Relational Segregation: A Structural View of Categorical Relations*

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How should we understand segregation? We often view it as a means by which dominant actors isolate and persecute minority groups, as with racial segregation in the Jim Crow South. Otherwise we may see it as a byproduct of the tendency for birds of a feather to flock together—this is how many explain contemporary endogamy and friendship segregation. We sometimes see both intertwined in vicious cycles. But alone these perspectives provide overly simplistic accounts that take much for granted and neglect crucial relationships.

Du Bois's century-old account of Jim Crow offers alternatives. In "The Superior Race" he took little for granted, questioning the very idea of racial groups: "But what is this group; and how do you differentiate it; and how can you call it 'black' when you admit it is not black?" His answer implied that racial identities were constructed in the regulation of relationships: "I recognize it quite easily and with full legal sanction: the black man is a person who must ride 'Jim Crow' in Georgia" (Du Bois 1996:68). Racial groups were not just being segregated. Segregation was creating racial groups.

In *Souls of Black Folk*, Du Bois (1903) also puzzled over Jim Crow's complexities and contradictions. Though residential segregation was pervasive in cities by 1900, it had been unfathomable under slavery—physical proximity and close interaction were critical for white people to control black slave labor and prevent uprisings. Jim Crow economic relations remained characterized not as much by separation as by discrimination and exploitation, as they had been under slavery. Many black people worked for white people at low pay in relations as intimate as nursemaids to white children. Others exchanged labor and loyalty with white patrons for food, shelter, and protection. White people encouraged charity for black people, if only to reinforce ideas of white superiority and black dependence. Everyday cross-race interactions were frequent

but governed by an etiquette of racial deference. And political relations were more asymmetric than segregated: though excluded from equal participation in government, black people were subject to laws, taxes, police control, and a biased justice system, mostly via interactions with white people (Du Bois 1903). Jim Crow was not total segregation; it was a mix of methods to preserve white supremacy by regulating different relations in different ways. Total segregation would have severed mechanisms by which white people exploited and controlled black people.

I hope to push this type of relational thinking further. I explore segregation as a structural aspect of categorical relations that, though complex, has some general features. By relational, I mean we keep structures of ties, interactions, and transactions at center stage. People understand their own identities in relation to others; they construct goals and devise methods of achieving them in relation to others; and they attempt to shape other people's identities and interactions for their own purposes (Emirbayer 1997; Tilly 1998). Viewed through this lens, segregation emerges as a natural yet unstable feature of social structures, and as a useful but flawed means for actors to achieve their goals. I draw on insights from relational theory and two historical cases—medieval European religious relations and American race relations—to build a relational conceptual framework for segregation research. I also situate studies of contemporary segregation within this framework and provide some ideas for future research.

Defining Relational Segregation

I define relational segregation as *a relative lack of relations between social categories in a social system*. I mean relations broadly, covering various interactions, transactions, and ties where specific types of action are oriented to other actors (Weber 1968:22). Relational sociology challenges us to think beyond oft-studied networks of friends and acquaintances, and to examine

structures of relations in specific economic (labor, commerce, credit), political (parties, alliances, movements), and other social activities (Tilly 2016).

By categories, I mean socially recognized labels that ostensibly distinguish attributes of persons—e.g., race, gender, religion. Categories fall short of groups, which connote some combination of shared identities, interests, and collective behavior (Brubaker 2006; Weber 1968:40–43). Categories vary in salience, and salient categories need not exist prior to segregation. They do in many cases, and we take them for granted in common explanations of segregation. But the absence of relations between clusters not yet categorically differentiated can also help new categories emerge (Abbott 1995).

Colloquially, "segregation" and "integration" sometimes carry connotations that tap the nature (e.g., conflict, equality) of relations or official designations (legal separation). The structural perspective I take here focuses on the relative distribution of ties among actors within and between categories, regardless of formal recognition in any type of relation. Segregation does not require a total absence of cross-category relations; that would render the categories independent and any boundaries between them irrelevant (Barth 1969). Rather, segregated structures have ties disproportionately within rather than between categories (often determined relative to the categories' sizes). Integration seems most consistent with structures that have "proportionate mixing" of ties between and within categories. There is no conventional term for structures with ties disproportionately between rather than within categories, but scholars have called this "disproportionate mixing" (Bojanowski and Corten 2014).

Finally, segregation can be relation-specific—pertaining to a certain type of relation or ties around a specific activity—but we should also attend to segregation across different domains of activity (e.g., economic, political, familial, etc.). I use the term *multiplex segregation* to refer

to the overall structure of categorical relations across various types of relations. The degree of segregation can differ across domains, as can the processes that generate (or erode) it and its consequences for social behavior. Moreover, interesting things happen when structures in different domains interact (Padgett and Powell 2012).

The Relational Core of Segregation

Relational elements undergird much segregation research. By treating relations as fundamental to social organization, the framework advanced here spotlights these elements while also revealing some stubborn challenges to a deeper understanding of segregation. The network segregation literature—including studies of racial segregation in friendship and discussion networks (DiPrete et al. 2011; Hofstra et al. 2017; Smith, McPherson, and Smith-Lovin 2014; Wimmer and Lewis 2010)— highlights the importance of relational structures, provides useful methods for analyzing segregation in these structures, and reveals important empirical findings. But it also often construes "networks" generically, abstracted from the specific, concrete forms of action that are "really alive" (Durkheim 2014:54). When this research is more concrete, it tends to focus on a few select types of ties (family, friends) and activities (information exchange), leaving relational structures in many domains relatively unexplored.

Research on place-based segregation—neighborhoods, schools, and urban activity spaces (Jones and Pebley 2014; Krysan and Crowder 2017; Reardon and Owens 2014; Wang et al. 2018)—has relational underpinnings as well, pertaining to how space channels or blocks potential relations (and vice versa). Mouw and Entwisle (2006) and Small (2004), for instance, show how segregated neighborhoods work to segregate friendships and other relationships along racial lines. Bonilla-Silva and Embrick (2007) and Krysan and Crowder (2017) demonstrate how these spatially circumscribed networks can reproduce residential segregation. But space and

categorical relations have nuanced interactions. Even in segregated places, some people form ties across spatial and categorical boundaries through shared activities, cultural links, and mobility (e.g., Brown 2006; De Souza Briggs 2007; Small 2004:145–74). Relational boundaries can survive proximity, too, as when cultural and organizational practices preserve racial segregation within ostensibly desegregated schools (Carter 2005; Moody 2001; Tyson 2011).

Our tendency to focus on generic or limited types of networks can also obscure how spatial-relational dynamics differ across concrete types of action. Sampson (2012) shows how space structures several specific relations that are often overlooked in spatial research—altruism, civic engagement, political networks—but he does not focus on segregation. Lacy (2004) does, in fewer and broader domains of activity, but in a way that demonstrates the advantages of a relational focus. By analyzing race relations in distinct domains, she not only reveals that suburban middle-class black families seek certain forms of interaction with white people while avoiding others—"strategic assimilation"—but also shows how people navigate these relations differently depending on their spatial environments. Centering relations can help us better understand segregation, including how space matters.

Relational Identities: The Coevolution of Segregation and Categories

In one of *Aesop's Fables*, "The Farmer and the Stork," a farmer catches a group of cranes eating his seed. Among them is a stork, who begs for mercy: "I am no crane, I am a stork, a bird of excellent character… Look, too, at my feathers—they are not the least like those of a crane." The farmer replies: "It may be all as you say, I only know this: I have taken you with these robbers, the cranes, and you must die in their company." The moral: "birds of a feather flock together" (Aesop 2008). This fable turns the familiar homophily trope on its head. Rather than assume that actors prefer to associate with others because of shared identities—identities that

precede these preferences and associations—relations around shared activity shape identities. The stork and cranes are "of a feather" because they flock together!

Identities—including categorical ones—are relational. They are not natural, fixed, or exogenous. They are relative in that they emerge from similarities and differences revealed or imagined in interpersonal relations, and they are malleable in that new identities can be created and old ones changed or destroyed (Barth 1969; Brubaker 2006; Emirbayer and Goodwin 1994; Tilly 2016; White 2008). Identities are often based as much on the ties (or lack thereof) among subjects as on subjects' attributes (Smith-Lovin 2007). The relativity of identities further means they are not purely positive: we define ourselves as much by who we are not as by who we are, and as much by who we are not related to as by who we are related to (Emirbayer and Desmond 2015:106; Simmel 1971; Tajfel 1974).

As scholars interrogate the malleability of categorical identities (Saperstein, Penner, and Light 2013), we should consider segregation's role. LaFleur (2020) argues that spatial segregation anchors racial formation projects—we can extend this idea to various relations and categories. Familial ties surely shape certain categorical identities, for instance, but so might one's position in a field of economic, political, and other relations (Emirbayer and Desmond 2015:79–90). Cornell and Hartmann (2007) and Wimmer (2013) move in this direction when they highlight network closure, structures of political alliances, and other shared institutions as factors in ethnic boundary formation. So does Liebler (2004), who posits that "thick" ties— relationships that recur across many activities—constrain people's racial identities. Presumably, ties that do not recur across activities complicate those identities.

Because we quickly become immersed in fields of established identities, these processes are difficult to discern. Childhood provides a window, as in Van Ausdale and Feagin's (2001)

ethnography of preschoolers and Brown's (2018) study of black Appalachian communities. In both, children learned simple racial ideas at home, but these ideas became concrete and meaningful in social interactions. Children learned to classify themselves and others through contrasts—comparing their skin and other traits—and as adults contested or "corrected" their attempts at racial categorization and cross-race interactions. Van Ausdale and Feagin find children learning to use specific relations (having a visibly white or black parent) in their classification efforts as they link race and heredity. And Brown shows how disruptions in even one domain of relations (school desegregation) can alter people's racial identities by changing how they see themselves through others' eyes. People's understanding of categorical identities is an emergent and malleable relational process.

Categories are Endogenous and Interdependent

Conventional wisdom treats categorical differentiation and identification as prerequisites for segregation. Categories come first, then boundaries. People interact and observe each other, ostensibly learning about different "kinds" of people, what they do, and how they do it. People can then see their own supposed ways of being, thinking, and acting converge with people of one kind and diverge from others. It seems that only then, after perceiving categorical differences, can people build boundaries upon those differences.

But maybe "Boundaries come first, then entities" (Abbott 1995:860). Notions of categorical difference can emerge from networks with segmented participation in activities and associations, which sparks ideas about divergent lineages, lifestyles, roles, or traits (Douglas 1986). Categories become durable stories about segmented networks. Even (maybe especially) when categorical differences are artificial, segregation can provide the distance and ignorance to believe they are real. Goffman (1961) sees this happening in asylums: severing inmates' relations

with the outside world facilitates their categorization, stripping inmates of their individuality and allowing authorities to construct theories of their essential nature.

It may be best to see categories and segregation emerging and evolving together amid social relations, shaping each other along the way. Borrowing from Simmel (1971:70–80), there is a fundamental "dualism" between segregation and interdependence, rooted in the relational dynamics of differentiation and identification that segregation requires.[1] Categorical identities are thus endogenous: they are affected by segregation just as they affect segregation.

Weber's (1968:387–88) account of ethnicity exemplifies this coevolution. When conflict arises between clusters of people, they seize on physical or cultural differences to categorize themselves and draw boundaries, aiming to monopolize resources by avoiding or excluding outsiders, resulting in the subjective recognition of ethnic groups. The stories people tell about clusters can become status beliefs that reinforce differentiation and promote segregation (Ridgeway 1991; Ridgeway and Erickson 2000; Smith-Lovin 2007). Segregation of familial ties, for instance, arises if groups restrict hereditary privileges to endogamous children, spawning ideas of pure anthropological types. Endogamy can lead resources, lifestyles, and traits to further diverge, cementing ideas of ethnicity. Weber claims we can trace the physical and cultural differences we ascribe to ethnicity back to a history of monopolistic closure practices, which magnified small, arbitrary differences over time.

Heretic as an Emergent Category

Moore's (2007) account of the persecution of heretics in medieval Europe shows more concretely how segregation and social categories coevolve amid everyday struggles. Though "heretics" had been accused and persecuted for centuries, such efforts were rare and scattered until the 1100s. Then, as the Catholic Church aimed to centralize authority and enforce uniform

religious practices, dissident movements emerged. The Church countered in their Third (1179) and Fourth (1215) Lateran Councils. Lateran III named a few popular heresies, ordered their adherents excluded from Church activities, and invited boycotts of their businesses. Lateran IV went further to prescribe a robust campaign against heresy throughout Christendom.

Lateran IV began by outlining requirements of Church members, leaving anyone outside those dictates at risk of punishment for heresy, which Canon 3 defined colorfully but vaguely: "We excommunicate and anathematize every heresy that raises against the holy, orthodox and Catholic faith which we have above explained; condemning all heretics under whatever names they may be known, for while they have different faces they are nevertheless bound to each other by their tails, since in all of them vanity is a common element." Heresies would thus be defined arbitrarily. In practice heretics were believers deemed insubordinate—"by damnable obstinacy" as Lateran IV put it—to Church authorities (Moore 2007). Groups with religious beliefs outside the mainstream always existed, but not all were branded heretics, and some beliefs deemed heretical were not far outside the mainstream. Alleged heresies were often sects that criticized corruption in the Church or called for reforms. To paraphrase Moore (2007:64), one became a heretic by gaining a following, refusing to accede to a bishop's charge that one's beliefs were heretical, and refusing to get a bishop's permission before preaching. Many dissidents proudly branded themselves heretics.

Lateran IV was clearer about punishment: excommunication, which severed important political, economic, and social ties. Heretics would incur the "stigma of infamy," be abandoned, have property confiscated, lose the right to vote or give testimony in court, and lose claims on inheritance. The harshest punishments made examples of heretics by expulsion, imprisonment, or

execution, but many accused heretics faced a probationary excommunication with the chance to defend themselves and demonstrate their loyalty to the Church (Moore 2007).

Heretic, then, was not a label deduced from religious beliefs or practices, but an emergent category that coevolved with a restructuring of social ties amid struggles of authority and dissent. This categorization emerged as Church authorities aimed to restructure dissidents' relations—including economic, political, and social segregation—to realign their behavior with elite interests. Where we see heretics being excommunicated, we can see dissidents being segregated and labeled heretics. We should remember this before taking categorical identities for granted. Whether formal or informal, categories have histories in which they have been crafted in social relations. When we see segregation, we should see a pattern of relations that is not only built on categorical identities, but is also creating, maintaining, or molding those identities.

Relational Preferences: Homophily or Interdependence?

To understand how structures form and influence behavior, we must understand how people establish relations. Theoretical traditions that prioritize individual agency feature preferences as staple ingredients. Traditions focused on collective processes emphasize solidarity and closure, but preferences lurk below the surface. Structures arise when people who prefer certain types of partners sort into matches, and when clusters coalesce and exclude outsiders.

These preference-based explanations have problematic assumptions. Like identities, preferences are relational. They are not fixed, natural, or exogenous; they are malleable, relativistic, and shaped by prior relations (Emirbayer and Goodwin 1994). People making choices compare possible outcomes under different alternatives based on prior experiences in relational structures. Krysan and Crowder (2017) make this point about residential choices; it

holds for relations, too. A bigger problem, however, is understanding why people form the preferences they do.

A Rant on Homophily

The most common preference-based explanation of segregation is homophily. Many take homophily for granted as a behavioral principle (McPherson, Smith-Lovin, and Cook 2001). As Durkheim (2014:45) said, "Everybody knows that we like what resembles us, those who think and feel as we do…" Although it seems obvious that homophilous sorting can promote segregation, these processes can be surprisingly strong. Schelling (2006) showed how even slight preferences to associate with like individuals can lead to extreme segregation.

But accepting homophily as gospel truth may bias us toward seeing it everywhere and missing heterophily in plain sight. Few if any structures have the densely connected, homogenous cliques that strict homophily implies (Feld and Grofman 2009). People have many potential types of identities, and any relation is unlikely to be homophilous on them all. What determines which identities are salient? Heterosexual marriages may seem homophilous in some respects (Kalmijn 1998), but not with respect to gender or gendered traits (Durkheim 2014:46). Moreover, homophily seems downright antithetical to relations characterized by interdependence among dissimilar actors in a division of labor (e.g., trade). To let Durkheim (2014:45) finish his thought: "…But the opposite phenomenon is no less frequently encountered. Very often we happen to feel drawn to people who do not resemble us, precisely because they do not do so" (Breiger 2010:41–42). Birds of a feather do not always flock together, as attested by the famed symbiosis between the plover bird (dentist) and crocodile (buffet).

Even where homophily might prevail, homophilic preferences make flawed explanations of segregation. As with Aesop's stork, the identities supposedly subject to such preferences may

be a product, not a cause, of social relations. At the gut level, homophily-based explanations also invite the naïve acceptance of segregation as a natural byproduct of human tendencies to "like" certain things. But preferences are not only positive (Simmel 1971:50–51); to say I prefer one thing is a nice way of saying I am more averse to something else. Such explanations are mired in logical problems as well: saying homophily causes segregation is tantamount to saying segregation happens because people want to segregate themselves.

So why and under what conditions do actors prefer relations with similar rather than different identities? And why would one or a few of potentially infinite types of identities (e.g., ethnicity, gender, religion) become more salient to people's preferences than others?

Explaining Homophily

Common explanations highlight structural constraints that lead similar actors to occupy shared positions—locations, organizations, roles—where they share interests and form relationships (McPherson et al. 2001). Blau (1994) laid out the argument: when memberships in positions are highly correlated with some categorical attribute (e.g., ethnicity), homophily with respect to that attribute will prevail, and relations will become segregated. If instead categorical memberships intersect positional memberships, there will be less homophily and segregation.

These are useful insights, but they overlook the processes that create or change categories and positions, and the ways people enter them. Feld (1981) emphasized that the activities at the core of relations can change people in ways that make them appear similar. People do things, and as they do, they create boundaries that define and differentiate new identities and roles (Abbott 1995; Durkheim 2014:211). We construct our very ideas of similarity and difference, not to mention our methods of classification, as we "pick and choose" our allies and opponents in ongoing relations (Douglas 1986:63). If we invent or rework categories and positions around

actors engaged in shared activities, we can create the appearance of homophily, as when Aesop's stork fell in with the cranes.

Structures and boundaries become further defined as people select or are selected into activities (Feld 1981). When people of certain categories tend to pursue certain activities, or when gatekeepers select people of certain categories into activities, this can promote segregation. We would be mistaken to attribute such sorting to homophily, because it is driven by selection into the activity, not people's attraction to particular people. Furthermore, the processes that link activities or positions to particular categories are built on histories of relations around social boundaries. So are the processes that foster categorical differences in culture (language, lifestyle) that might also help explain homophily (Barth 1969; Weber 1968). Segregation can explain homophily as much as homophily can explain segregation.

Research on friendship networks reveals some of these issues. In a study of college students' social media ties, Wimmer and Lewis (2010) show that much of what appears to be racial homophily is explained by things like dorm residence and shared majors. Similarly, Moody (2001) finds that racial segregation in adolescents' friendship networks depends on the segregation of extracurricular activities and academic tracks in schools, and Stark and Flache (2011) link ethnic friendship segregation to the degree of shared interests across ethnic categories. Generic features of relations can also be misattributed to homophily: the tendency of one's friends to befriend each other, for instance, makes adolescent friendships look more homophilous than they really are (Goodreau, Kitts, and Morris 2009; Kossinets and Watts 2009).

To their credit, some rational choice theorists go further to explain homophily by rooting it in social complementarities—i.e., when associating with others who share one's attributes heightens the benefits of those attributes (Becker and Murphy 2000). But how do we know

whether similarities or differences in an attribute or resource are complementary? Unfortunately, we often fall back on circular reasoning: where we find homophily, we infer complementarities, which are presumably the cause of homophily.

Group Solidarity and Social Closure

Considering complementarities in relations conjures age-old questions about group solidarity and closure. Durkheim (2014) distinguished two ideal types of solidarity: *mechanical*, among similar people with shared values, and *organic*, among differentiated but interdependent people in a division of labor. In doing so he rooted the extent of homophily in the degree of specialization in social activity: it makes sense to be more homophilous to the extent that similarities to others amplify the benefits of things we already have, and it makes sense to be more heterophilous to the extent that others can supply things we want or need but lack (2014:45–46). But Durkheim lends little to the analysis of segregated categories; we get only a brief mention of residues of old clan-based structures that progress will surely eradicate (2014:143–44). Weber's (1968:43–46) theory of status group closure, which he attributes to actors' instrumental efforts to monopolize resources, seems nearer to segregation but fails to explain the circumstances in which closure will and will not occur.

Hechter (1987) takes the next step by focusing on the nature of activity. He argues that solidarity is rational around jointly produced, collective, excludable goods—those that require cooperation to make and can be shared among insiders but denied outsiders. Public goods cannot be monopolized, reducing incentives for people seeking or producing such goods to police group boundaries. Nor are there such incentives in the acquisition or production of private goods, as sharing with others entails sacrifice. But collective goods that require joint effort to produce provide the right combination of a need for cooperation, the possibility of excluding outsiders'

consumption, and the joint benefits of sharing such that closure and solidarity are worthwhile. Hechter notes that such "goods" are often intrinsic to relations, such as the prestige that comes with being in a particular status group. By setting these scope conditions, Hechter makes a key point: we must understand the content of relations or the nature of activity to understand whether preferences and behaviors conducive to solidarity, closure, or homophily emerge.

Bringing Categories and Content Together

To connect this idea to segregation, we must explain how social categories become salient to people's preferences in matchmaking processes, or how they become aligned with positions involved in closure. Brubaker's (2017) comparison of categories with different relational imperatives is a start. He argues, for instance, that gender relations stand out from other categorical relations because genders are often interdependent, whereas ethnicities seem less interdependent and more prone to closure. Though insightful, the accuracy of these generalizations likely hinges on the nature of specific activities.

We must consider the nature of categories and relational activity together. Beyond the fact that categories can be shaped by relations, different types of activity will have different complementarities and interdependencies. Categories that are interdependent in some activities might not be in others. The balance between homophily and heterophily—and the degree of closure—depends on whether the things people bring to specific relations make categorical similarities or differences complementary.

In that vein, it is telling that most analyses linking homophily to segregation pertain to mutually oriented relations such as friendships, marriages, acquaintances, and confidants (Becker and Murphy 2000; Blau 1994; DiPrete et al. 2011; McPherson et al. 2001; Schelling 2006). Subtle interdependencies contrary to homophily surely exist even in these relations. But

heterophily around interdependencies is likely fundamental in relations with a starker division of labor, such as those involving economic exchange or coalition-building. The content of relational activity is key to understanding structural tendencies.

Structure-Culture Dualities and Weaknesses of Segregation

The structure-culture nexus provides some footing to incorporate relational content. Just as cultural differences can promote or justify segregation, segregation offers a structural foundation for cultural stories or practices to differentiate and bound categories (Lamont 2002; Park, Burgess, and McKenzie 1925). We often imagine a feedback loop, as youths socialized in segregated environments develop beliefs and habits that exacerbate perceptions of categorical difference and channel them into segregated lives as adults, whose children repeat the cycle (Bonilla-Silva and Embrick 2007; Krysan and Crowder 2017). Structural and cultural features of categorical boundaries surely do feed back into each other, but not necessarily in an unyielding cycle. Problems emerge. The structure-culture nexus is ridden with compromises and tradeoffs, as weakness and uncertainty plague both dimensions. Strengthening structure can sacrifice (or compensate for) weaker culture, and vice versa (Breiger 2010; Schultz and Breiger 2010; White 2008:57–58). Consequently, segregation's role in categorical boundary-making is culturally contingent and can be self-limiting.

Rigid segregation entails strong structural boundaries that may tend toward weak cultural accompaniments—segregated relations with categories differentiated by simple, vague, broad, and malleable stories and practices. The more segregated a society, the more it may struggle to align structural boundaries with complex parameters of categorical difference in people's roles, behaviors, traits, etc. Large social systems are complex and diverse, and people differentiate themselves and specialize their tasks (Durkheim 2014; Smith-Lovin 2007). When social systems

comprise similar activities, segregated systems tend to develop similar internal role structures. As Simmel (1971:252–53) put it, the more subgroups are separated, the more variation arises within them and the less between them.

Conversely, when categorical boundaries are structurally weak—relations are not rigidly segregated—rich systems of categorically differentiated cultural practices and beliefs can sustain strong symbolic boundaries (Lamont and Molnár 2002), and efforts to strengthen cultural boundaries might weaken structural ones. As Brubaker (2016) and Morning (2018) note, complex and strict criteria for authentic membership in racial and gender categories may heighten uncertainty and fluidity in people's categorical identities and relations.

Contingencies of Jim Crow Segregation

We see hints of the give-and-take between structure and culture under Jim Crow. The biologically spurious "one-drop rule" allowed a rigid binary structure of categories at the cost of cultural ambiguity about what race actually meant (Gossett 1963; Haney López 2006; Painter 2010). Du Bois (1996:68) saw how strict segregation defined races in ways incoherent cultural boundaries could not: "the black man is a person a person who must ride 'Jim Crow.'" While Jim Crow built strong structural boundaries (formally segregated relations) with weak cultural accompaniments (vague racial theories), post-slavery societies in Latin America veered toward stronger culture and weaker structure. Cottrol (2013) notes that although many Latin American countries inherited Spain's legacy of *limpieza de sangre* (blood purity), they never instituted a one-drop rule or formal segregation. Given their small "white" populations and widespread intermixing, a one-drop rule would have saddled many elites with inferior status and made "black" people an overwhelming majority. Hence, Latin American societies adopted more

complex, culturally-laden racial categorizations with room for mobility. This was incompatible with rigid systems of segregation (Cottrol 2013).

We also find structure-culture tradeoffs within Jim Crow. Ritterhouse (2006:50–51) portrays urban public segregation as a structural solution to the erosion of "racial etiquette." This etiquette evolved under slavery to ensure black people adhered to rituals of deference in interpersonal interactions that might otherwise connote equality (greetings, conversations, cooperative activities). But emancipation weakened personalistic methods of racial control and created opportunities for black people to avoid or defy such demands from white people who had less power over their lives. Legal segregation helped preserve the "public transcript" of white supremacy by minimizing cross-race interactions where egalitarian behavior was a risk.

Black domestics in middle-class white households show the converse tradeoff between weaker structure and stronger culture. Given the supposed immorality, uncleanliness, and inferiority ascribed to black people, it was transparently hypocritical for white families to hire black women to keep their homes, cook their food, and care for their children. The economic and symbolic benefits were enough, however, that white people not only preferred black domestics in their homes, but created legal exceptions for them in some segregated venues. Constructing the "mammy" role provided cultural boundaries to compensate for less segregated relations (Ritterhouse 2006).

Segregation's cultural contingencies also illuminate class differences in race relations. The southern white aristocracy originally had little interest in segregation; their class position could ensure deference from black people and preserve hierarchical racial boundaries. It was middle- and working-class white people—whose social and economic superiority over black people was too tenuous to ensure deference—who advocated strict separation (Davis, Gardner,

and Gardner 1941; Wilson 1978). White elites were fine with strong cultural boundaries supported by unequal power, but white commoners needed segregated relational structures to do boundary work.

Such tradeoffs are likely common with segregation. This diverges from theories that see segregation and cultural boundaries working in tandem such that segregation is functional in an ecological sense (Park et al. 1925), or that it reproduces itself with cultural reinforcements (Krysan and Crowder 2017; Massey and Denton 1993). The obvious problem with my argument is that segregation often seems prevalent and durable. I would like to have my cake and eat it, too. Segregation has a certain amount of inevitability in social life, but it also has instabilities. Understanding why requires focusing on relational content more concretely.

Relational Types and the Inevitability and Impossibility of Segregation

Relational content is critical because the nature of segregation—the way it happens and the way it matters to social life—might differ across activities. Allport's (1954) theory of prejudice recognizes this: cross-category relations can either mitigate or exacerbate prejudice and conflict depending on whether or not the relations are egalitarian and entail common goals. Segregation, like other structural features (Martin 2009), poses distinct problems and incentives to actors in different types of relations, inducing distinct behavioral tendencies. I think we can make headway with some simple and generalizable relational types.

Relational Typologies

The crudest typologies distinguish relations that are impersonal or associative from those that are more interpersonal or collective (Weber 1968:40–41). The most fine-grained focus on particular types of interaction and activity (Durkheim 2014:122–23). I draw on Martin (2009) and White (2008) to explore a middle ground that classifies relations according to basic

structural configurations and modes of action. Together, they provide tools that reveal segregation's proclivities and contradictions. Martin helps us think through segregation's emergence and instabilities, as people in small-scale relations act and counteract each other in predictable ways that complicate larger structures. I will use his ideas to explore how behavioral tendencies in certain relations (e.g., alliances) can both promote and undermine segregation. White analyzes the tendencies of larger structures surrounding broader domains of action (e.g., political action) that can encompass a variety of relational activities. Hence, we might find agglomerations of simple structures described by Martin in White's domains. I will use White's ideas to consider how segregation might evolve in complex activity with a division of labor.

Martin's (2009) typology is based on tie directionality, which carries important cultural and behavioral tendencies. *Symmetric* ties connote equality and mutuality, as actors on each side share reciprocal obligations, expectations, and action profiles. Action must be reciprocated to sustain the relation. Alliances and friendships are obvious examples that conjure notions of solidarity, but pure competition is also symmetric. As the number of actors grows, Martin highlights the difficulty of maintaining solidarity and equality. I will show how this can promote segregation in large structures but can also make it difficult to sustain in the long run.

Martin distinguishes two types of *nonsymmetric* ties. In *asymmetric* ties, the same type of action or content can be transmitted between actors, but in an unbalanced or unreciprocated way, thus permitting inequality. Asymmetric ties underlie donations and other altruistic activities, one-sided choices (e.g., attraction, admiration), and systems of generalized exchange. Conversely, the nature of the action or content transmitted in *antisymmetric* ties differs across actors, including reciprocal but differentiated flows as well as content or action that cannot be reciprocated. Antisymmetric relations may or may not seem equal and include pure market-like exchange

(money for services), patron-client relations (loyalty for protection), and interactions of dominance and subordination. Because nonsymmetric ties can connect differentiated actors, they may be common in cross-category relations. I argue that if categorical relations are unequal, however, the tendency of actors in large structures to resist or escape undesirable relations (noted by Martin) could foster some degree of segregation.

White's (2008:63–65) typology is based on action profiles that have distinct valuation orders, from which "disciplines" emerge. Disciplines provide rules of the game to coordinate tasks in a division of labor. Think Bourdieu's (1984) concepts of field and habitus, but more attentive to relational structures. There are also parallels between White's disciplines and Weber's (1968:926–38) dimensions of stratification (class, status, party). *Arenas*, White's first discipline, emerge around joint production in fields that value purity. Gatekeepers select participants to maximize "fit" (complementarities), and actors seek esteem from membership in closed groups. Arenas entail dense mutual (symmetric) relations within separate, bounded groups. This evokes Weber's status group closure, Hechter's (1987) group solidarity, and Durkheim's (2014) mechanical solidarity. Arenas seem a natural fit for segregation.

Interfaces, White's next discipline, emerge around differentiated production processes that value quality. Actors in one position compete with each other in performing one task, but they cooperate with each other in differentiated exchange with other positions that have different tasks, creating a chain of directed flows.[2] The competition and cooperation within positions entail symmetric relations, coupled with antisymmetric exchanges at the interfaces between positions. This resembles Weber's portrayals of class stratification (also Marx 1967) and Durkheim's (2014) organic solidarity in market systems with a division of labor. Segregation

seems harder to square with interfaces: regardless of how categories correlate with positions, actors at times have incentives for relations both within and between them.

Councils emerge from competition to set agendas and control resources amid processes of claims-making and dispute resolution in fields that value power or prestige. Actors gain power and prestige by mobilizing networks to build coalitions. Alliances and counter-alliances emerge, creating "aversive pillars" with similar internal role structures (akin to Weber's parties). These pillars may entail symmetric political commitments, asymmetric prestige hierarchies, and antisymmetric horse-trading. Between pillars there may be conflict and competition, but also bargaining. Even if pillars align with categories in ways that promote segregation in councils, the variety of activity between and within pillars can incentivize relations that undermine segregation. Though he provides few details, White (2008:105) also notes that these disciplines meld together in a broader division of labor. I provide some historical examples involving segregation that illustrate these dynamics.

From Symmetry to Segregation and Back

Martin's analysis of friendships and alliances sets the stage to examine how segregation might emerge and evolve from symmetric relations. Their mutual, egalitarian imperatives foster dense structures of transitive, reciprocal ties that are achievable in small groups (cliques), but become untenable as the number of actors grows. Clusters appear, and efforts to hold them together via special brokers introduce inequality and intransitivity, undermining solidarity and weakening the structure (Martin 2009). Hence, structures around mutual relations tend to fragment, which, if coupled with categorization, creates segregation between solidary groups.

Instabilities inevitably resurface, however. Simmel (1971:252–53) paints the picture as follows. Cultural differentiation continues and inequality arises within separate categories.

People adopt different roles in an evolving division of labor (Durkheim 2014), or pockets of deviance emerge (Feld and Grofman 2009). Categories develop similar role patterns, in part because they are separated and each must fill important roles. The similar roles and statuses of actors in parallel positions could foster positional solidarity or cultural similarities that promote cross-category relations (Breiger 2010), undoing the segregation that preceded it (Simmel 1971).

Hence, in symmetric relations, segregation can seem both self-generating and self-undermining, both inevitable and unsustainable. Where it seems to create categorical unity, it sows disunity, and where it seems to cement categorical differences, it creates similarities.

Tenuous Racial Segregation amid Shifting Political Alliances

Attempts at interracial class alliances in late nineteenth century U.S. South shed light on this idea. During Reconstruction, southern party politics were heavily racialized: Republicans incorporated freed black people and Democrats rallied disaffected white people (Foner 1988). But economic problems sparked class divisions, and a growing populist movement inched toward cross-race worker alliances to challenge elites (Woodward 2002). An ideal case of segregation unraveling might have entailed members of separate black and white class structures finding common interests, reorienting their action along class lines rather than racial ones.

In a fascinating examination of these movements, Gerteis (2007) shows how the Knights of Labor moved in this direction in 1880s. Among other factors, Gerteis argues that segregation actually helped advance interracial labor activism among the Knights, at least in Richmond, Virginia. Racial occupational segregation reduced competition for the same jobs, which facilitated interracial cooperation among workers under the Knights' broad producerist class logic. Segregation had also fostered autonomous black civic organizations, whose past instances of pro-labor activism helped whites envision them as allies. Meanwhile spatial segregation had

concentrated black political power and strengthened black political organization. This all supported a parallel system of black and white Knights assemblies that cooperated in strikes and other action. Less segregated places that lacked parallel systems of black and white organizations had less success.

The next step might have been the erosion of racial boundaries within classes to create a more unified class movement. This never happened. As the Knights entertained a third party, Democrats used taunts of "black supremacy" to secure white voters, deterring white Knights from promises of racial equality. This preserved incentives for black workers to stick with the Republican party, the source of what little power they had. In short, longstanding racial social barriers hurt efforts to create cross-category economic or political alliances (Gerteis 2007).

We might also consider structural aspects of this failure. Perhaps there was insufficient class equivalence between black and white communities. Had there been a faction of black elites, elites may have created their own cross-race alliances and been less willing or able to use racist appeals to divide workers. Economic and political divisions may have emerged among black people, weakening traditional racial party alliances. We will never know, but this case does suggest that segregation in symmetric relations such as political alliances could have self-undermining potential. It also shows how White's (2008) interfaces (class relations), arenas (segregated neighborhoods and organizations), and councils (political coalitions) interact in ways that can reshape categorical relations.

Inequality and Segregation's Dilemmas

Segregation may have different tendencies in nonsymmetric relations, particularly unequal ones. Many view segregation and inequality as part of a vicious cycle reinforced through economic and political mechanisms (Massey and Denton 1993; Sharkey 2013). If access to

relations depends on people's resources or power, categorical inequality can promote segregation; and if relations determine people's access to resources or power, segregation can promote categorical inequality (Durlauf 1996). Explanations of segregation that feature elites or institutional powerbrokers often take this approach. Historically, white elites have used racial segregation to consolidate white alliances and maintain power, conferring privileges to white people while repressing minorities and trapping them in subordinate positions (Marx 1998; Massey and Denton 1993; Woodward 2002).

Yet scholarship also suggests countervailing tendencies. If segregation makes certain categories more visible targets, it gives them security in numbers. If it isolates them from others, it reinforces their solidarity. If it creates cultural gulfs, it provides cultural autonomy. And if it excludes them from some opportunities, it may allow them to create or hoard others (Brown 2018; Duneier 2016; Nightingale 2012; Tilly 1998; Wacquant 2018).

Segregation's tenuous links to inequality have structural roots. Inequality entails nonsymmetric relations with cultural imperatives related to differentiation and unequal reciprocation. Dominance requires antisymmetric interactions that end in ritual submission (Martin 2009:146; Simmel 1971:96). Exploitation requires antisymmetric methods of control and appropriation (Marx 1967; Tomaskovic-Devey and Avent-Holt 2019). Even symbolic inequalities emerge in asymmetric interpersonal interactions, as when people express aversion, disgust, or pity for others (Ridgeway 1991; Ridgeway and Erickson 2000; Simmel 1971:74–76). In short, categorical inequality implies and requires relational interdependence, with resources or status flowing across categories (Tilly 1998).

Yet segregation is so common in unequal systems that they seem a natural pair. This may be, at least in part, a story of reverse causality. People on the short end of unequal relations have

incentives to avoid or escape them (Durkheim 2014:293–302; Martin 2009). Members of a disadvantaged category might thus perceive benefits to segregation, either to avoid harm and exploitation or to collectively mobilize for more favorable relations. Thus arises a sort of voluntary, or at least not coercive, segregation (Duneier 2016).

The advantaged category may counter to preserve unequal relations by making them seem less objectionable. Patronage relations—lord-vassal, master-servant—are a common solution that does so via antisymmetric reciprocated exchanges (labor, loyalty, and deference for sustenance and security) and pseudo-familial paternalistic bonds (Martin 2009). Patronage requires close, exclusive ties that give patrons sufficient control to prevent clients' collective mobilization. Intense control can be costly or impractical, however, and it can provoke hostility from clients that might lead patrons to coalesce for protection. This sort of elite segregation is common when elites are a small minority in highly unequal or exploitative societies (Marx 1998; Nightingale 2012).

Amid struggles in unequal relations, then, members of advantaged categories may not originally see segregation as beneficial, but it can become a reality they adapt to. Dominant categories can use institutions to keep some relations segregated but the inequality-generating ones mixed, as I will discuss. This presents a dilemma for nondominant categories. They could challenge dominant categories' monopolies through integration. This may be their only way to acquire valuable positions and resources, but they risk becoming further enmeshed in harmful cross-category relations. Alternatively, they could escape such relations through further segregation. This separatism might elevate their status by avoiding relations of subordination and exploitation, but these relations might be necessary to meet basic needs. Segregation may also provide avenues to equality by creating parallel structures of roles or positions, but if the

advantaged category has a monopoly on resources or power, even the ostensibly equivalent

positions in the disadvantaged category may be under-resourced or devalued.

Segregation is thus a useful but flawed structural device to actors on both sides of

unequal relations. It provides the disadvantaged an avenue of escape and a source of leverage for

more equal relations, but it may isolate them from important resources. It provides the

advantaged security and a means to cement monopolies, but it can undermine the transactions

that fuel their advantage. These contradictory tendencies again give segregation a flavor of both

inevitability and impossibility.

Inequality and the Path to Extreme Segregation

This tension between segregation and inequality provides an interesting lens through

which to revisit examples of formal, coercive segregation. Though often portrayed simply as a

tool dominant groups use to control, persecute, and exploit minorities, the reality may be a more

complicated evolution amid dueling control efforts. Take black-white relations in the United

States, which evolved from racial slavery, an extreme form of unequal antisymmetric cross-

category relations. White slave-owners used coercive and paternalistic means to extract labor and

prevent slaves from fleeing or rebelling. The system seemed durable, but instabilities emerged

when its economic benefits changed, and interesting dynamics ensued.

Wade (1964) describes the restructuring of urban slavery in the South before

emancipation. At the zenith of urban slavery, mass segregation was unfathomable to white

people. Slaves lived in quarters behind their master's house but within the same compound.

These compounds were walled off with only a few entryways and exits that masters could easily

monitor. This increased masters' control and prevented slaves from mingling with each other

amid white people's fear of insurrection. As the division of labor grew more fluid and complex,

incentives arose for a more flexible labor force. Masters found benefits to "hiring out" their slaves to other white people. Many masters soon found it easier to allow slaves to find work and hire themselves out. Some found it even easier to allow slaves to "live out" on their own, as long as masters received the expected payoff. These changes offered slaves more freedom and autonomy—they could leave their masters' compounds, make some money, and live together in budding black neighborhoods (Wade 1964; Wilson 1978).

Hence, we can see the emergence of what we might call segregated neighborhoods, but they were not imposed on black people as a means of control or exploitation. They emerged as black people sought to escape control and reduce their exploitation. This horrified many white people, who viewed hiring out and living out as existential threats to slavery and white supremacy. It also decoupled personalistic master-slave relationships and embedded them in more collective race relations. Municipalities responded by intensifying collective efforts to monitor and control black people in public (Wade 1964). In short, white people adapted to the emergence of segregation, which, at least for a time, benefitted black people.

Similar dynamics after emancipation further weakened white people's control and led black communities, in part through a spirit of self-determination, to form their own schools, churches and other organizations (Anderson 1988; Litwack 1979; Williams 2005). Once white people could no longer control black people through master-slave relations, they organized campaigns of terror and political suppression to build an institutional apparatus that could segregate relations that threatened categorical boundaries while maintaining interracial transactions that favored white people (Ritterhouse 2006; Wilson 1978). Jim Crow arrived, and it brought counter-moves from black people, who wavered between integration and separatism as solutions (Marx 1998; Woodward 2002).

In sum, rather than viewing segregation as a tool white people used to keep black people subordinate after slavery, we can view it as the outcome of a contested process, with white people striving to maintain supremacy and control over resistant black people. Early on, black people may have perceived benefits to some forms of segregation, but white people adapted and used power to preserve the racial hierarchy, which required a mix of cross-category inequality-generating relations and segregated boundary-preserving mechanisms. Following Martin (2009), we see how the tendencies of antisymmetric relations complicate the role that structure plays in inequality. We also see how categorical relations evolve as White's (2008) interfaces (changes in economic relations), arenas (separate organizations), and councils (white political coalitions and municipal organization) interact in a division of labor.

Multiplex Segregation and the Separation-Interdependence Dilemma

Though interesting, the dualisms and tradeoffs around segregation raise problems. Why does segregation seem so prevalent and persistent if it is unstable? And why is segregation often a component of durable categorical inequality if such inequality rests on cross-category relations? Perhaps categorical boundaries are porous (Tilly 1998). But what does that mean? A useful answer may lie in an overlooked aspect of segregation: social systems balance segregation's tradeoffs and manage its instabilities by differentiating complex social activity into domains with distinct relational structures.

Recall Du Bois's (1903) account of race relations across domains under Jim Crow. Other community studies revealed similar patterns: familial, religious, educational, and recreational activities were highly segregated, but economic relations were not (Davis et al. 1941; Dollard 1937). In this and other extreme cases of formal segregation amid inequality and persecution, we sometimes see segregation as more extensive than it actually is. We can gloss over its selective

application to some types of relations, such as housing or marriage, but not others, such as commercial or labor relations (Wacquant 2018).

Likewise, in contexts where segregation seems less coercive, we sometimes see the segregation and overlook the interdependence. Consider Park and his colleagues' ecological model. They argued that as cities expand, they sprout functionally differentiated and segregated niches, neighborhoods inhabited by different classes and ethnic groups who play different roles. These roles reinforce segregation via in-group solidarity and out-group prejudice (Park et al. 1925). Implicit and underappreciated here is the interdependence among niches in the division of labor. Sampson (2012) shows how this manifests in Chicago's "interlocking social structure" as institutional leaders in different neighborhoods exchange resources and information. For a city of segregated niches to function, some economic and political relations must cross neighborhood (and implicitly categorical) boundaries.

To better understand categorical relations, we must examine segregation across many transactions and interactions in a division of labor (familial ties, labor relations, credit networks, political alliances, etc.). Different domains of activity might have distinct relational structures with their own cultural accompaniments. How do people manage as their activity changes? And how does this affect relational structures?

Multiplex Segregation

Padgett and Powell (2012:6) help us envision multidimensional structures; they draw networks of relations in each of several domains on distinct planes and stack them into an array. This helps us examine structures in each domain, see how they differ, and consider how action is coordinated or decoupled across domains. White and colleagues (1976) show that multi-relational structures reveal key features of social systems, including structures of positions and

roles. Padgett and Powell (2012:5–7) go even further, rooting organizational genesis and change in the social processes that unfold across domains. I am interested in how structures of categorical relations might differ across domains, and how these structures might interact to affect categorical relations broadly. I loosely define *multiplex segregation* as the degree and variability of relational segregation in an array of domains.

Gordon's (1964) analysis of ethnic relations in the mid-twentieth century U.S. includes a rare examination of multiplex segregation in a systematic, if vague, manner. Echoing the aforementioned analyses of Jim Crow, Gordon found extreme segregation in "primary" group relations in familial, religious, and educational organizations, and in recreational activities. These surely entail many types of relations, but they seem most consistent with symmetric ties and arena disciplines. Gordon found extensive cross-category ties in more impersonal "secondary" group relations in economic and political life, which seem more consistent with nonsymmetric ties and interface or council disciplines. Gordon offered little explanation for these differences, claiming simply that this is how ethnicity works: ethnic identity is central to people's sense of personhood, which is cultivated in primary group relations with coethnics.

Things are likely more complicated, and analyses of multiplex segregation in different contexts may reveal interesting patterns. One way to see segmented assimilation theory (Portes and Zhou 1993) is that it recognized pathways with different combinations of primary and secondary group relational structures. Generally, which activities are segregated will depend on the categories involved, prior relational histories, the purposes segregation serves, and actors' resources and opportunities (see Lacy 2004). I already mentioned how segregated social relations undermined cross-category political alliances in 1880s populist movements (Gerteis 2007). In other cases, including boycotts to protest Jim Crow, actors in one category segregate economic

relations to gain leverage in other relations. In some societies, categories hostile to each other in many ways intermarry to maintain important ties (Strauss 1969).

Multiplex race relations varied even under Jim Crow. Rural Jim Crow was a patronage system with exploitative paternalistic relations. Planter-tenant relations were intimate, exhaustive, and reciprocal. White planters controlled, exploited, and personally punished black tenants, while also gossiping with them, protecting them from white mobs and legal troubles, and providing medical care. Urban race relations differed. Black people, at least those with adequate economic resources, received relatively favorable treatment by white merchants who benefitted from their business, but they also experienced pervasive repression in justice systems where white people exercised control by communal surveillance, municipal authorities, and judges and juries (Davis et al. 1941; Wilson 1978). The point is that segregation can vary across activities in a division of labor, and the entire multidimensional structure is key to understanding categorical relations (van Ham and Tammaru 2016). As mentioned previously, variable relational structures across domains could also complicate identities.

Relational Spillovers and Threats to Segregation

Another important feature of multidimensional structures is that relations across distinct domains interact and affect each other. "Every social relationship which goes beyond the pursuit of immediate common ends, which hence lasts for long periods, involves relatively permanent social relationships between the same persons, and these cannot be exclusively confined to the technically necessary activities" (Weber 1968:41).

On one hand, relations in some domains could become embedded in others in ways that make systems durable (Padgett and Powell 2012:9). This is one way of understanding processes that reproduce residential segregation by segregating social networks (Bonilla-Silva and Embrick

2007; Krysan and Crowder 2017). Such cycles not only entail reproductive tendencies, but also tendencies for repair when threatened. Any potential disruption of segregated peer networks by school desegregation, for instance, might be repaired if children remain embedded in segregated neighborhoods or school-based activities (Moody 2001).

On the other hand, categorical relations in one domain could bleed into others in disruptive ways. Categories come with stories and scripts that can be simple and diffuse, not intricately tailored to specific activities (Ridgeway 1991). Scripts suited to relations in one activity could be transposed to another, creating problems (Friedland and Alford 1991; Martin 2009:336; Padgett and Powell 2012:11). Segregation in certain relations might create boundaries that foster monopolies and undermine economic markets (Tomaskovic-Devey and Avent-Holt 2019; Weber 1968), for instance, creating economic incentives for integration. Cross-category economic ties could, in turn, threaten other social boundaries. Nightingale (2012) uses this logic when linking porous residential boundaries in colonial Indian cities to the benefits powerful actors reaped from inter-racial economic transactions. Relatedly, scholars have linked fears of miscegenation under Jim Crow to potential spillovers from exploitative economic relations between white households and black female domestic workers (Davis et al. 1941; Dollard 1937).

Gordon's (1964) theory of assimilation and Banton's (1983:109–11) theory of race and ethnic competition both grapple with these problems. Banton imagines two self-interested members of different categories in interdependent positions in a division of labor. Placed in an exchange relationship, they learn about each other, recognize shared values, and engage in other interactions peripheral to the original one. Cultural exchange, friendship, and intermarriage follow. Gordon similarly saw cross-category interpersonal relationships as the seeds of full assimilation, leaving ethnic organization leaders in his study torn. They—like the black families

in Lacy's (2004) study—aspired to gain economic opportunities through some types of integration, while segregating other relations to preserve their communities, but they worried these activities could not be fully compartmentalized. Nightingale (2012:113) casts this as a recurring dilemma in segregated systems throughout history; he calls it the "paradox of detachment and dependence."

Interfaith Sex and Multiple Relations in Medieval Europe

Nirenberg's (1996:7) account of interfaith relations in medieval Europe is rich with multidimensional relational dynamics. He claims that religious conflict helped a diverse society function, and that segregating certain activities smoothed other interdependent relations. He devotes an illustrative fifth chapter to the prohibition of interfaith sex, a major source of conflict.

Europe did not yet have racial theories built on biological inheritance, but they had a sense that sex entailed blood mixing, which unified participants and their kinship networks. Miscegenation thus threatened to bring nonbelievers across sacred communal boundaries. Nirenberg notes there were no such taboos on other interfaith activities. Christians, Jews, and Muslims ate, drank, and fought together, and they could cooperate in economic ventures. Rather than these relations threatening sexual boundaries, Nirenberg argues that the taboo on miscegenation "quarantined" broader religious tensions, making interfaith interactions in economic and social activities less contentious.

This entailed fascinating boundary work. Attention focused heavily on Christian prostitutes who, through sexual bonds forged publicly, were simultaneously a hub of the Christian community and a threat to the boundary between Christians and non-Christians. If accused of interfaith sex, Christian prostitutes faced death unless they proved their clients had deceived them. Prostitutes thus had incentives to police religious boundaries. Nirenberg provides

evidence from travelers' tavern tales, which recounted drinking, gambling, and moneylending among Muslims and Christians. Christian prostitutes appear in these tales, where they encourage these interfaith activities but declare their own services off limits to non-Christians.

Nirenberg also shows how the taboo on interfaith sex could disrupt other activities. Because religious boundaries were so salient in sexual relations, people leveraged miscegenation accusations in political and economic disputes with others of different faiths. Strategic actors imported relational imperatives from one domain to disrupt relations in another.

In short, multiplex segregation is ridden with potential spillovers. Segregation in certain domains might smooth or disrupt categorical relations in others, giving segregation either self-amplifying or self-undermining tendencies in multidimensional social structures. Moreover, strategic actors segregating certain relations for one purpose risk having their efforts undermined by spillovers from other relations, as they also risk inadvertently disrupting other relations in ways that undermine their interests.

Institutions and Multiplex Segregation

How do people manage multidimensional categorical relations despite these tradeoffs and paradoxes? When seemingly natural or rational behaviors threaten boundaries, we expect institutions to protect them (Hechter 1987). Cultural mechanisms (socialization) can convince people that their interests are those of the group and transmit norms conducive to in-group allegiance or out-group avoidance. Structural mechanisms can provide systems of monitoring and punishment to control those who have interests in crossing boundaries. Cultural scripts and organizational routines can also help match categories to roles or positions, or channel behavior in interactions to maintain segregation or inequality (Brubaker 2017; Emirbayer and Desmond 2015:337–38; Tilly 1998).

This accords with explanations of why some extreme cases of coercive racial segregation have occurred in modern bureaucratic states, despite avowed liberal ideals. Such societies used dehumanizing racist ideologies to justify excluding minorities from basic rights, and they used organizational resources to surveil and control minorities freed from the close interpersonal control of the past (Fredrickson 2002). This rings true for Jim Crow. The lack of such systems in Latin American countries may be due to their longer history of illiberal aristocracies, which reduced the need for dehumanizing ideologies, and partly due to post-slavery laws that preserved patronage relations between former masters and freed slaves (Cottrol 2013; Marx 1998).

Boundary-sustaining institutions alone, however, cannot solve the problems of multiplex segregation. If two categories occupy interdependent roles in one domain, breaking off all cross-category relations would undermine their interests. Yet allowing untethered relations across different domains—or in the interstitial spaces between them—could erode categorical boundaries as distinct relations bleed into one another, or as actors find opportunities to disrupt the status quo (Emirbayer and Desmond 2015:215–31; Mische and White 1998). Actors managing multidimensional categorical relations face the challenge of maintaining desirable cross-category relations without corrupting categorical boundaries (Barth 1969).

This requires not only regulating relations around different types of activity in different ways, but also tying domains together. High-level institutions can channel people's behaviors and relations as they "switch" from one activity or domain to another, coordinating action across domains with their own interdependent (and possibly contradictory) institutions (Friedland and Alford 1991; Mohr and White 2008; White 2008). Systems that fail to do so in coherent ways will struggle to achieve legitimacy, destabilizing social structures (Douglas 1986). Institutions

that help organize varying degrees of segregation across various domains in multidimensional structures are likely key to managing categorical relations.

Institutions in Formal Segregation

Top-down control mechanisms may have become so important in formal systems of segregation because societal changes such as monetarization, marketization, specialization, and urbanization depersonalized relations and induced multidimensionality (Durkheim 2014; Martin 2009; Simmel 1971). These changes freed or forced people to interact with a greater number and variety of others for different types of resources in a division of labor. Multidimensionality amplifies opportunities for individual interests to threaten social boundaries and for relational structures in different domains to influence each other (Mische and White 1998). The evolution of categorical relations depends on how institutions regulate multi-relational structures with varying degrees of segregation. History shows this has been difficult to manage.

Moore (2007) casts monetarization as a driving force of multidimensionality that shattered personalistic control structures in medieval Europe. Elites adapted by centralizing formal systems of control, categorization, and persecution. Nonetheless, these systems wavered as they struggled with segregation's paradoxes. Rulers confined Jewish people to ghettoes at some times but not others, for instance, regulated their rights to travel and do business in detailed but ever-changing ways, and seized their property and expelled them at some times but protected and exploited them at others (Moore 2007; Nirenberg 1996). Later, Nazis grappled with similar dilemmas preceding their decision to exterminate Jews (Duneier 2016:15–17).

We can also find struggles to regulate multidimensional relations in Jim Crow laws. Early segregation laws emerged as master-slave relations weakened under urbanization and industrialization (Wade 1964) and were eventually severed by emancipation; these laws spread

as white-controlled governments reasserted power after Reconstruction (Foner 1988). But why were there so many laws of so many varieties? Why did they focus on certain types of relations (marriage, travel accommodations, schools) more than others (economic transactions)? Why did they carve out special exceptions (permitting black maids to ride in white passenger cars) (Woodward 2002)? Because the racial order required different degrees of segregation in different types of activities that might disrupt each other. The most consistent feature was dueling efforts by white people to maintain superiority and by black people to resist (Emirbayer and Desmond 2015:130–33; Foner 1988; Litwack 1979).

Special Relations: Holes, Brokers, and Bridges

Institutions can help regulate complex relations, but where the rubber meets the road, there are key positions and ties. Like categories themselves, these structures are endogenous to segregation. This contrasts with theories that root segregation in the structures it helps shape, such as Park's (1925) ecological theory and Blau's (1994) structural theory, both of which highlight the overlap between categories and roles or positions. But categorical and positional structures evolve together. We can see this when efforts to solve segregation's problems create new arrangements with special roles.

The segregation-interdependence dilemma creates structural holes between categories. Burt (1992) argued that actors who fill these holes have privileged access to resources in multiple clusters, giving them unique advantages (or responsibilities) and making them instrumental to a system's functioning. Pachuki and Breiger (2010) broached the idea of "cultural holes" to highlight cultural contingencies in the mediation of cross-cluster relations. In the context of segregation, structural holes might be roles or positions that maintain cross-

category relations in interdependent activities, and cultural holes might include the ideologies, rituals, or routines that guide cross-category relations while preserving symbolic boundaries.

One way to manage segregated relations is to use actors with special categorical attributes as brokers. Brokers could have unique, ambiguous, or fluid identities, perhaps able to fit with either (or neither) category and mediate cross-category relations without explicitly violating boundaries. Simmel's (1971:143–49) "stranger" is the archetype. In a seeming paradox, a stranger's exotic attributes, mobility, and position as an outsider allow them to form ties across group boundaries. Middleman minorities, who often serve as brokers in ethnically segregated societies (Bonacich 1973), have similar traits.

Another way to mediate segregated relations uses special positions with bridging ties. Actors in these positions can keep standard categorical identities, because the position has cultural accompaniments that allow otherwise problematic cross-category relations, perhaps helping actors decouple as they switch to and from mixed or integrated relations "on the job" and segregated relations "off-the-job" (e.g., Goffman 1959). Examples might include agents or representatives for political factions or organizations.

The historical examples I have discussed blend these mechanisms. Christian prostitutes were brokers in medieval Europe (Nirenberg 1996), as were Jewish merchants under Jim Crow (Davis et al. 1941). Both entail categorical idiosyncrasies: prostitutes were different than other Christians, and Jews were different than other white people. And in both cases structures of government positions expanded and diversified to surveil and control categorical relations (Foner 1988; Moore 2007; Wade 1964). These strategies preserve some cross-category relations without disrupting segregation in others, but in doing so they alter the structures of categories, positions, and roles we often take for granted.

Discussion

A relational approach to segregation starts by prioritizing structures of ties, interactions, and transactions that pervade social life (Tilly 2016). As the studies discussed here show, extant scholarship gives us much to draw from. We can also draw from stratification research linking categorical inequalities to relational structures (if not quite segregation). Features of job-seeking and referral networks help explain disparate job opportunities (Fernandez and Sosa 2005; Pedulla and Pager 2019), for instance, and cross-category authority relations within workplaces help explain unequal pay (Tomaskovic-Devey and Avent-Holt 2019). We can enrich our understanding of categorical relations by examining segregation in structures like these, as well as others we know less about (political organizations and alliances, borrowing and lending networks, commercial transactions). How do these structures come about? How do they change? How do they affect our lives? I will close by highlighting themes from my argument, suggesting ways to engage them with empirical research, and discussing practical implications.

One theme has been implicit: segregation is not a single "thing" with regular, mechanistic causes or effects. Treating it as such fits the appealing research style of testing causal hypotheses by relating variation in segregation to other things we can measure. But when we reify a measure of segregation as a causal variable, we easily forget that people are doing the acting. Martin (2015:72–73) cites this as a common problem in theories of high-order constructs that emerge from interpersonal action. Segregation is a pattern of relations among actors doing any number of things, and we can only understand its causes and effects if we consider lower-level dynamics in context. Who are the actors involved, what are they doing, and why? How do people's relationships shape their identities, goals, habits, and resources, and how do these things shape people's relationships?

Another theme is that identities and preferences coevolve with relational structures and are thus endogenous to segregation. Empirical research could unpack some of this by examining how segregation in various relations impacts the fluidity of people's identities or the official categories used by organizations. Following Brown (2018) and Van Ausdale and Feagin (2001), we could also study how relational structures shape the categorization and identification of "newcomers" to a society (children, immigrants). We could better understand and address categorical relations by relying less on preferences to explain segregation and doing more to examine how preferences arise in structures of relations (Krysan and Crowder 2017). Following Lacy's (2004) example, empirical research should examine how and why people's preferences to associate with or avoid particular categories vary across activities. In doing so, we should consider the nature of the activities, the resources relevant to those activities, and the complementarities and interdependencies they entail.

Like other structural arrangements (Martin 2009), segregation has different implications for different types of activity, and it has inherent contradictions and limitations that are easy to overlook. One source of contradictions stems from tradeoffs between structural and cultural elements of boundaries. Each could compensate for weaknesses in the other to preserve basic features of categorical relations (differentiation, status hierarchies), but strengthening one could also destabilize the other. Researchers could examine how events that disrupt cultural boundaries alter patterns of segregation, or vice versa. Understanding these dynamics might expose hidden mechanisms of (and barriers to) change in categorical relations.

Another source of contradictions is that segregation can both support and undermine the interests of any given actor in relations with others, creating behavioral tendencies that make segregation seem both inevitable and unsustainable. This matters for how segregation emerges

and affects social relations. One tentative hypothesis: extreme categorical inequality arises in cross-category relations but sparks reactions that reduce inequality and heighten segregation. Another: extreme segregation emerging from solidary relations fuels dynamics that heighten within-category inequality while inviting cross-category relations. We could study these ideas by examining long-term dynamics of conflict and cooperation around categorical boundaries, including how actors leverage relational structures, perhaps using comparative-historical approaches (Marx 1998). These nuances could help identify the types activities in which (de)segregation tends to heighten or ameliorate conflict and inequality (and vice versa).

Many specific domains of activity are ripe for more segregation research, but we must also question how domains fit together and how people navigate this complexity (Mische and White 1998; Padgett and Powell 2012; White 2008). Systems likely struggle to balance categories' interdependence in some activities with their separation in others (Nightingale 2012). The idea of multiplex segregation provides leverage to study these problems. We might begin by exploring how patterns of segregation converge or diverge across types of activity. We should also consider how structures in certain domains influence others over time, whether certain multiplex structures are more or less durable than others, and whether certain structures coincide with more or less cooperation, conflict, or inequality. Collecting the relational data necessary to start a holistic analysis from scratch seems daunting, but we could start by cobbling together existing analyses of categorical relations in various activities, as well as data from ethnographies that provide rich accounts of their subjects' social ties (Lacy 2004; Small 2004).

Institutions greatly influence how we differentiate life into distinct domains and guide us as we transition among them (Friedland and Alford 1991). These transitions may be key sites of change in categorical relations. Laws and formal policies regulating different types of categorical

relations could provide a practical data source for research in this area. Similarly, the dilemmas inherent to multiplex segregation are plausible sources of change in often taken-for-granted structures of categories, positions, and roles. Such changes in the division of labor could impact segregation's durability and its consequences by mediating cross-category relations. The nature of multiplex segregation is the least explored of the themes here, and it may have significant implications for efforts to promote social progress and prevent destructive categorical relations.

In closing, segregation is more than what it seems. It is not only physical or spatial, it is not total separation, it is not inevitable or unchangeable, and it does not have mechanical causes or effects. Segregation is about structures of relations, it embodies a tenuous duality of separation and interdependence, it varies across domains of life, and it has nuanced implications for categorical relations. A relational perspective gives footing to grapple with this complexity and work toward a richer understanding of social life.

ENDNOTES

[1] A conversation with John Levi Martin helped clarify this idea.

[2] For instance, farmers compete to make quality crops, but they cooperate in marketing their produce to food processors. Food processors then compete with each other to make quality products, but cooperate when selling their products to food service companies, etc.

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