sociological science

Distinct but Proximate: The Residential Segregation of Black Americans by Nativity

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Abstract: The color line dividing Black and White Americans has long anchored the study of U.S. residential segregation; however, this work generally treats "Black" as a single population, even as more than one in ten metropolitan Black residents is now foreign-born. We measure the residential segregation of native- and foreign-born Black Americans across U.S. metropolitan areas in 2010 and 2020, against Whites and against one another, correcting for small-population and sampling-error bias. Correction removes most apparent differences relative to Whites, but one survives: the foreign-born are markedly less spatially clustered than the native-born. Measured against each other, the two groups are substantially dissimilar at the neighborhood scale yet show little clustering apart. They occupy different neighborhoods within the same parts of the metropolis: distinct, but proximate. A single measure of "Black" segregation cannot represent this cleavage, which grows more consequential as the foreign-born share rises.

Keywords: residential segregation; nativity; Black immigration; race and ethnicity; measurement; metropolitan inequality

Reproducibility Package: This article relies on statistical and computational methods and meets the journal's reproducibility standard. All source data are publicly available: tract-level counts are drawn from the U.S. Census Bureau's 2006–2010 and 2016–2020 American Community Survey five-year estimates and the 2000 census long form, obtained through IPUMS NHGIS. The replication package, available at https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/SBFKAN, contains the analysis data file, the extract specifications and release versions for all source files, the data-construction and analysis code, and a master script and readme documenting which files generate each table, figure, and reported result.

Citation: Kye, Samuel H. and Nunnally Zou. 2026. "Distinct but Proximate: The Residential Segregation of Black Americans by Nativity." Sociological Science 13: 1431-1456.

Received: August 28, 2026

Accepted: October 15, 2026

Published: November 24, 2026

Editor(s): Stephen Vaisey, Kristian B. Karlson

DOI: 10.15195/v13.a54

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FOR decades, the study of residential segregation has been largely dominated by a singular comparison: Black Americans against Whites. The five-dimension framework that structures the field—evenness, exposure, concentration, centralization, and clustering—was built to characterize that comparison (Massey and Denton 1988), and the finding it produced—that Black Americans experience segregation so severe and so multidimensional as to constitute *hypersegregation* (Massey and Denton 1989, 1993)—remains one of the field's central empirical facts. Subsequent work has tracked its persistence and slow decline (Elbers 2021; Massey and Tannen 2015) and extended the framework across groups and metropolitan areas (Iceland, Weinberg, and Steinmetz 2002). Blacks' segregation from Whites has been shown to persist even in an age of immigration, with Black–White integration continuing to lag behind the integration of Whites with other immigrant groups (Charles 2003; Hwang and McDaniel 2022). All throughout, however, the object of measurement

has stayed fixed: "Black" names *one* group, and Black segregation has meant the segregation of that group from Whites.

That object is changing. Between 2000 and 2020, the foreign-born Black population of U.S. metropolitan areas roughly doubled, from 2.1 million to 4.0 million, and its share of the metropolitan Black population rose from under 7 percent to nearly 11 percent (authors' calculations). More than one in ten Black metropolitan residents is now an immigrant. This is not a marginal demographic footnote but a remaking of the population itself: immigration has produced a Black America increasingly heterogeneous in national origin, migration history, and socioeconomic position (Hamilton 2019, 2020). Nor is this heterogeneity purely a matter of internal composition. Black immigrants have become an object of political attention in their own right, drawn into an immigration enforcement regime that operates as a racial project (Aranda and Vaquera 2015) and, more recently, into public campaigns that mark them as a distinct and threatening presence (Sanya 2021). Whether the residential experience of this population is in fact distinct—or whether it is adequately captured by measures built for the native-born—is therefore a question of increasing salience.

This matters because an aggregate index of "Black" segregation is only as meaningful as the homogeneity of the population it summarizes. If native- and foreign-born Black residents are residentially distinct from one another, a single, aggregate "Black" measure may not accurately describe the experience of either, and with increasing inaccuracy as the foreign-born share grows. The aggregate could mislead in either direction. It may be that native-born Black Americans have made real gains in integration with Whites, and that the foreign-born—concentrated, recently arrived, and disproportionately settled in the nation's most segregated metropolitan areas—now anchor "Black" segregation. Or the reverse: that the foreign-born, like other immigrant groups before them, have begun to achieve the more moderate integration that immigrant status has historically afforded non-Black groups (Alba and Logan 1993; Charles 2003), such that pooling them with the native-born understates just how segregated native-born Black Americans remain. Both could be consistent with the aggregate, but neither would be visible within it.

There is empirical reason to think nativity carries a residential signature. Foreign-born Black residents exhibit segregation profiles that vary by origin and destination (Tesfai 2019), carve out separate enclaves within shared racial geographies (Crowder 1999), and appear more segregated from Whites than the native-born in nationwide data (Scopilliti and Iceland 2008). Their settlement is associated with compositional change in Black neighborhoods, with Black immigrant influx associated with trends that lead to the displacement of native-born Black households alongside White population growth (Dahir 2025). Together, this work indicates that foreign- and native-born Black populations may follow distinct residential trajectories.

However, the broader implications of these trends have been limited by two key constraints. First, existing work tends to train its focus on no more than a handful of gateway metropolitan areas (and in some cases, a single metropolitan area). This yields detailed portraits of Black immigrant settlement in New York City, Miami, or Washington D.C., but leaves open whether the patterns it documents are features of those particular destinations or of the population as a whole. This

approach is thus silent on emerging destinations where the contemporary foreign-born Black population is increasingly found. The few nationwide studies that do exist widen the lens, but typically retain only metropolitan areas above conventional population thresholds (e.g., Scopilliti and Iceland 2008), and so exclude most of these destinations as well.

Second, existing work has mostly compared each Black subgroup separately to Whites. The exceptions that measure the two Black populations directly against one another do so with data from 2000 or earlier, and either in a few gateway metropolitan areas (Freeman 2002) or with dissimilarity alone (Scopilliti and Iceland 2008); Scopilliti and Iceland (2008), for example, report moderate dissimilarity between them across the metropolitan areas with at least 1,000 foreign-born Black residents. Dissimilarity alone can establish whether two groups live in different tracts, but not whether those tracts lie in separate parts of the metropolis or are woven through the same districts. What is missing is a comparison that measures the two Black populations against one another across the full range of destinations *and* along multiple dimensions of segregation, so as to reveal whether they occupy the same residential world or merely the same racial category.

What residential relationship between the two Black populations should we expect? The leading accounts of immigrant incorporation answer differently, making different predictions about where Black immigrants should live—and, implicitly, about where they should live relative to native-born Black Americans. *Spatial assimilation* theory holds that immigrants convert acculturation and socioeconomic gains into residence among Whites (Alba and Logan 1993; Massey 1985); on this account, foreign-born Black residents should become less separated from Whites than the native-born. *Place stratification* theory counters that race overrides individual attainment for Black Americans, channeling Black residents, immigrant or not, into Black residential space regardless of their resources (Logan and Alba 1993). Consistent with this view, Freeman (2002) finds Black immigrants highly segregated from Whites regardless of their degree of acculturation. *Segmented assimilation* theory, finally, locates part of what is at stake in incorporation in the neighborhood itself, arguing that the children of Black immigrants who grow up in segregated, disadvantaged neighborhoods alongside native-born Black peers face a heightened risk of downward assimilation (Portes and Zhou 1993). Each account thus implies a different residential relationship between the two Black populations—movement away from native-born Black neighborhoods toward White ones, absorption into the same Black neighborhoods, or co-residence as a channel of downward mobility.

Each of these accounts may capture part of the picture, and work on boundary-making among Black Americans suggests how. Waters (1999) long ago argued that Black immigrants engage in social and symbolic distancing from native-born Black Americans while remaining bounded by a racial system that classifies them together. Recent work has begun to sharpen what that argument implies for residential space. Clergé (2019), studying the multinational Black middle class of Queens and Long Island, finds that shared exposure to anti-Black racism produces common neighborhoods and institutions, yet does not dissolve the boundaries Black groups draw among themselves—distinctions of national origin, migration history, and respectability that persist even after convergence in income, occupation, and residence. Black immigrants, in her account, neither assimilate into an undifferentiated

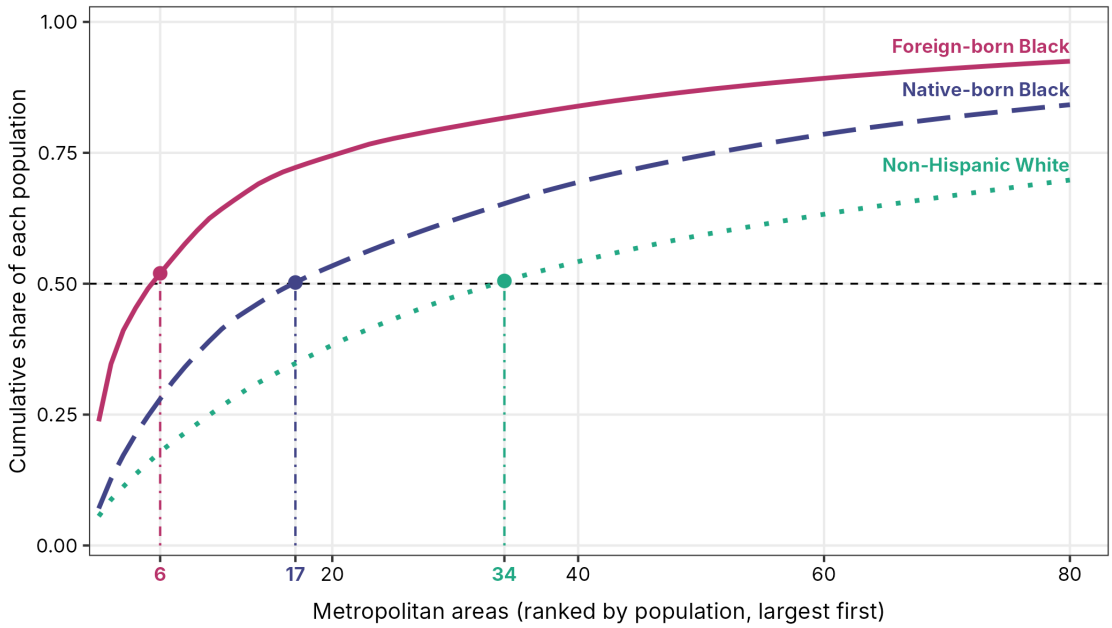

Figure 1: Cumulative share of the foreign-born Black, native-born Black, and non-Hispanic White metropolitan populations held by metropolitan areas, ranked separately for each group from largest to smallest population of that group, 2020. Marked points show the number of metropolitan areas that together hold half of each population; the horizontal axis is truncated at 80. Excludes Puerto Rico, Hawaii, and Alaska. *Source:* 2016–2020 ACS five-year estimates (IPUMS NHGIS).

African American population nor separate from it; they occupy a shared racial geography while remaining internally distinct within it. The spatial prediction that follows is neither residential fusion nor separate territories, but distinctness *within* a common geography. Notably, comparing each group to Whites cannot detect this pattern; only comparing the two Black populations directly to one another can.

Undertaking these comparisons, however, means confronting where the foreign-born Black population actually lives—and its geography poses a problem for segregation measurement. It lives, first of all, in remarkably few places. Figure 1 ranks metropolitan areas from largest to smallest separately for the foreign-born Black, native-born Black, and non-Hispanic White populations, and traces the cumulative share of each that successive metropolitan areas account for. The foreign-born Black curve rises far more steeply than the other two: in 2020, just six metropolitan areas contained half of all foreign-born Black residents, compared with 17 for the native-born and 34 for Whites. By the standard of either comparison group, the foreign-born Black population is extraordinarily concentrated—half of it gathered in a handful of metropolitan areas while the White population's first half is spread across nearly six times as many. Outside those few, its numbers thin quickly, and in most metropolitan areas the foreign-born Black population is small.

However, this concentration is loosening. In 2000, just two metropolitan areas—New York and Miami—together held a majority of the nation's foreign-born Black residents; by 2020 those same two held barely a third, and the number of metropolitan areas needed to account for half had risen from two to six (authors' calculations).

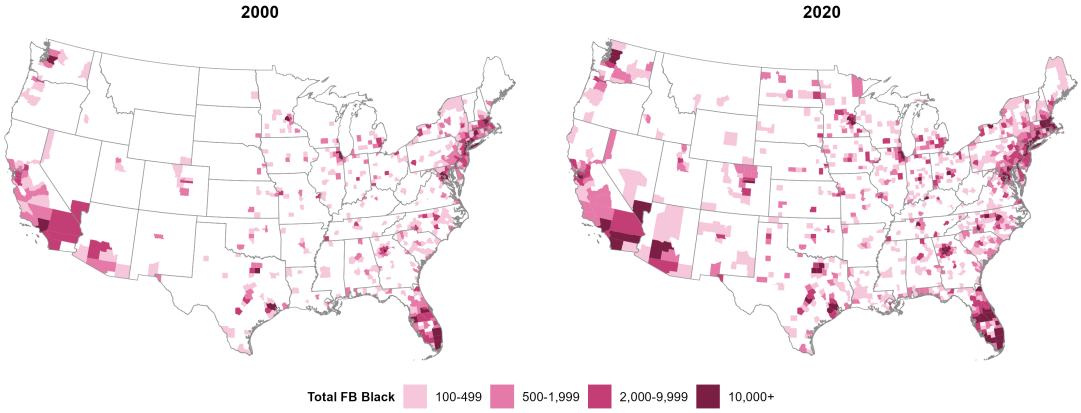

Figure 2: Foreign-born Black population by county, 2000 and 2020. Counties are shaded by the number of foreign-born Black residents; those with fewer than 100 are left unshaded. In 2000, substantial foreign-born Black populations were confined largely to a few established gateways—the New York–Washington corridor, South Florida, and the major California and Texas metropolitan areas. By 2020, the footprint had widened considerably, with new concentrations emerging across the Southeast, the interior South, the Mountain West, and the upper Midwest. The established gateways persist as the largest destinations; the change is the spread of settlement into counties that had little or no foreign-born Black presence two decades earlier. Continental United States; the sample excludes Alaska, Hawaii, and Puerto Rico.

Figure 2 maps the underlying shift. In 2000, substantial county-level concentrations sat almost entirely within the established gateways—the New York–Washington corridor, South Florida, and the major metropolitan areas of California and Texas. Yet by 2020, a fuller map now reflects new concentrations across the Southeast, the interior South, and the upper Midwest, in counties that two decades earlier had little or no foreign-born Black presence. Minneapolis is among the most striking: its foreign-born Black population, drawn heavily from East African and especially Somali immigration, nearly quadrupled over the period, from roughly 26,000 to over 100,000 (authors' calculations). The established gateways did not shrink—they remain the largest destinations throughout—but foreign-born Black settlement has grown up around them, spilling into a widening set of emerging destinations across the South, the Midwest, and the West (Massey 2008; Singer 2004). The population is concentrated relative to others, but dispersing relative to its own past.

These two facts pull in opposite directions. Concentration makes the intra-Black comparison difficult to measure, because in most metropolitan areas the foreign-born Black population is small, and dissimilarity is biased upward for small groups—both mechanically, when a group is too small to be evenly distributed across many tracts (Cortese, Falk, and Cohen 1976; Winship 1977), and through sampling error in the American Community Survey (ACS; Napierala and Denton 2017). Dispersion, however, is exactly what makes these small metros worth studying. Though easy to dismiss as "noise," emerging destinations are precisely where the contemporary geography of Black immigrant segregation is being written. However convenient, a study restricted to the places where the foreign-born Black population exceeds conventional thresholds would describe the diaspora's past rather than its present.

We take up that challenge here, measuring the residential segregation of native- and foreign-born Black Americans across a fuller metropolitan distribution in 2010 and 2020—emerging destinations included—and correcting for the biases that make small-group estimates unreliable rather than excluding the metropolitan areas where those biases loom. In doing so, we identify a residential cleavage internal to the category "Black." Measured against Whites, the two populations turn out to be separated to broadly similar degrees, with one key exception: they differ in spatial *form*. Relative to Whites, foreign-born Black residents are markedly less spatially clustered than their native-born counterparts. However, when measured against *each other*, the two populations are, in the typical metropolitan area, at least as dissimilar as native-born Black residents are from Whites—yet they exhibit *little* differential clustering relative to each other, with the foreign-born living far nearer to native-born Blacks than to Whites. Native- and foreign-born Black Americans occupy different neighborhoods within the same parts of the metropolis: residentially *distinct but proximate*. This is a structure an aggregate "Black" measure fails to detect—and one that grows more consequential as the foreign-born share of Black America continues to climb.

Data and Methods

We measure the residential segregation of native-born and foreign-born Black Americans using tract-level population counts from the U.S. Census and ACS, assembled through the IPUMS National Historical Geographic Information System (IPUMS NHGIS; Schroeder et al. 2026). For each census tract, we obtain counts of the native-born Black, foreign-born Black, and non-Hispanic White populations, together with total tract population, for three periods: the 2000 census long form, the 2006–2010 ACS five-year estimates, and the 2016–2020 ACS five-year estimates. Because tract boundaries are redrawn each decade, we harmonize all three periods onto constant 2010 tract boundaries.

We also make two decisions about how the Black population is defined. First, we use Black alone rather than Black alone-or-in-combination throughout. Second, our foreign-born Black counts are Black alone regardless of Hispanic origin. This departs from the general convention in multigroup segregation research, which defines racial categories as non-Hispanic and assigns Hispanic respondents to a separate category regardless of race (Iceland 2004). The departure here is imposed by the available tabulations: among the tract-level tables crossing race, Hispanic origin, and nativity, a non-Hispanic iteration is published solely for the White population. This means our foreign-born Black counts include a segment of Afro-Caribbean and Afro-Latino immigrants who report as Hispanic—concentrated in a small number of gateway metropolitan areas, most notably New York City—and our comparison does not separate Hispanic origin from nativity where the two overlap. Our equal weighting of metropolitan areas, described below, limits the influence those few gateways exert on our estimates.

Table 1: Analytic Sample and Population Characteristics, by Year.

	2010	2020
Total foreign-born Black metropolitan population (millions)	3.04	4.00
Total native-born Black metropolitan population (millions)	30.40	32.81
Total non-Hispanic White metropolitan population (millions)	150.81	153.64
Foreign-born share of Black population	9.1%	10.9%
Median foreign-born Black population per metro	788	1,269
Median native-born Black population per metro	24,734	23,927
Median non-Hispanic White population per metro	199,331	190,759
Metropolitan areas in sample	314	334

Notes: Metropolitan areas with at least 100 foreign-born Black residents, excluding Puerto Rico, Hawaii, and Alaska.
Source: 2010 and 2020 ACS five-year estimates (IPUMS NHGIS); authors' calculations.

Sample Definition

Because the emerging destinations are central to what we mean to describe, we impose only a minimal floor of 100 foreign-born Black residents, retaining all but the smallest metropolitan areas. Those below this floor cannot support a well-defined index, because the sampling error in their counts is comparable to or larger than the counts themselves; together they contain less than 0.1 percent of the foreign-born Black population in both years. A higher floor would not buy greater reliability, because the corrected dissimilarity index behaves smoothly at low counts, as we show in the analytical approach below. What raising the floor does instead is change the estimand (Lundberg, Johnson, and Stewart 2021), progressively selecting the established gateways where native-born Black segregation is already highest. The floor is thus a choice about which metropolitan areas we mean to describe, not a threshold for reliability, and we treat measurement imprecision through correction rather than exclusion. We report results under stricter floors and reliability screens in the online supplement, and the findings on which our argument rests hold across all of them: intra-Black dissimilarity remains substantial throughout, and the versus-White clustering gap strengthens under the most demanding specifications.

Imposing this floor—and after excluding metropolitan areas in Puerto Rico, Hawaii, and Alaska, whose ACS treatment and settlement histories differ from those of the conterminous states—the analytic sample comprises 314 metropolitan areas (58,042 tracts) in 2010 and 334 (58,570 tracts) in 2020. Table 1 summarizes the sample, along with the population counts, foreign-born share, and median group sizes that underlie it. The disparity in group sizes is stark: the median metropolitan area contains fewer than 1,300 foreign-born Black residents, against more than 20,000 native-born Black and nearly 200,000 non-Hispanic White residents. It is this imbalance—a small, imprecisely counted group measured against large and precisely counted ones—that makes uncorrected segregation indices unreliable and the corrections we describe below necessary.

Segregation Indices and Reference Groups

We characterize segregation along five dimensions (Iceland et al. 2002; Massey and Denton 1988): evenness (the dissimilarity index, D), exposure (the isolation index and, between the two Black populations, the interaction index), concentration (delta), centralization (absolute centralization, ACE), and clustering (the spatial proximity index, SP). Examining the full five-dimension profile allows us to ask not simply whether one Black population is more segregated than the other but whether the two are segregated in the same way—and, once measurement error is addressed, to report which apparent differences survive correction and which do not. All five are two-group or group-versus-geography measures, and we state the reference group for every index explicitly, because dissimilarity and clustering in particular are reference-dependent.

Index Definitions

For two groups with tract counts x_i and y_i (totals X and Y) across tracts $i = 1, \ldots, n$, the dissimilarity index is

$$D = \frac{1}{2} \sum_{i=1}^{n} \left| \frac{x_i}{X} - \frac{y_i}{Y} \right|. \tag{1}$$

D ranges from 0 to 1 and gives the share of either group that would have to relocate across tracts for the two to be identically distributed; it is symmetric in the two groups (Duncan and Duncan 1955).

The spatial proximity (clustering) index follows White (1983) and Massey and Denton (1988):

$$SP = \frac{X\,P_{xx} + Y\,P_{yy}}{T\,P_{tt}}, \qquad P_{gg} = \frac{\sum_i \sum_j g_i\, c_{ij}\, g_j}{\left(\sum_i g_i\right)^2}, \tag{2}$$

where $T = X + Y$, P_{tt} is the corresponding proximity for the combined population, and $c_{ij} = \exp(-d_{ij})$ is a distance-decay kernel with d_{ij} the distance in miles between tract centroids i and j. The within-tract distance is set to $0.6\sqrt{a_i}$, where a_i is tract land area in square miles, and pairs beyond 25 miles are set to zero. $SP = 1$ indicates no differential clustering between the two groups; $SP > 1$ indicates the focal group is more spatially clustered than the reference group, and $SP < 1$ less.

For the intra-Black comparison, we also measure exposure between the two populations, using the interaction index (Massey and Denton 1988):

$$_xP^*_y = \sum_{i=1}^{n} \frac{x_i}{X} \cdot \frac{y_i}{t_i}, \tag{3}$$

where t_i is the total population of tract i. It gives the share of group y in the tract of the average member of group x. Unlike D and SP, it is asymmetric: $_fP^*_n$, the native-born Black share of the average foreign-born Black resident's tract, and $_nP^*_f$, the foreign-born Black share of the average native-born Black resident's tract, differ whenever the two groups differ in size. We report both.

The remaining three indices are computed following Massey and Denton (1988) as implemented by Iceland et al. (2002), adopting those formulas without modification. Isolation ($_xP_x^*$) is the average within-tract share of a group's own members experienced by a member of that group—the extent to which the group is exposed principally to itself. Concentration (delta) is the share of a group that would have to move for the group to be uniformly distributed across land area, capturing confinement to physically small portions of the metropolis. Centralization (absolute centralization, ACE) measures the degree to which a group resides near the metropolitan center, with tracts ordered by distance from the metropolitan central business district; it ranges from -1 (fully peripheral) to 1 (fully centralized).

Analytical Approach

Our analysis rests on two comparisons. In the first, we measure the native-born Black and foreign-born Black populations each against non-Hispanic Whites, reporting the full five-dimension profile for each subgroup. We adopt the non-Hispanic White reference for comparability with the Massey–Denton Black–White segregation tradition. In the second comparison, we set Whites aside and measure the two Black populations directly against one another. This intra-Black comparison is the paper's central analysis, and it focuses primarily on the three dimensions that are genuinely pairwise: evenness (D), clustering (SP), and exposure between the two groups ($_xP_y^*$).[1]

The inclusive sample described above brings small, imprecisely counted metropolitan areas into the analysis, and segregation indices computed for such groups are biased upward. Two distinct mechanisms produce that bias, and we correct them separately because they have different sources. The first is a finite-population effect: a group too small to populate every tract evenly cannot be evenly distributed, so random allocation alone produces apparent dissimilarity even absent any systematic segregation (Cortese et al. 1976; Winship 1977). This is a live concern for our sample: roughly half of the metropolitan areas we retain—172 of 314 in 2010 and 152 of 334 in 2020—contain fewer than 1,000 foreign-born Black residents, well within the range where small counts can destabilize a dissimilarity estimate. The second mechanism is specific to the ACS: its counts are survey estimates carrying sampling error that can inflate dissimilarity, most severely for small, dispersed groups measured against large, precise ones (Napierala and Denton 2017).

We correct for both. For the sampling error, we propagate ACS margins of error directly (Napierala and Denton 2017). Because each tract count sums four published sex-by-age cells, we first combine their margins of error following Census Bureau guidance for derived sums, which includes only one margin of error among cells estimated at zero (U.S. Census Bureau 2011:23). Specifically, for each tract we draw the group count from a normal distribution centered on the published estimate, with standard deviation equal to the margin of error divided by 1.645 and draws truncated at zero, recomputing the index on each of 4,000 draws. Both the native- and foreign-born Black counts are drawn in this way, in every index and in both the versus-White and intra-Black comparisons; only the non-Hispanic White population is treated as fixed, its counts being large and precise enough that incorporating

their margins of error would not materially move the versus-White estimates. Intuitively, the procedure asks how much the measured segregation would move if the underlying counts were redrawn within their reported uncertainty, and reports the typical value rather than the single, noisier point estimate.

For the finite-population bias, we apply the Cortese–Falk–Cohen normalization, which rescales each dissimilarity relative to the segregation that a group of that size would exhibit if its members were scattered across tracts at random.[2] The intuition here is to net out the apparent separation that arises purely because a small group cannot be spread smoothly across many neighborhoods, leaving only the separation in excess of that baseline. For the two dissimilarity-based measures—each group's evenness relative to Whites, and the dissimilarity between the two Black populations directly—the corrections are applied together: within each margin-of-error draw, the recomputed dissimilarity is normalized for finite-population bias. The point estimate is the metro-weighted mean of each metropolitan area's median across draws, and the 2.5th and 97.5th percentiles of the metro-weighted mean across draws give a 95 percent interval. These intervals summarize the precision with which the correction locates each index given ACS sampling error; because they are computed across a fixed set of metropolitan areas rather than a sample drawn from a larger population, they do not represent variability across metros and should not be read as tests against a null.[3] The remaining indices are corrected for sampling error alone, by the same draw-and-recompute procedure without the finite-population step, with the median and percentile interval defined as above.[4] The exception is exposure, both isolation and the interaction index between the two Black populations, which we report uncorrected for reasons discussed with the results. We report the corrected estimates as primary; for the corrected indices, the observed (uncorrected) values shown alongside them indicate how much the correction moves each index.

The correction also allows us to directly test whether segregation estimates remain trustworthy in light of the lower population counts the inclusive sample retains. Grouping metropolitan areas by the size of their foreign-born Black population, we examined how corrected intra-Black dissimilarity behaves as counts fall. Two patterns emerge in these diagnostics, which we summarize here rather than report in full. First, the estimates are no more erratic for the smallest metropolitan areas than for the largest—the dispersion of corrected values across metros of a given size is comparable from about a hundred foreign-born Black residents to tens of thousands—so the correction does not break down at low counts.[5] Second, what does change with size is the level: intra-Black dissimilarity is somewhat higher in smaller metropolitan areas than in larger ones. Together these mean that raising the count floor would lower the pooled estimate—but not because small metros are unreliable; rather, because excluding them conditions the sample on its larger, less internally divided cases. We report the full sensitivity of our estimates to the count floor itself in the online supplement.

The framework also fixes the analytic window at 2010 and 2020. The 2000 counts derive from the census long form, a different instrument carrying no margins of error, so they cannot enter the correction we treat as primary. The point is not merely technical: the long-form-to-ACS transition coincides exactly with an apparent rise

in the native–foreign segregation gap between 2000 and 2010, and because the ACS systematically inflates dissimilarity relative to the long form for small groups, a genuine social change cannot be distinguished from the change in instrument. Restricting the segregation analysis to the two single-instrument ACS periods removes the confound, and we make no claim about a 2000s trend. We retain 2000 only in the descriptive front matter, where the relevant quantities are population counts and distributional shares. These are not affected by the upward bias that afflicts dissimilarity, and so remain comparable across the change in instrument.

Finally, we weight metropolitan areas equally rather than by population. This follows the unit-of-analysis logic of the new-destinations framework, where each metropolitan area is one instance of the receiving-context phenomenon. Because the foreign-born Black population is so concentrated, population-weighting would let a few large gateways dominate and discount the emerging destinations the inclusive sample is designed to capture. For completeness, we report results under both weightings in the online supplement, where the paper's central findings hold under either approach.

Results

Black Segregation from Non-Hispanic Whites by Nativity: A Cross-Dimensional Profile

We begin by comparing the residential segregation of native-born and foreign-born Black Americans, measuring each group against the non-Hispanic White population. Figure 3 shows, for each of the five dimensions, the distribution of segregation across metropolitan areas. Every point is a single metropolitan area, positioned vertically by its index value and spread horizontally in proportion to how many metros share that value, so that the width of each cloud traces the density of the distribution; the red bar marks the mean across metros.

A natural expectation is that one group is simply more segregated than the other—that the two populations differ in degree along a common axis. The figure suggests something more complicated. At first glance the two groups appear to differ on most of the dimensions, and not in a single direction. On evenness, the foreign-born cloud sits higher than the native-born: foreign-born Black residents appear more unevenly distributed relative to Whites. On concentration, the foreign-born cloud again sits higher—appearing more concentrated relative to available land. On isolation, the pattern inverts: the foreign-born cloud is pressed toward zero while the native-born cloud spreads well above it, so foreign-born residents appear far less exposed to their own group. And on clustering, the foreign-born cloud again sits lower, collapsing toward the baseline while the native-born cloud spreads upward—foreign-born residents appearing less spatially clustered. Only on centralization do the two clouds substantially overlap. Taken at face value, then, the figure seems to show systematic, multidimensional differences between the two Black populations: differences on four of the five dimensions, running in both directions.

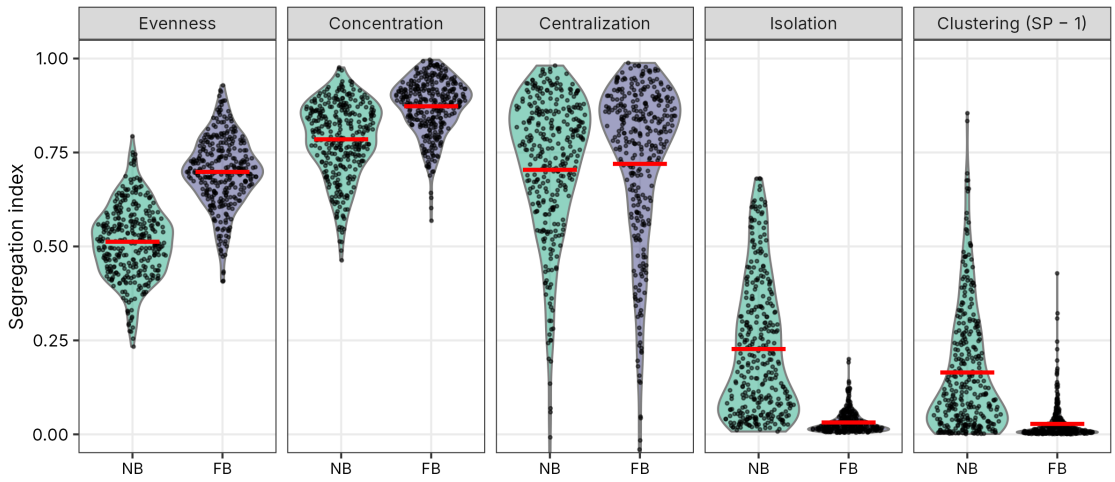

Figure 3: Segregation of native-born (NB) and foreign-born (FB) Black populations from non-Hispanic Whites across metropolitan areas, by dimension, 2020. Each point is one metropolitan area ($N = 334$), positioned by density (sina plot); red bars mark metro-weighted means. Values are observed (uncorrected). Clustering is shown as SP − 1, where 0 denotes no differential clustering.

These apparent differences, however, may not survive measurement correction. Table 2 reports each index at two stages: the observed value, computed directly from the published counts, and the corrected value, after propagating ACS sampling error through the index and, for evenness, applying the finite-population correction. The observed and corrected columns tell sharply different stories, and the difference between them is concentrated exactly where the figure's apparent differences were most pronounced. Of the four, only one survives correction as a substantial and robust difference in how the two populations are distributed: clustering. Isolation, also among the four, does retain a large gap, but for reasons of group size rather than spatial arrangement; we return to it at the end of this section.

Foreign-born Black residents are less spatially clustered relative to Whites than native-born residents, by approximately 0.17 in 2010 and 0.14 in 2020, and here the correction barely moves the estimate at all: the observed and corrected values are nearly identical, and the corrected gap is tightly bounded in both years (95 percent intervals $[-0.167, -0.164]$ in 2010 and $[-0.139, -0.136]$ in 2020). Native-born Black segregation from Whites takes the spatially massed, contiguous form long documented in the segregation literature (Massey and Denton 1989); foreign-born Black settlement, relative to Whites, is more dispersed in this specific sense.

Evenness tells a different story. In the observed counts, foreign-born Black residents appear far more unevenly distributed from Whites than native-born—a gap of roughly $+0.19$. But almost all of that gap is an artifact of measurement: once sampling error and finite-population bias are corrected, it shrinks to $+0.081$ in 2020 $[+0.075, +0.086]$ and, $+0.003$ in 2010 $[-0.004, +0.010]$. Both intervals are narrow, because propagated measurement error largely averages out across metropolitan areas. In 2010, the corrected gap is essentially zero; in 2020 a modest gap remains, of roughly eight dissimilarity points against an observed gap of nearly 19. Figure 4 makes this visible in 2020. In the observed panel, nearly every metropolitan area

Table 2: Residential Segregation of Native- and Foreign-Born Black Populations, by Dimension, 2010 and 2020.

	Native-Born		Foreign-Born		Foreign-Minus-Native Gap	
Dimension	Observed	Corrected	Observed	Corrected	Observed	Corrected
2010						
Evenness (D)†	0.540	0.514	0.731	0.516	+0.191	+0.003
Clustering ($SP-1$)	0.191	0.186	0.022	0.020	−0.169	−0.166
Concentration (δ)	0.797	0.781	0.889	0.765	+0.092	−0.015
Centralization (ACE)	0.703	0.685	0.730	0.614	+0.028	−0.071
Isolation	0.256	—	0.027	—	−0.230	—
2020						
Evenness (D)†	0.513	0.511	0.698	0.592	+0.186	+0.081
Clustering ($SP-1$)	0.165	0.165	0.028	0.028	−0.137	−0.138
Concentration (δ)	0.785	0.787	0.873	0.826	+0.088	+0.039
Centralization (ACE)	0.704	0.702	0.720	0.692	+0.016	−0.010
Isolation	0.227	—	0.032	—	−0.196	—

Notes: Metro-weighted means. Corrected values propagate ACS sampling error across 4,000 simulated draws and are the primary estimates (see the *Data and Methods* section). Gaps are foreign-minus-native; positive values indicate greater segregation of the foreign-born from Whites. Clustering is shown as $SP-1$, where 0 denotes no differential clustering. Isolation is reported uncorrected (see text). $N = 314$ (2010) and 334 (2020) metropolitan areas; sample as in Table 1.
Source: 2010 and 2020 ACS five-year estimates (IPUMS NHGIS). † Corrected evenness also applies the Cortese–Falk–Cohen finite-population correction.

falls above the line of equality: the foreign-born are more unevenly distributed from Whites than the native-born almost everywhere. In the corrected panel, the cloud drops toward that line: the foreign-born remain more unevenly distributed in most metropolitan areas—85 percent, against 98 percent before correction—but the typical distance from the line is now much smaller. What looked like a pronounced nativity difference in the degree of separation from Whites is, properly measured, a modest one: present in 2020, absent in 2010, and in both years far smaller than uncorrected estimates suggest.

Concentration, the third of the four, does not survive in any form. It is the clearest case. In the observed counts, foreign-born residents appear more concentrated than native-born, by +0.09. But accounting for sampling error shrinks this gap sharply, and in 2010 reverses its sign, to −0.015 in 2010 and +0.039 in 2020—values inconsistent even in direction across the two periods and, at no more than four hundredths of an index whose observed levels exceed 0.78, too small to carry substantive meaning.[6] Centralization tells a related but distinct story. Its corrected gap is consistently negative—foreign-born residents marginally less centralized than native-born—but it is small, and its magnitude is unstable: the gap reverses sign between the observed and corrected estimates, and the two periods disagree by a factor of seven (−0.07 in 2010 to −0.01 in 2020), with the larger value drawn from the noisier earlier period. By 2020, it sits near zero. We therefore read centralization as consistently signed but too small in both periods to bear analytical weight, rather than as a stable dimension of nativity difference.

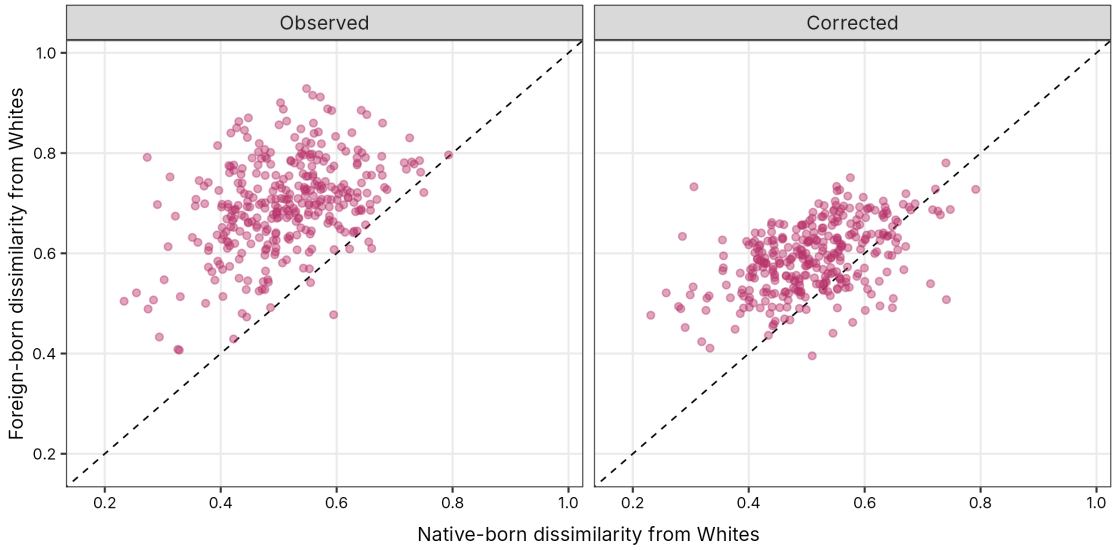

Figure 4: Dissimilarity from non-Hispanic Whites of native-born (horizontal axis) and foreign-born (vertical axis) Black populations, observed and corrected, 2020. Each point is one metropolitan area ($N = 334$); points above the dashed equality line indicate greater foreign-born dissimilarity. Corrected values propagate ACS sampling error and apply the finite-population correction.

Isolation, the last of the four apparent differences, is a separate matter. The two groups do meaningfully differ on it—foreign-born residents are far less exposed to their own group than native-born residents are—but this can be explained as a mechanical function of each group's share of the population. With the foreign-born Black population being small in nearly every metropolitan area, it is necessarily less self-exposed, irrespective of the spatial pattern of settlement. Because this gap reflects relative group size rather than spatial arrangement, we report only the observed levels in Table 2 and do not correct it.[7]

What survives correction is a single but telling contrast. The two Black populations are separated from Whites to broadly similar degrees—the foreign-born modestly more unevenly distributed in 2020, though not in 2010—but not in the same spatial form: foreign-born Black residents are markedly less clustered, their neighborhoods dispersed across the metropolitan landscape rather than massed in the contiguous concentrations characteristic of native-born Black settlement. An aggregate measure of "Black" segregation would record the shared degree of separation and miss the divergence in its form entirely. This raises the question we address in the following section: if the two populations are separated from Whites to similar degrees, are they residentially interchangeable—or are they separated from one another?

Comparing the Segregation of "Black" Populations Directly

The comparison to Whites measures each Black population against a third group; it cannot, by construction, describe how the two Black populations are arranged

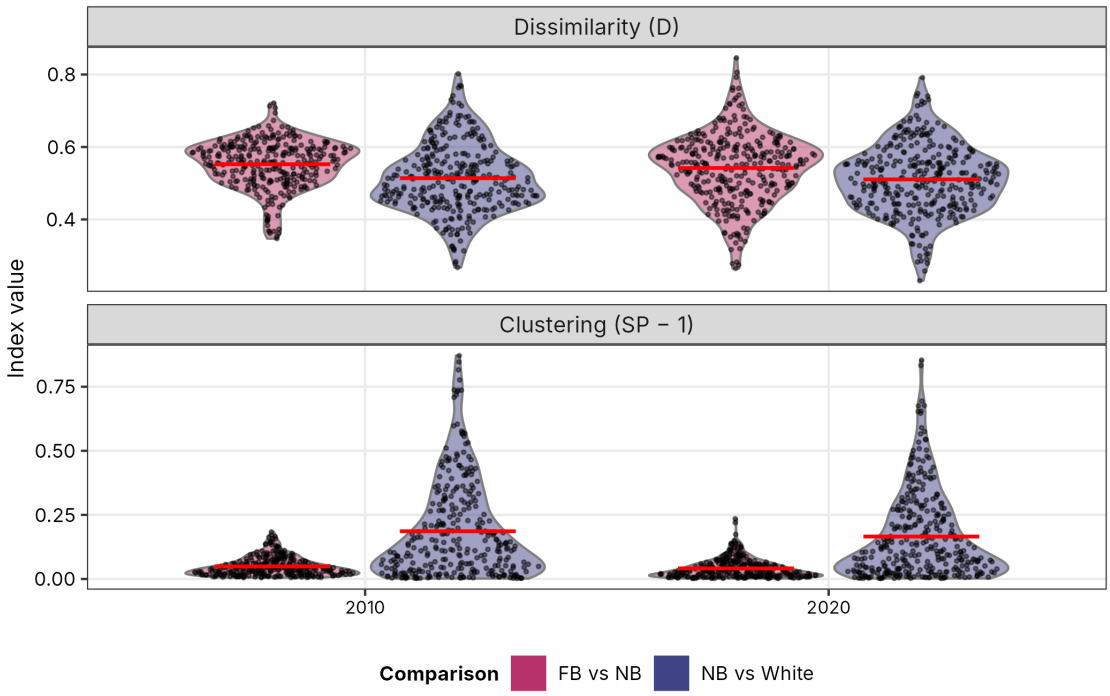

Figure 5: Dissimilarity (top) and clustering (bottom) between foreign- and native-born Black populations (FB vs NB), benchmarked against native-born Black segregation from non-Hispanic Whites (NB vs White), 2010 and 2020. Each point is one metropolitan area's corrected value, positioned by density (sina plot); red bars mark metro-weighted means. Clustering is shown as SP − 1, where 0 denotes no differential clustering. Corrections as in Table 2.

relative to one another. We therefore turn to a direct comparison of the foreign-born and native-born Black populations, on the three dimensions a comparison between two groups admits: dissimilarity, which measures whether they occupy different neighborhoods; clustering, which measures whether those neighborhoods occupy different parts of the metropolitan area; and exposure, which measures how much each population lives alongside the other. Dissimilarity and clustering answer different questions, and their answers diverge.

Figure 5 reports the direct comparison on dissimilarity and clustering, alongside a canonical benchmark. Each panel shows, for 2010 and 2020, the distribution across metropolitan areas of two quantities: the segregation of the foreign-born from the native-born ("FB vs NB"), and—as a reference—the segregation of the native-born from Whites ("NB vs White"), the axis the literature has treated as the defining measure of Black segregation for decades. The top panel reports dissimilarity, the bottom clustering; each point is one metropolitan area's corrected value, and the red bar marks the mean across metros. On dissimilarity, the foreign-born-versus-native-born distribution sits *above* the versus-White benchmark: the two Black populations are, on average, at least as dissimilar from one another as native-born Black residents are from Whites. On clustering, the same comparison sits near zero, and well below the versus-White benchmark: the two populations,

Table 3: Effect of Measurement Correction on Pairwise and Single-Group Segregation Indices, 2010 and 2020.

	2010		2020	
Dimension	Observed	Corrected	Observed	Corrected
Native- vs. Foreign-born				
Evenness (D)†	0.616	0.552	0.590	0.542
Clustering ($SP-1$)	0.039	0.049	0.039	0.041
Exposure, FB to NB (${}_fP_n^*$)	0.176	—	0.161	—
Exposure, NB to FB (${}_nP_f^*$)	0.011	—	0.013	—
Native-born				
Concentration (δ)	0.797	0.781	0.785	0.787
Centralization (ACE)	0.703	0.685	0.704	0.702
Isolation	0.256	—	0.227	—
Foreign-born				
Concentration (δ)	0.889	0.765	0.873	0.826
Centralization (ACE)	0.730	0.614	0.720	0.692
Isolation	0.027	—	0.032	—

Notes: Metro-weighted means; corrected values as in Table 2. The first block measures the native- and foreign-born Black populations against each other; the remaining blocks measure each population against metropolitan geography. ${}_fP_n^*$ is the native-born Black share of the average foreign-born Black resident's tract, and ${}_nP_f^*$ the reverse. Exposure and isolation are reported uncorrected (see text). Clustering is shown as $SP-1$, where 0 denotes no differential clustering. N and sample as in Table 2.
Source: 2010 and 2020 ACS five-year estimates (IPUMS NHGIS). † Corrected evenness also applies the Cortese–Falk–Cohen finite-population correction.

however dissimilar, are at most slightly clustered apart from one another. The two dimensions point in opposite directions: separated across neighborhoods, yet sharing the same general stretch of the metropolis.

Are these differences real, or an artifact of measurement error? Given the small foreign-born Black population in most metropolitan areas, it is reasonable to ask whether the patterning of the intra-Black separation described above would dissolve post-correction. Table 3 shows that it does not. Correction reshapes the foreign-born single-group indices most—their concentration and centralization fall noticeably once small-group inflation is removed—but barely touches the pairwise comparisons that carry the analysis: the intra-Black dissimilarity shifts by roughly 0.06 in 2010 and 0.05 in 2020, against a versus-White evenness gap that the correction cuts by more than half in 2020 and eliminates in 2010. The separation we document here is thus not an artifact of measurement but a feature the correction leaves standing.

Another way to understand these findings is by comparison with an existing set of nationwide estimates. Scopilliti and Iceland (2008), in their study of Black immigrant and native-born Black residential patterns in the 2000 census, report a dissimilarity of 0.41 between foreign- and U.S.-born Black residents, lower than what we find for the same comparison in either 2010 or 2020. The difference reflects the estimand rather than change over time: their figure averages over metropolitan areas with at least 1,000 foreign-born Black residents, weighted by group size, and

so centers on the established gateways where the two populations are least distinct. Including emerging destinations, where intra-Black dissimilarity is highest (Table A1 in the online supplement), and treating each metropolitan area as a receiving context raises the average.[8] The comparison also shows that the divide they documented in 2000 persisted through two decades in which the foreign-born Black population roughly doubled. And it clarifies what the small-population corrections add: without them, an inclusive sample would substantially overstate how much more segregated from Whites Black immigrants are in emerging destinations, while the divide between the two Black populations is comparatively robust to correction.

What are the broader implications of these results when taken together? One way to address this question is to ask what high dissimilarity, on its own, would leave undetermined. Two populations highly dissimilar at the neighborhood scale might be arranged in either of two ways. In the first, they occupy different neighborhoods interwoven across the same districts: distinct tracts—a block of recent African immigrants on one, a long-established native-born Black area on another—that together make up one contiguous stretch of the metropolis. In the second, they occupy neighborhoods massed in separate quarters of the city, two Black sub-cities each internally cohesive but spatially apart. Dissimilarity cannot distinguish these, but clustering can. And here, the findings point to the first picture: the foreign- and native-born Black populations sort into different neighborhoods that are not separated at a macro scale—in short, distinct but proximate.

Exposure offers a third, more direct view of the same arrangement, describing the neighborhoods each population actually lives in. As with isolation, we report these values uncorrected.[9] In 2020 the average foreign-born Black resident lives in a tract that is 16.1 percent native-born Black, while the average native-born Black resident lives in a tract that is 1.3 percent foreign-born (Table 3). The asymmetry largely reflects group size—foreign-born residents make up roughly a tenth of the metropolitan Black population—and should not be read as one group avoiding the other. To assess whether this exposure is high, we compare it with the native-born Black share of the metropolitan population, which is the exposure the two groups would have if both were evenly distributed. Computed within each metropolitan area and then averaged [$_fP_n^* \div (N/T)$, where N/T is the native-born Black share of the metropolitan population], this ratio, which is not shown in Table 3 but is included in the replication materials, is 1.77 in 2020 and 1.87 in 2010: foreign-born residents have native-born Black neighbors at nearly twice the rate even distribution would produce. Even as their dissimilarity shows them sorted into different tracts, the two populations live alongside one another far more than their numbers alone would imply.

Figure 6 illustrates this configuration in two large metropolitan areas in different regions, St. Louis and Houston, each with substantial populations of both groups; the maps illustrate rather than establish a pattern the indices document across all metropolitan areas. Each panel shades census tracts by their share of the metropolitan area's native-born or foreign-born Black population, so that the darkest tracts are those in which each group is most concentrated. Reading across panels for each metro, the maps show both halves of the pattern at once. The darkest native-born and foreign-born tracts fall within the same central districts—the historic Black core of north St. Louis, the central wards of Houston—such that the

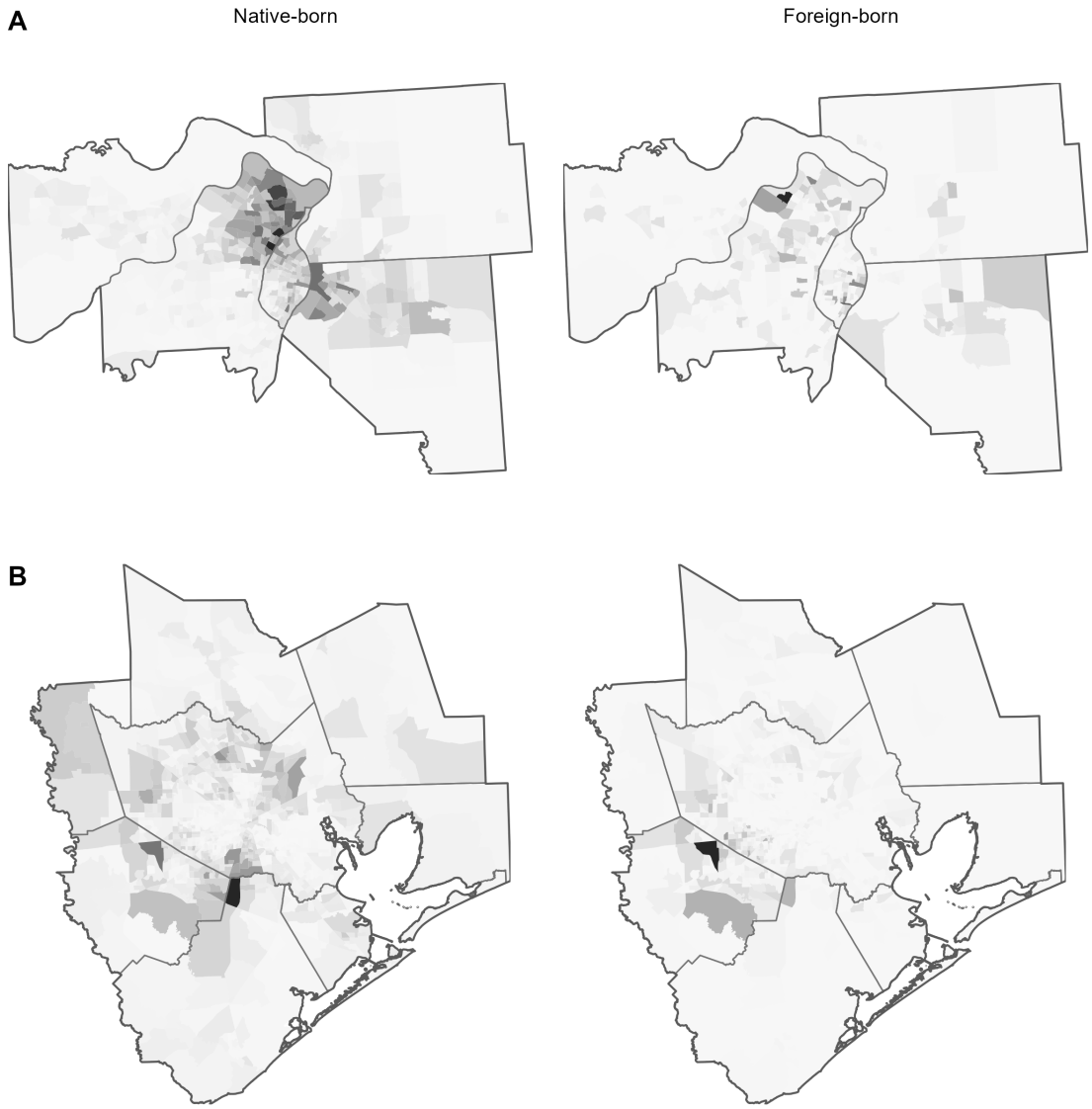

Figure 6: Tract share of each metropolitan area's native- and foreign-born Black population, selected counties of (A) St. Louis and (B) Houston, 2020. Darker tracts hold a larger share of the group named above the panel; gray lines mark county boundaries. *Source:* 2016–2020 ACS five-year estimates (IPUMS NHGIS).

two populations settle in the same general part of each respective metropolitan area. Yet the specific tracts in which each concentrates are not the same. Where the native-born population is densest, the foreign-born is often sparse, and the reverse. For example, in Houston, foreign-born settlement leans further toward the southwest, into Fort Bend County and southwest Harris County. In St. Louis, the foreign-born concentrate in a few scattered pockets within and beside the broader native-born corridor, rarely in the same tracts that anchor it.

Thus, the two comparisons—each Black population against Whites, and the two against each other—describe one geography from two vantage points. Measured

against Whites, native-born Black residents are markedly clustered: they live near one another in dense, contiguous stretches of the metropolis. Foreign-born Black residents are far less so, their settlement scattered across pockets rather than gathered into a single mass. But scattered relative to what the native-born form is not the same as scattered away from them. When we change the reference group and measure the foreign-born directly against the native-born, clustering nearly vanishes: $SP - 1$ is 0.041 in 2020 and 0.049 in 2010 (Table 3), close to its no-clustering value of zero. The pockets of foreign-born settlement are not systematically displaced into some other quarter of the metropolis. They are distributed through and around the same districts the native-born occupy—smaller, looser, and interspersed, but not elsewhere. The first comparison establishes that foreign-born settlement lacks the massed form characteristic of native-born Black segregation; the second establishes that this looser form nonetheless unfolds within the same parts of the metropolitan area.

Is It Nativity, or Is It Class?

The most natural objection to reading the native–foreign dissimilarity as a true nativity cleavage is that it may be downstream of a stronger class effect. Native-born and foreign-born Black populations differ in socioeconomic composition, income and education segregation are themselves considerable, and so the separation we attribute to nativity might be socioeconomic sorting that happens to fall along the nativity line. We take the objection seriously, and we are candid about what we can and cannot do in response to it: the published tabulations do not cross race by nativity by socioeconomic status at the metropolitan scale, so we cannot formally net socioeconomic composition out of native–foreign dissimilarity.

However, the argument we can make turns on the shape and magnitude of our results. In short, socioeconomic sorting is spatially organized in a way we suggest the observed pattern is not. Residential sorting by income and class is not merely uneven but also *clustered*: high- and low-income households concentrate in distinct, spatially contiguous zones, a regularity established across the literature on income segregation (Bischoff and Reardon 2014; Reardon and Bischoff 2011). If the native–foreign residential separation were principally a by-product of socioeconomic sorting, the two populations would be not only in different tracts but in different, income-typed parts of the metropolitan area, and the foreign-born population would be differentially clustered relative to the native-born. That is not what we observe. The two populations are substantially dissimilar at the tract level and yet exhibit little differential clustering ($SP - 1$ of 0.04–0.05): different neighborhoods, woven through the same districts. This combination is difficult to reconcile with socioeconomic sorting *alone*. The magnitude of the separation points the same way. A native–foreign dissimilarity of roughly 0.54–0.55 is large—by conventional thresholds (Massey and Denton 1988), falling at the upper end of the moderate and approaching high levels of segregation—and likely larger than the socioeconomic gap between the two Black populations would, on its own, produce.

Recent work on race and class suggests why. Income and education shape racial residential segregation, but they buy Black households considerably less

residential integration than they buy other groups. Rising income brings Black Americans smaller gains in contact with Whites and in neighborhood affluence than it brings Hispanics or Asians (Crowell and Fossett 2022; Intrator, Tannen, and Massey 2016); Black households live in markedly poorer neighborhoods than White households with the same income (Reardon, Fox, and Townsend 2015); and even the highest-earning Black movers enter less White neighborhoods than the highest-earning Whites (Pais, South, and Crowder 2012). If class translates only weakly into residential position for Black households, class differences between the two Black populations should translate only weakly into residential separation between them.

One might expect Black immigrants specifically to follow a different pattern, closer to that of other immigrant groups, for whom class sorting is stronger. Among Hispanic and Asian immigrants, lower income, English-language ability, and homeownership largely account for their greater segregation relative to the native-born. Among Black immigrants, however, they do not: foreign-born Black residents are on average of higher socioeconomic status than the native-born, yet more segregated from Whites (Iceland and Scopilliti 2008), and their segregation from Whites remains high regardless of acculturation (Freeman 2002). Their socioeconomic advantages appear instead to be realized largely within Black residential space: Black immigrants are among the principal contributors to the socioeconomic ascent of predominantly *Black* neighborhoods (Candipan and Bader 2022). The evidence is not uniform, however: in some destinations, Black immigrants experience little segregation once individual characteristics are taken into account (Tesfai 2019), and direct evidence on whether class sorts the two Black populations from one another remains scarce.

In sum, we cannot rule out a socioeconomic contribution to the native–foreign separation, and we do not claim to. But the weight of the evidence—the spatial form of the separation, its magnitude, and an existing literature that offers little reason to expect Black immigrants to sort by class as other immigrant groups do—indicates that socioeconomic sorting alone is unlikely to fully account for it.

Discussion and Conclusion

Our analysis began from a measurement problem and arrived at a substantive one. The category "Black," as segregation research operationalizes it, has come to aggregate two populations—native- and foreign-born—that are residentially distinct from one another. Measured against Whites, the two populations are separated to broadly similar degrees—the foreign-born somewhat more unevenly distributed in 2020, though far less so than uncorrected estimates suggest—but in different spatial forms. Measured against each other, they are, in the typical metropolitan area, at least as dissimilar as native-born Black residents are from Whites, yet exhibit little differential clustering. The two populations occupy different neighborhoods within the same parts of the metropolitan area—distinct but proximate.

These findings bear on the leading accounts of Black immigrant incorporation, though as aggregate patterns rather than tests of individual-level mechanisms. They do not show the pattern that strong spatial assimilation would produce: relative

to Whites, foreign-born Black residents are no more evenly distributed than the native-born, and modestly less so in 2020. Place stratification is more consistent with what we observe, but only in part: the two populations show little clustering apart from one another and share neighborhoods at nearly twice the rate even distribution would produce, consistent with a racial order that channels Black residents into common residential space regardless of nativity. At the neighborhood scale, however, nativity reasserts itself. The average foreign-born Black resident lives in a tract that is 16 percent native-born Black, against 23 percent for the average native-born Black resident (Tables 2 and 3). This qualifies the residential premise of segmented assimilation, which expects downward assimilation to operate partly through shared neighborhoods: Black immigrants live near native-born Black Americans, but less often among them. Race, in short, sets the regional container; nativity sorts residents within it.

The account that anticipates both scales at once is the one developed by Waters (1999) and, more recently, Clergé (2019). Waters describes a process in which Black immigrants distinguish themselves—socially and symbolically—from native-born Black Americans, while remaining bound by a racial system that classifies the two together. Clergé, studying the multinational Black middle class of Queens and Long Island, finds distinctions of national origin and migration history that persist even after convergence in income, occupation, and residence, sustained within communities and institutions the groups nonetheless share. "Distinct but proximate" is what this account would predict if it were transcribed into residential space: distinctness at the neighborhood scale is the spatial correlate of the boundary-making these authors document, and proximity at the regional scale is the correlate of the shared racial position that bounds it.

We draw these connections carefully, and as interpretation rather than demonstration. Our evidence is a spatial pattern, not the identity work or the boundary-making that Waters and Clergé describe. The same pattern could arise from co-ethnic network formation, from housing-market channels, or from the simple recency of much foreign-born settlement, none of which requires the symbolic distancing Waters emphasizes. The proximity we observe is likewise open to more than one reading: foreign-born Black settlement clustered near existing native-born Black communities is consistent with a shared racialized geography, but also with ordinary processes of settlement near established co-racial institutions and housing. And the populations differ. Waters and Clergé write primarily of West Indian and Caribbean immigrants in the New York region; the foreign-born Black population we analyze is national and increasingly African in origin, so the fit between their accounts and our nationwide pattern is suggestive rather than exact. What we can say is that the residential structure we document is the one their arguments anticipate, and that it is difficult to reconcile with a view of "Black" as residentially singular.

These findings build upon an important body of work that has begun to suggest the possibility of residential differences along nativity lines within Black America—the origin-and-destination variation in foreign-born segregation, the enclave formation, the neighborhood change that accompanies Black immigrant settlement (Crowder 1999; Dahir 2025; Tesfai 2019). Yet what remained unknown was whether

these differences amounted to two populations living genuinely apart, and whether any such separation extended beyond the well-known gateways into the emerging destinations where the Black immigrant presence has grown most rapidly. By comparing the two populations directly against one another, our analysis speaks to both questions. Native- and foreign-born Black residents are substantially dissimilar at the neighborhood scale yet spatially interwoven at the regional scale—distinct but proximate—and their neighborhood-level separation is, if anything, greatest in the smaller, emerging destinations rather than confined to the gateways.

The implications reach beyond the indices themselves. For decades, the segregation of Black Americans from Whites has served as the empirical anchor of the residential-stratification literature—the single most studied fact about race and place in the United States. That measure was built for, and has always described, a population treated as internally uniform. Our findings indicate that this uniformity can no longer be assumed. The aggregate Black–White figure is not yet badly distorted: native- and foreign-born Black residents are unevenly distributed relative to Whites to broadly similar degrees, and the foreign-born remain a small share of the Black population. But the aggregate cannot show what lies beneath it. In the typical metropolitan area, the two Black populations are at least as dissimilar from one another as native-born Black residents are from Whites. As the foreign-born share of Black America continues to rise, that internal sorting will bear increasingly on what the aggregate can be said to mean.

We recognize that our study establishes the general, nationwide pattern but not its sources. We show that native- and foreign-born Black Americans are residentially distinct but proximate across the metropolitan United States, yet the strength of that pattern surely varies—more pronounced in some metropolitan areas than others, and plausibly structured by the characteristics of the receiving context: the size and national-origin composition of the local foreign-born Black population, the age of the destination, the housing market, the spatial form of the existing Black community. Which conditions sharpen the cleavage and which mute it is a question our descriptive design leaves open. The logical next step is to model this heterogeneity directly—to ask what kinds of metropolitan areas produce the sharpest distinct-but-proximate structure, and why. Applying established corrections for sampling error and finite-population bias, we find a genuine pattern in these small, dispersed populations rather than noise; the emerging destinations at the leading edge of Black immigrant settlement can—and should—therefore be retained rather than excluded in future work.

The immigrant recomposition of Black America is well underway, and it is already a matter of public and political consequence: Black immigrants have become objects of national contention in their own right. The residential structure we document—native- and foreign-born Black residents sorted into different neighborhoods within the same districts—is part of the ground on which that contention plays out, though the categories we ordinarily use to observe segregation render it invisible. How the country's most studied racial boundary shifts as the population behind it recomposes is not a question for the future, and answering it means treating "Black" as the internally differentiated category it has become.

Notes

1 Isolation, by contrast, is a group's exposure to itself and is not a pairwise quantity; concentration and centralization measure a group against the metropolitan land area and center rather than against another group.

2 The Cortese–Falk–Cohen correction takes the form $(D - E[D])/(1 - E[D])$, where $E[D]$ is the expected dissimilarity under random allocation. We compute $E[D]$ from the standard normal approximation, $E[D] = \sqrt{1/2\pi} \cdot \left(T\sqrt{P(1-P)}\right)^{-1} \sum_i \sqrt{t_i}$, where T is the combined size of the two groups, P the focal group's share of that total, and t_i the combined count in tract i. The expectation is evaluated once from the observed counts and held fixed across the margin-of-error draws, rather than recomputed within each draw: the quantity being netted out is the separation implied by the groups' actual sizes, which the simulation is not intended to perturb. We use the normalization rather than the simple difference $D - E[D]$, which over-corrects and can drive small gaps below zero.

3 The intervals also capture within-year measurement error only. Because ACS precision differs substantially between the two periods—the 2010 five-year estimates are considerably less precise for small groups than the 2020 estimates—they do not license inference about change from 2010 to 2020, and we make no such comparison.

4 The restriction of the finite-population correction to dissimilarity is not a matter of convenience: the Cortese–Falk–Cohen normalization is defined specifically for the dissimilarity index and has no analog for spatial clustering, concentration, or centralization, whose functional forms differ and whose small-group behavior is governed by different considerations.

5 Across metropolitan areas grouped by foreign-born Black population size, the within-group standard deviation of corrected intra-Black dissimilarity is 0.047 among metros with 100 to 249 foreign-born Black residents and 0.077 among those with 10,000 or more in 2010, and 0.099 and 0.093 in 2020, indicating that the correction introduces no additional instability for small groups.

6 Simulation intervals around these corrected gaps are narrow, but they describe the precision with which ACS sampling error has been propagated across a fixed set of metropolitan areas; they are not tests of whether the underlying difference is substantively meaningful.

7 A second, measurement-specific reason reinforces the choice. Isolation is a convex function of the underlying tract counts, so simulating sampling error inflates it systematically for small, imprecisely counted groups: by Jensen's inequality, the average of a convex index across simulated draws exceeds the index evaluated at the point estimates. The effect is substantial here. Corrected foreign-born isolation is roughly 40 percent above its observed value in 2010 (0.027–0.037), and the 2020 draw distribution is strongly right-skewed. The corrected quantity is therefore not a bias-reduced version of the observed one, and we report dashes rather than values in Table 3.

8 Restricted and weighted as in Scopilliti and Iceland (2008), our observed estimates closely reproduce theirs: 0.42 in 2010 and 0.41 in 2020, despite differences in instrument and population definitions (they use the 2000 census long form, restrict to persons aged 21 and older, count persons born in Puerto Rico and the outlying areas as foreign born, and use U.S.-born non-Hispanic Whites as the reference group). Their versus-White estimates are similarly close to ours under their design. These comparisons are included in the replication materials.

9 Simulating sampling error does not behave reliably for this measure: in 2010 it shifts both exposure measures substantially even in the largest metropolitan areas, where sampling error should matter least—the ratio described below falls by roughly a fifth among those with at least 10,000 foreign-born Black residents. That is a sign the simulation is distorting the measure rather than correcting it. In 2020 the correction moves the values only slightly (the ratio, for instance, from 1.77 to 1.62).

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Acknowledgments: The authors thank Ariela Schachter, Chaeyoon Lim, and Andy Andrews for their support and encouragement. We also gratefully acknowledge research support from the Weidenbaum Center on the Economy, Government, and Public Policy at Washington University in St. Louis.

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