967) theory that the greater the size of the minority population, the greater the perceived threat. “Immigrant minorities would begin to resemble African Americans” (Alba et al. 2000: 593), facing greater segregation as their numbers rise (see also Wilson 1987).

Taken together, this work makes clear that many debates regarding the experiences of Latinos remain unresolved at the same time that it provides several important findings and questions guiding our analysis. Both the spatial assimilation model as well as the place stratification model may be relevant to the analysis of Latino segregation in the Heartland as well as more broadly. More specifically, the dramatic rise of the Latino population in the last decade may have transformed the dynamics of segregation to reflect an increasingly complex interplay between class and race. If so, we may see a convergence of segregation patterns for Latinos and African Americans given the significant influx of immigrants. Further, these dynamics may vary across cities and towns that differ in other theoretically important ways as well. By focusing on a region largely ignored in previous research, our analysis will clarify the complexities of Latino segregation across the United States.

### **Data and Methods**

Our analysis draws from the U.S. Census, as well as several other data sources, to explore the dynamics of residential segregation and its consequences for Latinos in three midwestern cities: Omaha, Lincoln, and Lexington, NE. Each has become an important destination for Latinos in the last decade. At the same time, these cities differ in several important ways.

Omaha, the largest city in Nebraska, is home to the largest Latino population in the state. While this community has a long history, the last decade has witnessed unprecedented growth as the Hispanic population increased 143% from 16,371 to 39,735 (see Table 1A). Many Latinos have been drawn by jobs in the manufacturing sector, which historically has been more important in Omaha than elsewhere in Nebraska. In 2000, fully 28% of the Latino population was employed in this sector, many recruited to work in the city’s meat-packing plants (see Table 1B). As in other cities, construction, retail, and the growing healthcare industry have also become important, providing both the “blue collar” and service-sector jobs often reserved for Latinos.



TABLE 1

## DEMOGRAPHIC, SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS OF LATINOS ACROSS NEBRASKA, 1990-2000

<b>A. Population growth, 1990-2000</b>								
	Total Population			Latino Population			Percentage Latino	
	1990	2000	Percentage Growth	1990	2000	Percentage Growth	1990	2000
Omaha (MSA)	618,262	716,998	15.97	16,371	39,735	142.72	2.65	5.54
Lincoln (MSA)	213,641	250,291	17.15	3,938	8,437	114.25	1.84	3.37
Lexington (city)	6,601	10,011	51.66	329	5,121	1,456.53	4.98	51.15
Nebraska	1,578,385	1,711,263	8.42	36,969	94,425	155.42	2.34	5.52
United States	248,709,873	281,421,906	13.15	22,354,059	35,305,818	57.94	8.99	12.55
<b>B. Employment by industry sector as percent of total Latino employment, 2000</b>								
	Manufacturing	Construction	Retail trade	Professional	Education, health and social services	Accommodation and food services	Other	Total
Omaha (MSA)	27.56	9.81	11.60	7.82	10.78	10.36	22.08	100.00
Lincoln (MSA)	17.51	15.07	8.47	8.30	19.62	9.48	21.56	100.00
Lexington (city)	74.91	3.16	2.35	2.25	2.68	3.10	11.56	100.00
<b>C. Median family income in dollars, 2000</b>								
	Non-Hispanic white	Hispanic	Difference					
Omaha (MSA)	57,810	37,488	20,322					
Lincoln (MSA)	55,373	32,426	22,947					
Lexington (city)	47,123	38,514	8,609					
Nebraska	49,669	33,639	16,030					
United States	54,698	34,397	20,301					

Lincoln, in contrast, depends more heavily on state employment than manufacturing, and perhaps for this reason it draws fewer Latinos than Omaha. Both the state capital and the largest public university in Nebraska are located in this city, which counted nearly 20% of its labor force as government workers in the last census. Despite more limited job opportunities, the Latino population has increased considerably since 1990, rising from 3,938 to 8,437 (see Table 1A). Many have, in fact, been drawn to Lincoln by state-sector jobs, though manufacturing and construction are also important, employing 18% and 15% of the Latino population, respectively.

Lexington perhaps represents the most interesting of the cities we include in our analysis. This small town, located in the heart of rural Nebraska, has become the center of a newly defined “micropolitan statistical area,” a designation that refers to areas with at least one “urban cluster” of 10,000 to 49,999 residents. More importantly, Lexington perhaps most clearly reflects the historic shift in immigration patterns that have created new Latino enclaves across the Midwest and other regions in the last 10 years. In 1990 Hispanics accounted for only 5% of the population. In the past decade this population has grown 1,456% from 329 to 5,121 (see Table 1A), making Lexington the first Nebraska town to officially report a Latino majority (51%) in the last census. Recent news releases have treated this and similar enclaves as one of the most surprising and unexpected revelations to emerge from this census. This growth, however, is not so surprising when we recognize its connection to the rise of new labor markets in rural America. In the 1990s, Lexington, like other small towns across the Heartland, became home to one of several major meatpacking plants that relocated from larger cities like Chicago as part of a broader process of industrial restructuring that began in the 1960s. Iowa Beef Packers (IBP) ranks as the top employer today, with close to 2,500 employees. Latino workers, as dramatically reflected in Table 1, represent an important if not major source of labor for this company. Fully 1,400 (75%) of 1,869 Latino workers counted by the census indicated that they held jobs in manufacturing. The overwhelming majority of these workers are employed at IBP; those who are not have few other employment options, as the next largest employer, Orthman Manufacturing Co., has fewer than 200 employees.

The distinct demographic and labor-market dynamics at work in Omaha, Lincoln, and Lexington have several important implications for patterns of residential segregation. Perhaps most significantly, census data reveals that the class divide between Latinos and whites is greater in Omaha and Lincoln than in Lexington. The median family income for Hispanics and non-Hispanic whites for each city is reported in Table 1C. In general, Latinos living in Lexington

report higher family incomes than Latinos living in Omaha or Lincoln, a dividend of sorts for the grueling jobs they perform in the meatpacking industry. More specifically, the median family income for Hispanics in Lexington is \$38,514 per year, fully \$6,000 higher and \$1,000 higher than the median income for their counterparts in Lincoln and Omaha, respectively. Further, the yearly income gap between Latinos and non-Hispanic whites in Lexington is \$8,609 but increases to \$22,947 and \$20,322 in Lincoln and Omaha, respectively. If residential segregation of Latinos is more a product of class differences than other factors, then segregation should be less extreme in Lexington than either in Omaha or Lincoln.

We turn to the decennial census of population and housing to tap several dimensions of residential segregation facing Latinos in each of these cities (U.S. Census Bureau 1992a, 1992b, 2001, 2002, 2003). More than 20 distinct statistical measures have been developed to gauge segregation. We focus our analysis on the most widely used measure: the index of dissimilarity. The dissimilarity index is considered a measure of "evenness," tapping the extent to which individuals belonging to a particular ethnic or racial group are evenly distributed across all neighborhoods in a city or, conversely, concentrated in some neighborhoods (Duncan and Duncan 1955; Farley and Frey 1994). The measure ranges from 0, indicating complete integration, to 100, indicating complete segregation of two groups. In any given city, a dissimilarity score of 100 for Latinos would occur if all members of this ethnic group lived in the same geographic area, namely a block, block group, or census tract. In this case 100% of this population would have to move to another neighborhood to achieve an even distribution across the city. The index of dissimilarity may be calculated at the block, block group, or census tract level using an equation that essentially compares the racial/ethnic composition of these geographic units to the racial/ethnic composition of the city as a whole. The general consensus is that an index of dissimilarity that falls under 30 indicates low levels of segregation, values between 30 and 60 indicate moderate segregation, and values above 60 indicate high segregation (Massey and Denton 1993).<sup>2</sup>

Drawing from Iceland et al. (2005), our analysis of dissimilarity indices includes three key sets of comparisons that are suggested by spatial assimilation and place stratification models. First, we compare dissimilarity indices for Latinos and African Americans in 1990 and 2000 across the three geographic areas included in our sample. Second, we compare dissimilarity indices for Latinos of *distinct social classes* within each area. More specifically, we calculate dissimilarity indices that tap the segregation of Latinos of different social classes from all non-Hispanic whites and from non-Hispanic whites of

similar socioeconomic status (SES). If class remains central to the dynamics of segregation, then high-SES Latinos should face less segregation than low-SES Latinos. We include three dimensions of socioeconomic status that might be tied to residential segregation: household income, educational attainment, and homeownership status. Household income is also broken down into four income brackets to roughly represent income quartiles: \$19,999 or less, \$20,000 to \$44,999, \$45,000 to 74,999 and \$75,000 and over. Educational attainment is broken down into four categories: less than high school degree, high school degree only, some college (including associate's degree), and college graduate (bachelor's and/or graduate degree). Third, we calculate dissimilarity indices that tap the segregation of Latinos of different social classes from other Latinos. If place stratification models are relevant, these indices should be lower than our other indices, indicating that Latinos are more segregated from whites than from other Latinos. For Lincoln and Omaha, we calculate all three sets of dissimilarity indices at the census tract level. For Lexington, we calculate these indices at the block-group level since the city includes only two census tracts. Greater variation at the block group level allows us to derive a more meaningful analysis of the connections between class, race/ethnicity, and segregation across neighborhoods in this city.

If residential segregation occurs largely through housing markets, then it is also important to examine several dimensions of the housing market across our sample of three cities. The value of homes, rental prices, and several other indicators that reflect housing markets are drawn from the census.

Finally, the census also provides data that allows us to sketch the consequences of segregation for the neighborhoods in which Latinos and other minorities are concentrated. For Massey and Denton, the concentration of poverty is perhaps the most serious consequence of segregation in any city where the overall poverty rates among racial and ethnic minorities are higher than among whites. The extent to which segregation concentrates poverty is measured through an analysis of poverty rates at the census-tract level in Lincoln and Omaha and at the block-group level in Lexington. The U.S. Census Bureau (1995b) designates any tract with poverty rates 20% or higher as "poverty areas" while tracts with poverty rates at 40% or higher are designated "extreme poverty areas"; we extend these same criteria to compare poverty rates across block groups. We also examine several other conditions that are typically considered among the most deleterious consequences of segregation, including the concentration of female-headed households, welfare dependence, and low educational attainment.

## Results

### **A Tale of Two Cities: Residential Segregation in Omaha and Lincoln**

All who enter Nebraska through the major interstate that crosses the state are greeted with signs promising “the Good Life.” If segregation in any way represents an obstacle to “the good life,” then our analysis indicates that the prospects for Latinos across Nebraska are mixed. In general, Latinos are less segregated from whites in cities and towns across Nebraska than in cities such as Chicago and Los Angeles. However, segregation persists, though it varies considerably across the state much as it does across the nation.

According to the U.S. Census, Latinos were most segregated from whites in Omaha, where the index of dissimilarity at the census-tract level and the block-group level stood at 48.2 and 50.6, respectively, in 2000 (see Table 2A). In Lincoln, Latinos were considerably less segregated as indicated by dissimilarity indices of 32.5 and 34.8 across census tracts and block groups, respectively. Though segregated, in neither of these cities does the dissimilarity index qualify as high, unlike the indices for Chicago (61.1) and Los Angeles (63.1) ([www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov)). Consistent with Massey and Denton, Latinos in these cities are also less segregated from whites than are blacks. African Americans in Omaha, in particular, face much higher levels of segregation, as indicated by a dissimilarity index of 69.8 in 2000.

The dynamics of segregation for Latinos in these cities are, however, more complicated and problematic than these figures and comparisons reflect. A more cautionary tale is suggested by several indicators, including the substantial *increase* evident in the level of segregation facing Latinos over this past decade. Between 1990 and 2000 the index of dissimilarity increased for Omaha and Lincoln at both the census-tract level and the block-group level. In contrast, the segregation facing African Americans in these cities declined considerably, consistent with a trend seen nationally. Together these findings confirm our expectations that Latino and black segregation levels will increasingly converge with rising immigration. Further, these results underscore an important similarity in the dynamics of Latino and black segregation not fully acknowledged in previous research. Specifically, Latino segregation seems to rise as the *size* of the Latino population increases, just as rising black-white segregation across the country was historically fueled by the influx of African Americans from the South into northern cities.

The rise in Latino segregation that is coupled with rising immigration reflects in part the growth of ethnic enclaves in Lincoln and Omaha. In both

TABLE 2

## DISSIMILARITY INDEX FOR URBAN AND RURAL NEBRASKA

<b>A. Dissimilarity index for urban and rural Nebraska, 1990-2000</b>									
City	Hispanic-White				Black-White				
	Census-tract level		Block-group level		Census-tract level				
	1990	2000	1990	2000	1990	2000			
Omaha (MSA)	37.3	48.2	38.1	50.6	74.8	69.8			
Lincoln (MSA)	26.0	32.5	28.6	34.8	42.7	37.2			
Lexington (city)	NA	10.0	NA	24.5	NA	NA			

<b>B. Dissimilarity index by socioeconomic status for Latinos, 2000</b>									
Socioeconomic status	(1)			(2)			(3)		
	Segregation of Hispanics in SES category from all non-hispanic whites			Segregation of Hispanics and non-Hispanic whites in same SES category			Segregation of Hispanics in SES category from all Hispanics		
	Lincoln	Omaha	Lexington	Lincoln	Omaha	Lexington	Lincoln	Omaha	Lexington
<b>Household income quartiles</b>									
\$19,999 or less	51	64	28	32	53	24	27	27	18
\$20,000-\$44,999	37	55	27	34	50	33	17	17	10
\$45,000-\$74,999	42	47	29	46	49	35	30	23	15
\$75,000 or over	63	58	53	61	62	74	65	42	30
<b>Education (population 25 years and over)</b>									
12th grade or less, no high school diploma	53	68	35	40	58	24	24	24	4
High school diploma only	45	52	23	43	49	21	26	23	23
Some college (including assc. degree)	38	41	46	38	40	54	29	34	26
Bachelors degree or higher	41	50	54	39	50	72	36	48	28
<b>Homeownership</b>									
Renters	49	56	31	30	46	28	19	21	8
Homeowners	34	47	28	36	48	33	33	27	8

Note: The dissimilarity index does not provide an accurate measure of segregation when a group's population is less than 1,000 as is the case in Lexington for African Americans in 1990 and 2000 and for Latinos in 1990.

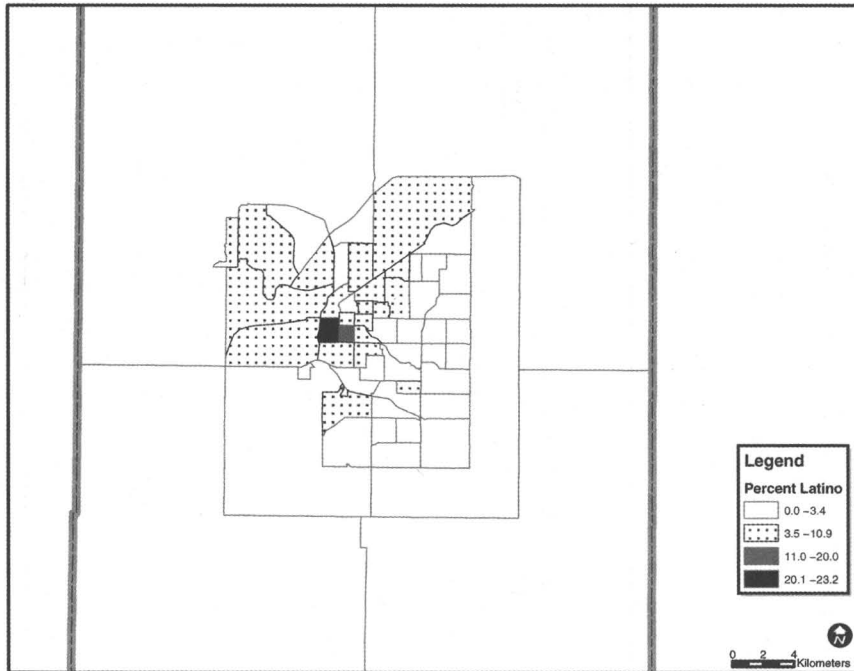


Figure 1. Percentage Latino by census tract in Lincoln, NE, 2000.

cities these enclaves have emerged from a handful of centrally located census tracts that trace their history to the turn of the century. In Lincoln these include census tracts 20 and 21, recently designated by the city as “core neighborhoods” that lie in the “Heart of Lincoln” (see Fig. 1). At the turn of the century, these neighborhoods were home to German, Russian, Czech, and other immigrants. Today, Latinos have become the largest minority group in these tracts, due largely to immigration. Between 1990 and 2000 the Latino population grew by 73% and 330% in census tracts 21 and 20, respectively (see Table 3).

In Omaha, the growth of the Latino enclave has been more dramatic, fueled by a greater rise in immigration. The core of the Hispanic community lies in several south-side neighborhoods that, like those in Lincoln, were home to German, Russian, and Czech immigrants at the turn of the century (see Fig. 2). Latinos living in this enclave, however, face considerably greater segregation and spatial isolation than either their predecessors or their counterparts in Lincoln. In other words, the Latino enclave in Omaha has become increasingly home to Hispanics—and no one else—in the last 10 years. Census tracts 27, 26, and 32 most clearly reflect this growing spatial isolation (see Table 3). According to the

TABLE 3

## DEMOGRAPHIC, SOCIAL, AND ECONOMIC PROFILE OF LATINO AND BLACK ENCLAVES IN LINCOLN AND OMAHA

	Latino population		Non-Hispanic white population		African American population	Median contract rent (\$)	Median value of owner-occupied housing (\$)	Percent in poverty	Percent female headed	Percent receiving public assistance	Percent high school degree or higher
	Percent change	Percent of total population	Percent change	Percent of total population	Percent of total population						
<b>LINCOLN</b>											
<b>Highest Latino concentration</b>											
Census tract 21	73	23.2	-14	66	5.8	395	60,600	18.6	13.4	5.2	76.6
Census tract 20	330	11.2	-10	72	9.1	371	81,200	30.0	25.8	6.5	84.4
<b>Enclave total</b>	<b>159</b>	<b>15.0</b>	<b>-11</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>8.2</b>	<b>383</b>	<b>70,900</b>	<b>26.7</b>	<b>21.1</b>	<b>6.3</b>	<b>82.2</b>
<b>Highest black concentration</b>											
Census tract 4	590	7.0	-6	67	13.7	395	63,400	25.2	22.0	11.8	75.1
Census tract 7	313	6.6	-15	56	12.9	374	65,700	37.7	19.5	6.5	74.7
<b>Enclave total</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>6.9</b>	<b>-9</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>13.4</b>	<b>385</b>	<b>64,550</b>	<b>29.5</b>	<b>21.3</b>	<b>9.8</b>	<b>75.0</b>
<b>MSA Total</b>	<b>114</b>	<b>3.4</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>3.4</b>	<b>456</b>	<b>105,100</b>	<b>9.5</b>	<b>9.5</b>	<b>2.9</b>	<b>90.5</b>
<b>OMAHA</b>											
<b>Highest Latino concentration</b>											
Census tract 27	139	55.4	-31	40	3.0	350	50,200	18.6	8.0	4.4	52.6
Census tract 26	248	52.8	-33	41	3.1	392	64,100	16.5	9.9	6.7	57.5
Census tract 32	266	52.2	-35	42	4.3	324	53,800	20.4	12.4	3.8	52.6
Census tract 20	400	43.7	-24	51	2.1	371	50,700	19.1	21.5	7.8	54.9
Census tract 39	519	42.2	-35	43	11.5	344	52,100	23.2	16.4	6.2	59.7
Census tract 28	169	41.2	-23	52	3.6	389	60,900	16.6	16.6	5.4	62.2
Census tract 29	191	37.2	-18	34	25.8	145	54,600	32.7	25.9	12.8	59.1
Census tract 33	350	36.1	-30	56	3.7	388	49,300	14.9	15.7	4.9	56.2
Census tract 24	165	32.4	-17	61	4.3	403	51,300	16.9	16.9	6.7	60.4
<b>Enclave total</b>	<b>234</b>	<b>42.6</b>	<b>-26</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>8.5</b>	<b>345</b>	<b>54,111</b>	<b>21.0</b>	<b>17.3</b>	<b>7.0</b>	<b>57.6</b>
<b>Highest black concentration</b>											
Census tract 7	717	3.5	-25	6	90.4	327	26,900	35.3	26.5	11.9	64.6
Census tract 59.02	203	4.6	-37	9	86.0	389	37,400	32.6	21.5	15.5	69.3
Census tract 8	78	3.3	-8	10	86.0	366	34,800	36.3	42.1	10.1	64.8
Census tract 52	550	4.3	-26	10	84.5	327	33,400	40.4	55.2	19.9	61.8
Census tract 11	159	2.9	22	11	82.9	343	31,900	50.3	55.4	15.9	72.6
<b>Enclave total</b>	<b>213</b>	<b>3.7</b>	<b>-14</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>85.4</b>	<b>361</b>	<b>39,889</b>	<b>40.0</b>	<b>41.3</b>	<b>14.7</b>	<b>67.4</b>
<b>MSA Total</b>	<b>143</b>	<b>5.5</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>8.8</b>	<b>478</b>	<b>100,100</b>	<b>8.4</b>	<b>10.6</b>	<b>2.9</b>	<b>88.0</b>

Note: Percent change figures are based on a comparison of 1990 and 2000 census data. All other figures are based on census data for 2000. In Lincoln, census tract 32.01 actually has the highest concentration of African Americans. However, this population is confined to "group quarters" (i.e., a correctional facility) and not included in this analysis. The census tracts included in Latino and black enclaves, respectively, are geographically contiguous.



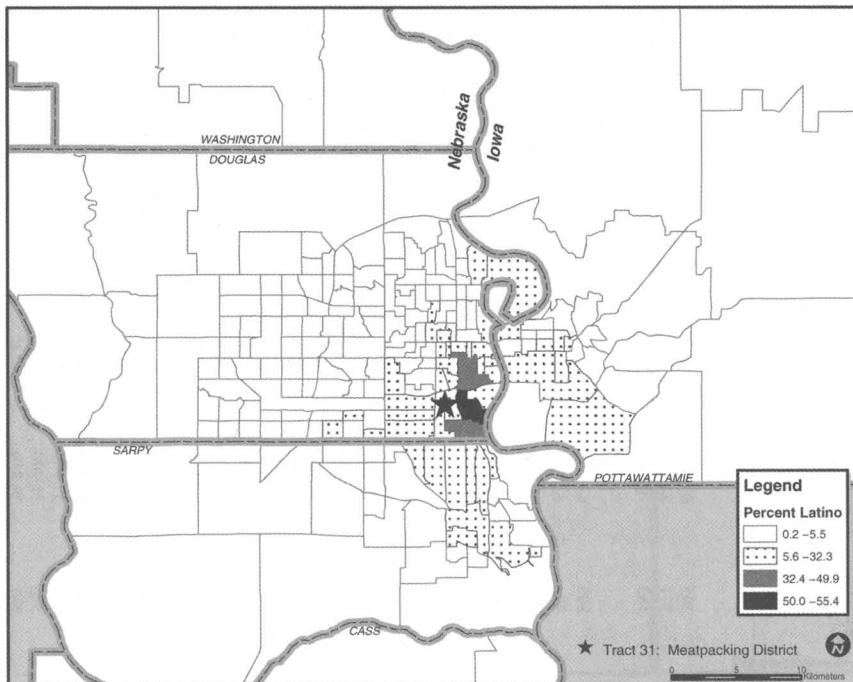


Figure 2. Percentage Latino by census tract in Omaha, 2000.

most recent census, Latinos have become the majority in each tract, reaching 60% in several block groups within these tracts.

In both Lincoln and Omaha, the growth of the Latino enclave is tied to the set of factors emphasized by spatial assimilation models as well as place stratification models. At least in part, the concentration of new immigrants in these enclaves seems to be driven by the economics of housing markets that afford those with limited financial resources few options. Many Latinos can only afford low-priced rental properties, and many of these properties are located in Hispanic enclaves. In Lincoln, for example, the median contract rent in the Latino enclave is \$383 while the MSA median reaches \$456 in 2000 (see Table 3). Similarly, the median rent in Omaha's Hispanic enclave is \$133 less than in the broader metro area. The value of owner-occupied housing in Latino enclaves also differs significantly, falling \$34,000 and \$50,000 below the median for the Lincoln and Omaha metro areas, respectively.

In Omaha, a unique set of labor-market dynamics intersects with the economics of housing markets to further fuel the expansion and segregation of

the Latino enclave. Specifically, this enclave, a historically important center of the meatpacking industry, remains home to several large meatpacking plants. Three plants form the core of this industry in Omaha today: Northern States Beef operated by Con Agra, Nebraska Beef, and Greater Omaha Packing. All depend heavily on Latino immigrants for labor, just as they depended heavily on European immigrants at the turn of the century (Lopez 2000). All are located in census tract 31, a commercial hub that lies alongside the Latino residential enclave that has emerged across the south side (see Fig. 2).

Notwithstanding the importance of these class dynamics, place stratification models are also relevant to explaining the rise of ethnic enclaves in Lincoln and Omaha. More specifically, the rising concentration of Latinos in a handful of neighborhoods also reflects the white flight that rising immigration has fueled. In Lincoln, the white population declined by 14% and 10% in the two tracts that form the core of the Hispanic enclave, as Anglo-Americans relocated from the central city to less diverse neighborhoods on the edge of the metro area. In Omaha, white flight has been more dramatic. Since 1990 the white population has declined by 26% across the Latino enclave, while the number of Hispanics has increased by more than 200%.

These findings, though telling, leave unresolved the importance of class and ethnicity in the process of spatial assimilation—that is, assimilation into neighborhoods that lie outside ethnic enclaves. More specifically, do Latinos become less segregated from whites—and more segregated from each other—as their socioeconomic status increases, even though they face a set of racial biases that motivate white flight? Table 2B provides a more careful analysis of this issue and further underscores the complexities of Latino segregation. On the one hand, upward mobility along several dimensions of social class seems to afford some spatial mobility for Latinos in Lincoln and Omaha. The connection between social class and spatial mobility is most clearly reflected in dissimilarity indices that tap the segregation of Latinos who differ in their SES from *all* non-Hispanic whites (Table 2B, column 1). These indices indicate that middle-income Hispanics are considerably less segregated from whites than are low-income Hispanics. Similarly, college-educated Latinos are less segregated from whites than are less-educated Latinos.

As expected, spatial mobility for middle-income and college-educated Latinos, as well as others, seems to be secured in part through homeownership, as Hispanic homeowners are less segregated from whites than are Hispanic renters. Though most Latinos remain renters, a surprising percentage has been able to convert gains in their socioeconomic status into homeownership. In the past decade, homeownership rates among Latinos rose considerably to reach

36% and 44% in Lincoln and Omaha, respectively. Some of these homeowners have remained in the tracts that represent the core of the Latino enclave, adding a measure of stability to these neighborhoods. The majority, however, have moved into neighborhoods outside these enclaves to live alongside whites, as did an earlier generation of immigrants.

Though increases in SES seem to bring spatial mobility for Latinos, our analysis of dissimilarity indices also provides several pieces of evidence that further confirm the continuing significance of ethnicity for Hispanic residential patterns. First, the highest-income Latinos in Lincoln are more segregated from whites than Latinos of any other socioeconomic group, including low-income households. Similarly, the highest-income Latinos in Omaha are more segregated than middle-income Latinos and only slightly less segregated than the lowest-income Latinos. This pattern, widely treated as unique to African Americans, further indicates that the dynamics of Latino segregation reflect processes emphasized by place stratification models as well as by spatial assimilation models.

Similarly consistent with place stratification models, our findings indicate that ethnicity seems to limit the spatial assimilation that higher-SES Latinos are able to secure. The dissimilarity indices reported in Table 2B, column 2, which tap the segregation of Latinos from whites of the same SES, point to these constraints. In both Lincoln and Omaha, segregation from similarly situated whites increases as income increases, though not monotonically. Similarly, Latino homeowners are slightly more segregated from white homeowners than Latino renters are from white renters. Consistent with this pattern, segregation between college-educated Latinos and college-educated whites does not differ significantly from the segregation evident between less-educated Hispanics and less-educated whites.

Finally, the dissimilarity indices reported in Table 2B, column 3, more definitively point to the continuing significance of ethnicity as well as class for Latinos in both Lincoln and Omaha. These indices tap intragroup segregation—that is, the segregation of Latinos of different social classes from all other Latinos. Consistent with the spatial assimilation model, we find that Latinos become more segregated from other Latinos as SES rises. High-income and/or college-educated Latinos are more segregated from other Latinos than are lower-income and/or less-educated Latinos. Similarly, Hispanic homeowners are more segregated from other Latinos than are Hispanic renters. However, a comparison of the results reported in Table 2B, columns 1 and 3, indicate that the indices of dissimilarity tapping intragroup segregation are, in general, much lower than the indices of dissimilarity tapping intergroup segregation. In

other words, Latinos are more segregated from non-Hispanic whites than they are from each other, a pattern that parallels the pattern reported for African Americans in most cities.

Both intergroup and intragroup segregation have important consequences for the neighborhoods in which Latinos reside in Lincoln and Omaha. Latino enclaves, in particular, differ from other neighborhoods along several dimensions that will determine the opportunities available to this generation as well as the next. First and foremost, poverty rates are considerably higher in these enclaves than in the broader metro area (see Table 3). In Lincoln, the poverty rate in the Latino enclave reaches 26.7% while the metrowide poverty rate is only 9.5%. In Omaha, the poverty rate in the Hispanic enclave, though lower at 21.0%, is more than double the metrowide poverty rate. In both cities, these enclaves represent high poverty areas by census standards. As expected, the greater concentration of poverty is tied to a higher concentration of female-headed households as well as a higher concentration of families receiving public assistance. In Omaha, segregation results in one other important disparity: only 58% of all adults in the Hispanic enclave have a high school degree, while high school completion stands at 88% in the broader metro area.

Though these disparities underscore a serious set of challenges for Latino enclaves, our analysis indicates that segregation has a more deleterious set of consequences elsewhere. More specifically, those neighborhoods that are widely recognized as the center of the black community in Omaha face a more dire set of circumstances. First, these neighborhoods are more socially isolated than the Latino enclave. In 2000 African Americans accounted for more than 80% of the population in the five census tracts with the highest concentration of blacks. Second, segregation has resulted in a much greater concentration of poverty. The poverty rate across these five census tracts reaches 40%, making this an extreme poverty area according to the census. Similarly, 41% of all households are female-headed while nearly 15% receive public assistance. Paradoxically, these disadvantages are this extreme despite the higher levels of educational attainment. More than 67% of the adults in these tracts have a high school degree, a level 10% higher than the level seen in the Hispanic enclave.

The differences that distinguish the Latino enclave from the black enclave in Omaha provide a broader lesson regarding the interplay between segregation and labor-market dynamics not fully articulated in previous research. Given that Latinos face rising segregation in this city, they may increasingly face a degree of spatial isolation that marginalizes this population politically and socially, just as African Americans have become marginalized. However, split labor markets that relegate many African Americans to the ranks of the unemployed while

creating job opportunities for Latino newcomers in the meatpacking industry mean that segregation has distinct economic consequences for the two groups. For Latinos, “the good life” is compromised by segregation and a labor market that affords few opportunities outside the backbreaking work provided by meatpacking plants. But employment in this sector, though grueling, to some extent provides the income necessary to buffer Latinos from the most devastating economic consequences of segregation. Many have been able translate this income into homeownership, and through homeownership provide an important anchor for the south-side community. The enclave that has been built on this foundation, though isolated, has become an economically and socially vibrant haven for Hispanics in Omaha.

### **Lexington: Integration and Segregation in Small-Town America**

In some ways, Latino encounters with segregation in Omaha and Lincoln reflect patterns noted by other scholars for larger cities in the United States. In general, however, our analysis makes clear that the dynamics of segregation have become increasingly complex in the context of the most recent wave of immigration. These complexities are further underscored by our analysis of segregation in Lexington, Nebraska. This small town provides important lessons about the “new face” of segregation that has emerged in the last decade across communities largely ignored in academic and public debates.

At first glance, Lexington has become a “model city,” ranking among the most integrated in the country. Several measures capture this remarkable if in many ways unexpected reality. The index of dissimilarity perhaps most concisely taps the integration of Latinos across neighborhoods in Lexington (see Table 2A). At the census-tract level, the dissimilarity index barely reaches 10 as Latinos are spread almost evenly across the two census tracts that make up the city. More specifically, Latinos constitute 56% of the population in census tract 9684 and 46% of the population in census tract 9685, respectively (see Fig. 3). Both tracts closely reflect the overall demographics of the city, which now counts 51.2% of its population as Latino. At the block-group level, residential integration is less complete, as the dissimilarity index rises to 24.5. Segregation, in other words, does occur within each of Lexington’s census tracts but this segregation, according to commonly accepted standards, would be labeled “low.” By these measures, Latinos in Lexington are much more integrated across neighborhoods than are Latinos living in Lincoln, Omaha, or most other U.S. cities.

At least in part, the integration of Latinos across Lexington reflects their success buying homes in most every neighborhood. In 2000 the homeownership



Figure 3. Percentage Latino by census tract and block group, Lexington, NE, 2000.

rate among Latinos in Lexington stood at 50.1%, exceeding the homeownership rates among Latinos in Lincoln, Omaha, and nationally. This figure reflects at least three interdependent factors that give Latinos greater access to homeownership in Lexington. First, housing is more affordable. The median value of owner-occupied housing, according to the most recent census, was \$61,600, about \$40,000 less than housing values in Omaha and Lincoln. Approximately two-thirds of all housing is valued at under \$100,000 and close to one-third of the housing is valued under \$50,000. Second, the number of rental properties available, at least when Latinos initially arrived, was limited and plans to build apartment complexes to meet the growing demand for housing encountered stiff opposition from native-born residents (see Gouveia and Stull 1995). This set of opportunities and constraints in the local housing market intersected with the opportunities created by the local labor market for Latino newcomers to both push and pull them into homeownership. As in Omaha, employment in the meatpacking industry has provided a steady source of income for many, even though on other levels this work entails serious costs. In short, Latinos in Lexington like Latinos in Omaha have been forced to work hard at dangerous jobs simply to make a living, and in the process many have managed to translate their earnings into homeownership. Homeownership in turn has become a "springboard" to spatial mobility as Massey and Denton anticipate. More specifically, the dissimilarity indices reported in Table 2B indicate that Latino homeowners are less segregated from whites than Latinos of nearly every other SES.

Despite these strides, a more careful analysis of the data for Lexington reveals that ethnicity remains a significant determinant of residential patterns even as integration has occurred. While residential segregation across the city is low, Latinos remain, in fact, underrepresented in some block groups and overrepresented in other block groups (see Fig. 3). Importantly, the highest concentration of Latinos occurs in the single block group that lies south of the railroad tracks that cut through town. This area, block group 3 in census tract 9684, is officially 67% Latino and accounts for 32% of the total Latino population in Lexington. Many have in fact become homeowners, but perhaps not coincidentally the largest mobile-home park in the city also lies in this area. In contrast, the three contiguous block groups that cut across the northernmost section of the city, and on the other side of the tracks, claim the fewest and lowest concentration of Latinos.

A more complex analysis of the continuing significance of ethnicity in Lexington is provided by the results reported in Table 2B. Consistent with spatial assimilation models, income and education as well as homeownership to some extent provide access to more integrated neighborhoods (column 1).

Latinos who hold a high school degree are considerably less segregated from whites than are less-educated Latinos. Similarly, Latino households in the \$20,000 to \$44,999 income bracket are slightly less segregated from whites than Latino households falling in the lowest income category. However, the relationship between income, education, and spatial mobility is not linear. The indices of dissimilarity for college-educated Latinos are considerably higher than the indices for those with a high school degree as well as for those who are less educated. Similarly, the dissimilarity index for the most affluent Latinos, at 53, is significantly higher than the dissimilarity indices for less affluent Latinos. In short, the most affluent and highly educated Latinos in Lexington are more segregated from whites than any other group. This finding, though unexpected, may reflect a set of dynamics similar to those evident in larger cities, becoming more pronounced when the number of highly educated and affluent Latinos becomes small. In Lexington, only 142 of 1,160 Latino households report an income greater than \$75,000 while only 52 of 2,380 adults age 25 or older have completed a college degree. The overwhelming majority of these individuals and households are concentrated in those block groups with the highest concentration of Latinos. Conversely, those block groups with the highest concentration of whites include few if any of these individuals and households while Latinos of other SES groups are better represented.

Three other findings underscore the continuing significance of ethnicity in the dynamics of residential segregation and integration in Lexington. First, Latino-white segregation does not disappear once we control for socioeconomic status, as the results in Table 2B, column 2, indicate. With few exceptions, these dissimilarity indices indicate that Latinos remain as segregated from whites of the same SES as they are segregated from whites more generally. Second, Latinos of most SES groups are less segregated from other Latinos than they are from whites, as a comparison of columns 1 and 3 indicates. Finally, evidence that these patterns, at least in part, reflect a process of *white flight* similar to that occurring in larger cities perhaps most clearly underscores the continuing significance of place stratification models for Lexington as well as Omaha and Lincoln. According to the census, the white population of Lexington dropped from 6,231 to 4,635, or 26%, since 1990, even though the total population grew by 52% (see Table 4). This pattern of white flight cuts across every block group in the city, as each lost Anglo residents.

To some extent this exodus may reflect the migration of many younger Anglos to urban centers in search of college degrees and subsequent employment. In Lexington, however, this trend also reflects an important new form of white flight and “re-segregation” not widely acknowledged. As Latinos arrived



TABLE 4  
 DEMOGRAPHIC AND SOCIAL PROFILE OF LEXINGTON BY CENSUS TRACT AND BLOCK GROUPS, 2000

LEXINGTON (city)	Latino population		Non-Hispanic white population			Percent in poverty	Percent female headed	Percent receiving public assistance	Percent high school grad	
	Percent change	Percent of total population	Decline in numbers	Percent change	Percent of total population					
<b>Highest Latino concentration</b>										
Census tract 9684	BG 3	1538	67.35	-418	-36	30.3	14.10	7.27	4.96	38.15
Census tract 9685	BG 3	1211	63.83	-218	-42	33.2	4.89	3.08	7.98	48.19
Census tract 9685	BG 5	2093	55.47	-267	-30	40.4	20.84	14.55	13.35	50.33
Census tract 9684	BG 2	1213	54.27	-154	-24	42.7	13.34	12.54	5.32	48.36
Census tract 9685	BG 4	1173	48.43	-116	-19	48.3	12.85	13.28	1.69	62.10
<b>Lowest Latino concentration</b>										
Census tract 9684	BG 1	1419	37.00	-157	-17	61.3	9.09	7.84	1.96	80.83
Census tract 9685	BG 2	1636	33.29	-149	-24	66.2	13.30	2.00	0.00	79.16
Census tract 9685	BG 1	1354	20.93	-117	-14	77.7	4.08	2.83	1.94	87.61
<b>Citywide totals</b>		<b>1457</b>	<b>51.15</b>	<b>-1596</b>	<b>-26</b>	<b>46.3</b>	<b>12.45</b>	<b>8.33</b>	<b>5.02</b>	<b>57.95</b>

and settled in this city this past decade, a growing number of Anglos have left Lexington for new developments and “acreages” outside the city. Johnson Lake, which begins seven miles south of Lexington, represents one of the most important of these developments. This lake, a manmade reservoir built in the early 1940s, has been transformed from a popular vacation spot for the state into the centerpiece of several exclusive housing developments that have become home to many Anglos who continue to work in Lexington, Cozad, and other nearby towns.

Census data for the Johnson Lake area (census tract 9676 Gosper County) reflect the demographics of this growth. Since 1990 nearly 70 new homes have been built in this area, many along the 11-mile shoreline, while others have converted existing cabins into permanent residences. While most other rural areas have suffered dramatic population declines this past decade, the population in the area surrounding Johnson Lake has *increased* from 1,928 to 2,143. Work continues to draw most to Lexington and Cozad, but the lakefront communities these commuters now call home represent a different world in many ways. Most importantly, fully 98% of the population is white, a stark contrast to the increasingly integrated neighborhoods a few miles up the road in Lexington.

The negative consequences of white flight and “resegregation” in Lexington are perhaps less clear at this point than they are in larger cities. In many ways, Latino newcomers have saved this town from the decline so many other small towns across the Heartland have suffered. Despite white flight, economic, social, and cultural institutions have flourished as the influx of Latino immigrants has bolstered a wide range of established businesses, from banks to realty agencies, and given rise to new businesses. Latinos have also contributed greatly to the resurgence of schools, churches, and other social and cultural institutions across Lexington. Similarly, most of the neighborhoods in which Latinos are concentrated have been spared the decline that often comes with white flight and resegregation (see Table 4). Neighborhood poverty rates, in general, remain lower than poverty rates in many Hispanic enclaves across the country, as working-class Latinos employed in the meatpacking industry have taken the place of working-class and middle-class whites.

Nevertheless, several patterns suggest that a number of challenges remain for Latino newcomers. For some, poverty remains a serious obstacle to “the good life” even as meatpacking jobs offer the promise of financial security to most others. Specifically, the poverty rate among Latinos living in Lexington remains at 18.2% while poverty rates across the nation dropped to 12.4% in the last census. The most economically vulnerable Latinos, like low-income individuals across the nation, live a precarious existence as basic needs, though perhaps less costly than in larger cities, can claim a significant share of household income. For most

low-income families, rent represents the most costly basic need. Lexington does not seem to be an exception, as the savings that small-town living provides homeowners is not similarly available to renters. The median contract rent for the city is \$358. For Latino renters, the contract rent rises to \$364. Faced with these rents, making ends meet for those with low income remains difficult.

In Lexington as in Omaha, a “safety net” of sorts may be provided by the neighborhoods in which low-income Latinos are concentrated as well as by the broader set of institutions the Hispanic community has bolstered. However, the future of this safety net and the prosperity of the Latino community more generally may be more tenuous than is commonly recognized for two key reasons. On the one hand, meatpacking provides an important but limited number of job opportunities. This sector thus will be unable to fully absorb the next generation of Latino adults. On the other hand, the next generation also lacks one important form of social capital on which their white counterparts may draw to pursue other opportunities: namely, a network of educated parents and neighbors. As Table 4 indicates, educational attainment in those neighborhoods with the highest concentration of Latinos is much lower than in predominantly white neighborhoods. In fact, the majority of Latino adults living in Lexington lack a high school degree. The public schools that Latino children attend ideally could compensate for this disadvantage, arming students with the high school degrees that they need to pursue higher education or employment opportunities beyond the meatpacking industry. If these schools fail Latino children in Lexington, however, as have others across the nation, the prosperity of the Latino community may be more fleeting than secure.

### **Conclusions**

As the Heartland becomes an increasingly important destination for Latinos, scholars must turn their attention to the cities and towns of the Great Plains to more fully understand the dynamics that shape the fate of Hispanics in the United States. This analysis of the segregation facing Latinos across Nebraska extends our understanding of these dynamics in several important ways. First, our analysis clarifies the diverse set of constraints and opportunities that Latinos encounter in their search for “the good life.” More specifically, we uncover the increasingly complex connections between class, race, and segregation that have emerged with the most recent wave of immigration. Both the larger cities and small towns of the Midwest provide important lessons about these complexities and the way that the dynamics of segregation differ and coincide across time and place.

Much like African Americans a generation ago, Latinos in Omaha and Lincoln have become increasingly segregated from whites as the *size* of the Hispanic population has increased. Consistent with most previous studies, this rising segregation reflects to some extent the set of processes emphasized by spatial assimilation models. In other words, the increase in segregation reflects in part the economic constraints facing the recent wave of Latino immigrants who in large part account for Hispanic population growth in these cities. Split labor markets that limit the job opportunities available to these new immigrants intersect with the economics of housing markets to concentrate many in the ethnic enclaves that have emerged in each city. Class factors also account to some extent for the spatial mobility many Latinos have secured. More specifically, homeownership has provided some degree of spatial mobility for Latinos, as have some gains in education and income.

As central as class factors are to these processes, our analysis also points to the limits of previous research that emphasizes spatial assimilation models to the exclusion of place stratification models in accounting for the segregation facing Latinos. With the most recent wave of immigration, several patterns have emerged that clearly point to the continuing significance of race/ethnicity for Hispanics, at least in some metro contexts. First, the relationship between income, education, and spatial mobility is not linear as earlier studies report. Second, Latinos of most SES groups are less segregated from other Latinos than they are from whites. Perhaps most importantly, the segregation facing Latinos in Lincoln and Omaha is in part the product of white flight. In both cities, the influx of Latinos to those neighborhoods that have become ethnic enclaves has spurred the exodus of whites just as did the arrival of African Americans to northern cities in the early 20th century. In neither case is white flight reducible to economics.

Lexington offers additional lessons less fully anticipated in previous research and perhaps more interesting. On the one hand, this case suggests that new models for building integrated communities lie in “micropolitan areas” like this one: small towns that offer Latino immigrants a set of job opportunities that provide incomes similar to those of white residents and make homeownership across a broad spectrum of neighborhoods possible. On the other hand, this case also suggests that the promise of integration afforded by these circumstances may be undermined by the same fears that have fueled white flight in urban areas. In short, Lexington makes clear that white flight represents a response to integration that cuts across rural and urban America. The flight from city to suburb evident in cities across the country since the 1950s may be repeated in towns like Lexington, albeit taking on a perhaps new form as Anglos move

from town to acreages and lakefront properties that literally lie in the “middle of nowhere.”

Though problematic in many ways, the consequences of segregation for Latinos in Nebraska are perhaps more mixed than we initially anticipated. In Omaha and Lexington, in particular, meatpacking jobs have provided the income that buffers predominantly Latino neighborhoods from the economic costs of segregation evident in predominantly black neighborhoods. Further, the concentration of a “critical mass” of steadily employed Latinos in both cities has provided the foundation for a thriving Hispanic business community as well as churches and other cultural institutions. This may in turn contribute further to the concentration of Latinos in these ethnic enclaves through a process we were unable to tap; specifically, some if not many Latinos who may have the financial resources to rent and buy housing in other neighborhoods may choose to live in ethnic enclaves because they want to remain connected to the cultural, political, and social life of this community. Those who have emerged as leaders within the Hispanic community in particular are likely to remain in ethnic enclaves. This possibility may explain why the most highly educated and affluent Latinos remain so segregated from whites in Lincoln, Omaha, and Lexington.

Notwithstanding the economic and cultural vitality of Latino neighborhoods in these cities, segregation could result in at least two serious problems in the future. First, our analysis suggests that segregation may undermine the educational attainment and economic security of the next generation, to the extent that the Latino neighborhoods that have emerged with the most recent wave of immigration lack the social capital on which academic achievement and school success increasingly depend. Public schools could compensate for this lack of social capital but few historically have done so, as the high dropout rates among second-generation Latinos indicate. If this generation fails to attain more education than their parents, poverty will likely become more common than the upward mobility secured by earlier generations of immigrants—and a phenomenon that Portes and Zhou (1993) refer to as “segmented assimilation” will become more common than spatial assimilation.

Segregation, particularly if coupled with economic decline, can also result in a phenomenon that Martha Menchaca (1995) refers to as “social apartness,” fueling the perception and treatment of Latinos as “other.” That Lexington is widely referred to pejoratively as “Mexington” is but one indication of this social apartness. If we are to more fully understand the exclusionary practices and logic facing Latinos across the nation, more careful analysis of the many forms of apartness that persist alongside spatial segregation as well as integration is necessary.

For Latinos as for others, segregation does indeed have many faces, bringing a complex mix of opportunities and costs that increasingly play out across

the cities and towns of the Great Plains. By shifting our focus to new centers of Latino population growth, we gain a deeper understanding of an American dilemma that remains among our most pressing challenges in the 21st century.

### Acknowledgments

The authors would like to thank Matthew Hayes, Marcia Underwood, and Robert Wahl for their technical assistance. We are also grateful to Dennis Roncek, Jerry Deichert, and Joe Duggan for generously providing their expertise and encouragement as we began this project.

### References

- Alba, R.D., J.R. Logan, and K. Crowder. 1997. White ethnic neighborhoods and assimilation: The Greater New York Region, 1980-1990. *Social Forces* 75:883-912.
- Alba, R.D., J.R. Logan, and B.J. Stults. 2000. The changing neighborhood contexts of the immigrant metropolis. *Social Forces* 79:587-621.
- Blalock, H. 1967. *Toward a Theory of Minority-Group Relations*. New York: Wiley.
- Borjas, G. 1994. The economics of immigration. *Journal of Economic Literature* 32:1667-1717.
- Charles, C.Z. 2003. The dynamics of racial residential segregation. *Annual Review of Sociology* 29, 167-207.
- Darden, J.T., and S.M. Kamel. 2000. Black residential segregation in the city and suburbs of Detroit: Does socioeconomic status matter?" *Journal of Urban Affairs* 22:1-13.
- Duncan, O.D., and B. Duncan. 1955. A methodological analysis of segregation indexes. *American Sociological Review* 20:210-17.
- Emerson, Michael O., G. Yancey, and K. J. Chai. 2001. Does race matter in residential segregation? Exploring the preferences of white Americans. *American Sociological Review* 66 (6):922-35.
- Farley, R., and W.H. Frey. 1994. Changes in the segregation of whites from blacks during the 1980s: Small steps toward a more integrated society. *American Sociological Review* 59:23-45.
- Frey, W.H., and R. Farley. 1996. Latino, Asian, and black segregation in U.S. metropolitan areas: Are multiethnic metros different? *Demography* 33:35-50.
- Glazer, N., and D.P. Moynihan. 1970. *Beyond the Melting Pot: The Negroes, Puerto Ricans, Jews, Italians, and Irish of New York City*. Cambridge: MIT Press.

- Gouveia, L., and R. Saenz. 2000. Global forces and Latino population growth in the Midwest: A regional and subregional analysis. *Great Plains Research* 10:305-28.
- Gouveia, L., and D.D. Stull. 1995. Dances with cows: Beefpacking's impact on Garden City, Kansas, and Lexington, Nebraska. In *Any Way You Cut It: Meat Processing in Small-Town America*, ed. D.D. Stull, M.J. Broadway, and D.C. Griffith, 85-108. Lawrence: University of Kansas Press.
- Hirsch, A.R. 1983. *Making the Second Ghetto: Race and Housing in Chicago, 1940-1960*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Iceland, J. 2004. Beyond black and white: Metropolitan residential segregation in multiethnic America." *Social Science Research* 33:248-71.
- Iceland, J., C. Sharpe, and E. Steinmetz. 2005. Class differences in African American residential patterns in U.S. metropolitan areas: 1990-2000. *Social Science Research* 34:252-66.
- Liebertson, S. 1963. *Ethnic Patterns in American Cities*. New York: Free Press of Glencoe.
- Liebertson, S. 1980. *A Piece of the Pie: Blacks and White Immigrants since 1880*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Lopez, D.A. 2000. *Latinos in Omaha: An Examination of Socioeconomic Measures for Latinos in South Omaha*. East Lansing: Julian Samora Research Institute, Michigan State University.
- Massey, D.S., and N. Denton. 1993. *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Massey, D.S., and M.J. Fischer. 1999. Does rising income bring integration? New results for blacks, Hispanics, and Asians in 1990. *Social Science Research* 28:316-26.
- Massey, D.S., and B.P. Mullan. 1984. Processes of Hispanic and black spatial assimilation. *American Journal of Sociology* 89:836-72.
- Menchaca, Martha, 1995. *The Mexican Outsiders: A Community History of Marginalization and Discrimination in California*. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press.
- Moore, J.W. 1978. *Homeboys: Gangs, Drugs, and Prison in the Barrios of Los Angeles*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- O'Connor, A., C. Tilly, and L.D. Bobo. 2001. *Urban Inequality: Evidence from Four Cities*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Portes, A., and L. Jensen. 1989. The enclave and the entrants: Patterns of ethnic enterprise in Miami before and after Mariel. *American Sociological Review* 54:929-49.
- Portes, Alejandro and Min Zhou. 1993. The New Second Generation: Segmented Assimilation and Its Variants. *The Annals* 530:74-96.

- Ravuri, E. 2003. Changes in Asian and Hispanic population in the Cities of the Great Plains, 1990-2000. *Great Plains Research* 13:75-96.
- Squires, G.D., and S. O'Connor. 2001. *Color and Money: Politics and Prospects for Community Reinvestment in Urban America*. Albany: SUNY Press.
- U.S. Bureau of the Census. 1992a. *Census of Population and Housing 1990, Summary Tape File 1 CD*. Washington, DC: U.S. Bureau of the Census.
- U.S. Bureau of the Census. 1992b. *Census of Population and Housing 1990, Summary Tape File 3 CD*. Washington, DC: U.S. Bureau of the Census.
- U.S. Bureau of the Census. 1995a. *Statistical Abstract of the United States: 1995*. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office.
- U.S. Bureau of the Census. 1995b. Poverty areas. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Commerce, Economics and Statistics Administration, Bureau of The Census.
- U.S. Bureau of the Census. 2001. *Census of Population and Housing 2000, Summary File 1 DVD*. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.
- U.S. Bureau of the Census. 2002. *Census of Population and Housing 2000, Summary File 3 DVD*. Washington, DC: U.S. Bureau of the Census.
- U.S. Bureau of the Census. 2003. *Census of Population and Housing 2000, Summary File 4 DVD*. Washington, DC: U.S. Bureau of the Census.
- Waters, M.C., and K. Eschbach. 1995. Immigration and ethnic and racial inequality in the United States. *Annual Review of Sociology* 21:419-46.
- Wilson, W.J. 1987. *The Truly Disadvantaged: The Inner City, the Underclass, and Public Policy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Wilson, W.J. 1996. *When Work Disappears: The World of the New Urban Poor*. New York: Knopf.
- Yinger, J. 1995. *Closed Doors, Opportunities Lost: The Continuing Costs of Housing Discrimination*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Zhou, M., and J. Logan. 1991. Returns on human capital in ethnic enclaves: New York City's Chinatown. *American Sociological Review* 54:809-20.

### Notes

1. We use the term "white" and non-Hispanic whites interchangeably throughout the text, following a convention in the literature on residential segregation. It is important to acknowledge, however, that most Latinos counted by the census are white.
2. Four key websites report dissimilarity indices for all metro areas as well as some places and counties. These include the U.S. Census ([www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov)), the Lewis Mumford Center ([www.albany.edu/mumford](http://www.albany.edu/mumford)), Censusscope ([www.censusscope.org](http://www.censusscope.org)), and the University of Michigan Population Studies Center (<http://enceladus.icpsr.umich.edu/race/racestart.asp>).



# Great Plains Research

A JOURNAL OF NATURAL AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

## CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

- a biannual multidisciplinary international peer-reviewed journal
- publishes original scholarly papers in the natural and social sciences
- book reviews

PUBLISHER:  
Center for Great Plains Studies,  
University of Nebraska  
ISSN: 1052-5165

UNIVERSITY OF  
**Nebraska**  
Lincoln

**Robert F. Diffendal, Jr.**, Editor  
Great Plains Research  
University of Nebraska-Lincoln  
P.O. Box 880246  
Lincoln, NE 68588-0246 USA

Tel.: 402-472-6970  
Fax: 402-472-0463  
Email: [gpr@unl.edu](mailto:gpr@unl.edu)

Articles in 2005 on ecology, prairie landscapes, wetlands, river habitat, ecosystem conservation, sand dunes, windbreaks, and nature tourism.



An equal opportunity educator and employer  
with a comprehensive plan for diversity.

Webpage: [www.unl.edu/plains](http://www.unl.edu/plains)