Title: Segregation (Forever?): Measuring Segregation and It’s Long-Term Effects  [joint with John M. Parman, College of William and Mary]

Abstract: We develop a new measure of residential segregation based on individual-level data.  Measures of historical segregation in the United States have been limited by the availability of data required to estimate traditional measures of segregation. What estimates do exist rely either on city-level data, failing to capture the experience of individuals in rural areas or smaller towns, or on coarse measures of the racial composition of counties. We exploit historical census manuscript files to derive a measure of segregation based upon the racial similarity of next door neighbors. Our measure overcomes several of the shortcomings of traditional segregation indices and allows for a much richer view of the variation in segregation patterns across the United States.  With our new measure, we can distinguish between the effects of increasing the racial homogeneity of a location and of increasing the tendency to segregate within a location given a particular racial composition.  We provide estimates of how this new measure relates to traditional segregation measures, how it relates to various local characteristics and how it relates to a variety of individual and aggregate measures of well-being over time.