THE RESIDENTIAL STRATIFICATION OF MIXED-RACE COUPLES


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Marriage and cohabitation between members of different racial and ethnic groups has increased in the U.S. over recent decades. Despite this demographic shift, we know relatively little about how the growing numbers of mixed-race couples are faring in systems of residential stratification. My dissertation addresses this gap by investigating the extent to which mixed-race couples move into and out of neighborhoods defined by their levels of poverty. I also measure the residential mobility patterns of these couples into and out of diverse neighborhoods. Finally, I focus on the mobility of black-male/white-female and white-male/black-female couples' out of and into neighborhoods defined respectively by their levels of whites, blacks, and ethnoracial diversity.

Through the use of longitudinal data between 1985 and 2013 from the Panel Study of Income Dynamics linked to neighborhood- and metropolitan-level data from multiple censuses, my multilevel models reveal mixed-race couples tend to be located in neighborhoods with higher levels of poverty. In particular, mixed-race couples with black partners often migrate into neighborhoods with higher levels of poverty than couples without a black partner. In terms of neighborhood diversity, mixed-race couples tend to be found in neighborhoods with higher levels of diversity and frequently enter more diverse residential destinations when they move. However, these outcomes vary substantially across types of mixed-race couples. Lastly, the mobility patterns of black-male/white-female and white-male/black-female couples' demonstrate race and gender matter in the residential mobility and attainment of these couples. For instance, black-white couples with black male partners demonstrate a heightened probability of leaving neighborhoods with large concentrations of whites, while their counterparts with white male partners evince the opposite pattern.

My findings further illuminate the residential patterns of a growing segment of the U.S. population who are part of diversifying American neighborhoods. But, despite the potential for mixed-race couples to redefine prevailing patterns of residential stratification, these couples appear subject to the same types of dynamics maintaining sharp distinctions between black and white residential outcomes. In other words, the results presented in my dissertation highlight the continued salience of race in residential attainment.