

The Black Metropolis Legacy

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How to cite this paper: Boyd, R. L. (2024). The Black Metropolis Legacy. *Current Urban Studies*, 12, 283-297.
<https://doi.org/10.4236/cus.2024.123014>

Received: July 2, 2024

Accepted: August 30, 2024

Published: September 2, 2024

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Abstract

This article examines how Drake and Cayton's pathbreaking study of Chicago's early twentieth-century Black community—published 80 years ago as the book, *Black Metropolis*—continues to guide scholarship on race and cities. The article extends the idea, originating in historical research, that this now-classic study motivated a valuable social-scientific inquiry into urbanism and Black communities. Specifically, *Black Metropolis* showed that, contrary to the sociological perspective of ghettoization, many economic and cultural aspects of these communities thrived under the conditions of industrial urbanization. The article concludes that Drake and Cayton's study is a touchstone for future explorations of topics emerging from the shifting geography and demographics of urban Black communities in the first two decades of the twenty-first century United States.

Keywords

Black Communities, Race, Urbanism, United States

1. Introduction

The legacy of Saint Clair Drake and Horace R. Cayton's *Black Metropolis* (Drake & Cayton, 1945) is rich, complex, and misconstrued, much like the object of its investigation: the pre-World-War II Black community of Chicago, popularly known as “Bronzeville”. A perusal of the book's Google Scholar citations (accessed¹ on April 18, 2024) shows multiple legacies in several disciplines—not only sociology (including its subareas of urban sociology, racial/ethnic relations, and social stratification) and African American studies, but also urban history and African American history. In fact, *Black Metropolis* and other pioneering sociological studies of northern urban Black communities, starting with *The Philadelphia Negro* (Du Bois, 1899), *The Negro in Chicago* (Johnson, 1922), and *The Negro Family in*

¹https://scholar.google.com/scholar?cites=15518328684644466923&as_sdt=5.25&scioldt=0.25&hl=en

Chicago (Frazier, 1932), are recognized by historians as foundational works of urban Black history (Trotter, 1995). Trotter (1995) argues, however, that Drake and Cayton's work stands out as a turning point in this line of scholarship. *Black Metropolis*, he maintains, challenged the Chicago School's "cycle of race relations" model and, "using the community's own self-designation as 'Bronzeville'" (Trotter, 1995: p. 443), candidly revealed the community's intricacies to an often-uninitiated readership through what is probably the most massive and comprehensive examination ever undertaken of an urban Black population's culture, institutions, and social-class structure. Trotter's point—that the use of "Bronzeville" is noteworthy—runs parallel to Pattillo's (2014) observation. She suggests that Drake and Cayton's choice of "Bronzeville" (as well as the term, "Black Metropolis") is a "subtle but crucial intervention", because, "Outsiders have a hard time seeing Bronzeville. All they see is the Black Ghetto" (Pattillo, 2014: p. 4). Moreover, *Black Metropolis* broke new ground, according to Trotter (1995: p. 443), by documenting "the growing militance of the black community" against the backdrop of "racial violence and friction" inherent in the inequalities of what Drake and Cayton called the "Color Line" and "Job Ceiling". Surely, these are still relevant points today.

Risking oversimplification, this article proposes that a main legacy of *Black Metropolis* for interdisciplinary urban studies is the instigation of a discourse on two contrasting and ostensibly competing perspectives on Black communities. This proposal is implied by Gregory's (2005) interpretation of the long-run scholarly effect of Drake and Cayton's study. The first perspective, which Gregory (2005: p. 115) asserts is predominant in history and the social sciences, is "ghettoization". This perspective, which is critiqued below, is akin to the negative-themed "deficit frame", identified by Hunter and Robinson (2016: p. 385), that appears to influence much scholarship on urban Black communities. The second perspective inspired by *Black Metropolis*, an alternative to the ghettoization perspective, is what this article calls the Black Metropolis perspective. It is derived from Gregory's appeal for a rediscovery of the original meaning of the Black Metropolis concept (discussed below) and a renewed appreciation of its utility for understanding early twentieth-century urban Black communities, northern ones, in particular (Boyd, 2011). The Black Metropolis perspective, with its accent on pluses rather than minuses, is comparable to Hunter and Robinson's (2016: p. 398) positive-themed "asset frame" for analyzing urban Black communities, which spotlights the role of Blacks' agency in "the ability to make and unmake places and cities into predominantly Black enclaves and locals—or chocolate cities".

2. Ghettoization Critiqued

Emphasizing the twin forces of racial subordination and racial segregation that are highlighted in *Black Metropolis*, the ghettoization perspective draws attention to uniquely severe hardships experienced by residents of the largest Black communities of the urban North, as evidenced by numerous socioeconomic indicators

of racial inequality and spatially-concentrated disadvantage. A long line of influential scholarship in this vein was ushered in over three decades ago by *The Truly Disadvantaged* (Wilson, 1987) and *American Apartheid* (Massey & Denton, 1993), both of which regularly cite *Black Metropolis*. These books in many ways extended the 1960s' urban poverty research tradition, perhaps exemplified by *Dark Ghetto* (Clark, 1965), which stressed the overwhelmingly adverse experiences of life in communities loosely called ghettos. Interestingly, though, *Dark Ghetto* fails to cite *Black Metropolis*.

Such hardships, the ghettoization perspective contends, originated largely from conditions encountered by southern Blacks who moved from rural communities and small towns to major northern cities during the 1915-1970 Great Migration. The migrants and their descendants, according to the perspective, were ill-prepared for the urban North's industrial setting and faced multiple dilemmas spawned by rapidly growing Black populations that were rigidly constrained by racial subordination and racial segregation and often sharply fragmented by internal divisions of class and status (Gregory, 2005: p. 115). Viewing these problems through the lens of the Chicago School's social disorganization theory (Wirth, 1938), which underscored urbanism's supposedly corrosive effects on primary groups, the ghettoization perspective, Gregory contends, led many scholars to conclude that northern urban Black communities were, at the outset, stunted, imbalanced, and dysfunctional to varying degrees. For instance, Gregory (2005: p. 115) interprets Drake and Cayton's analysis as follows, maintaining that *Black Metropolis* "introduces the ghetto story that would guide the next half century" of research on urban Black communities:

"the book in many ways distances itself from its title, emphasizing not the integrity and prospects of a Black Metropolis but the limitations of a community tightly compressed within walls of racial subordination. The authors assess Bronzeville's resources and mostly find them wanting: the business sector is too small, the religious sector is too large, the newspapers too sensational, the politicians too corrupt, the 'shadies' too powerful, the middle class too irresponsible, the lower class too large and demoralized" (Gregory, 2005: p. 115).

To be sure, historical and social-scientific scholarship on early twentieth-century urban Black communities is skewed toward the ghettoization perspective. This skew is in part evinced by the preponderance of the word "ghetto" in the respective titles or subtitles of frequently cited case studies of urban Black communities. Some examples include well-known books by Katzman (1973), Kusmer (1976), Osofsky (1966), Philpott (1978), and Spear (1967). Note, however, that while "Black Ghetto" is a key analytical concept of Drake and Cayton's investigation (see Chapter 8), their work is importantly subtitled, "A Study of Negro *Life* in a Northern City" (emphasis added), reflecting their concern with multiple dimensions of Bronzeville. "Life" in the work's subtitle undoubtedly refers to the "axes of life" around which individual and community life turn: "1) Staying

Alive; 2) Having a Good Time; 3) Praising God; 4) Getting Ahead; 5) Advancing the Race” (Drake & Cayton, 1945: p. 385; see also Pattillo, 2014: p. 5). Gregory’s accusation that *Black Metropolis* chartered a ghettoization course for theory and research on urban Black communities may thus be overstated or even misplaced. It might be more accurate to surmise that many scholars over the years have selectively perceived and selectively cited Drake and Cayton’s work, picking and choosing quotations, data, observations, and insights to suit their own points of emphasis.

Note, too, that Drake and Cayton’s focus on “institutional diversity, cultural richness, and social vitality” within the Black Ghetto’s confines (Pattillo, 2014: p. 4) has some precedent in non-fiction writings of the prewar Harlem Renaissance. These writings, which may not be as well-known to social scientists as is *Black Metropolis*, include *Black Manhattan* (Johnson, 1930) and *Harlem: Negro Metropolis* (McKay, 1940). Following on the heels of *The New Negro* (Locke, 1925), these important works explored the bold and energetic worlds of Black cultural expression in New York’s premier Black community. Yet, these works are more journalistic (or perhaps dramatic and/or romantic) than social scientific. For example, Woodson (1941) flatly dismissed the scholarly merit of McKay’s *Harlem*, stating in his review, “It is all right to play up Harlem as a gay, happy-go-lucky center for the frivolous and improvident; but ... *Harlem* ... is not intended for the promotion of the truth. It is one of those books published to make money by featuring exciting accounts” (Woodson, 1941: p. 121). Woodson’s criticism aside, one should not discount the influence of the Harlem Renaissance writers on popular and academic views of urban Black communities; see, for instance, the opening reference to Zora Neale Hurston’s work by Hunter et al. (2016) and note that Drake and Cayton themselves briefly describe “Bronzeville’s ‘New Negro’” (Drake & Cayton, 1945: pp. 714-715).

3. The Black Metropolis Perspective

Gregory’s (2005: p. 114) call for a renewed appreciation of the Black Metropolis idea inspires the Black Metropolis perspective and is based on a recognition of two things: 1) the unrivaled locational advantages for Blacks of the nation’s “great cities in their age of maximum greatness” (that is, northern urban centers of the early- to middle-twentieth-century), and 2) the unprecedented optimism, expressed by leading Black journalists at the start of the Great Migration, over the prospect that Black communities could achieve in the urban North a measure of economic independence, social freedom, and political self-determination vis-à-vis the larger society that was not possible in the South. Most notable among the journalists from whom Gregory draws is Harlem-based writer Ottley (1943), whose book, “*New World A’Coming*”: *Inside Black America*, Gregory notes, predates the publication of *Black Metropolis* by a few months. Ottley depicted Harlem as “the Negro capital ... the nerve center of advancing Black America ... a vibrant, bristling black metropolis” (Ottley, 1943: pp. 1-2, cited by Gregory, 2005: p. 115).

Gregory's call begs the question: What is the original meaning of the term, "Black Metropolis"? While commonly associated with the notion of a solidly Black "city within a city" (Drake & Cayton, 1945: p. 396), the term's original meaning is much broader and appears to stem from an idea called "The Dream of Black Metropolis" (Meier & Rudwick, 1976: p. 252, cited by Boyd, 2015: p. 131). This idea was popularized in the early twentieth century by Black professionals and entrepreneurs, many of whom were southern-born and steeped in Booker T. Washington's vision that, through self-help and racial solidarity (and particularly Black support of Black-owned businesses), Blacks could, in growing urban communities, "take advantage of the disadvantages" of racial subordination and racial segregation (Meier & Rudwick, 1976: p. 252). Northern urban communities, far above the former Confederacy's entrenched White Supremacy ideology and brutal racial subjugation practices, seemed to offer the best hope for achieving the Dream of Black Metropolis, according to the idea's advocates, who, in the wake of the 1920s' financial prosperity—known as the "fat years" (Drake & Cayton, 1945: p. 78)—believed that:

"The northern Black Metropolis would generate a flourishing 'group economy' in which black professionals and entrepreneurs sold goods and services to a lucrative market of black consumers and, in the process, created additional jobs for black workers. The northern Black Metropolis would nurture the emerging social worlds of black artists, musicians, and writers who were developing exciting new forms of cultural expression and, in doing so, were captivating audiences far beyond the black community. The northern Black Metropolis would encourage the rise of a formidable bloc of black voters that would be leveraged to help blacks obtain official positions in local government agencies—positions that would, in turn, be used to deliver necessary public services to black neighborhoods" (Boyd, 2015: p. 131).

Awareness of Black Metropolis's original meaning provokes additional questions, for instance: To what extent did the largest urban Black communities of the North become Black Metropolises, and more specifically, to what extent did Bronzeville become a Black Metropolis? These questions arise because, in many respects, "Black Metropolis" is a state of mind, comprised of psychological and symbolic elements that were (and are) real in their consequences. This point is developed by Reed (2011: p. 130), who declares that the Black Metropolis idea fostered a "spirit of unity, independence, and agency among blacks of all socioeconomic levels." But the Black Metropolis is also a social-scientific concept and, as such, must be operationally defined, that is, empirically measured (which will be discussed below).

Attempts to answer the above questions, furthermore, speak to sociological issues implied by *Black Metropolis*, the most fundamental of which may be about the existence of the Black Metropolis itself. Consider, for instance, the allegation, made by Frazier (1957) throughout his book, *Black Bourgeoisie*, that middle- and upper-class Blacks lived in two worlds: one of reality and one of make-believe. The

former refers to the harsh and tangible effects of racial subordination and racial segregation while the latter refers to Blacks' social construction of group responses to these effects. The world of reality clearly includes the Black Ghetto. But does the world of make-believe include the Black Metropolis? Frazier suggested that middle- and upper-class Blacks' socially constructed responses to the Ghetto often took the form of what he regarded as fanciful or delusional beliefs that were actually intended to reinforce status distinctions within Black communities and to help middle- and upper-class Blacks soothe or escape the emotionally traumatizing consequences of racial segregation and racial subordination.

For example, Frazier alleged that middle- and upper-class Blacks used the Black press and Black church to promote a self-serving "Myth of Negro Business" which argued, based on the "double-duty dollar" theory, that Black patronage of Black-owned enterprises was key to achieving the Dream of Black Metropolis (Drake & Cayton, 1945: p. 430). The double-duty dollar theory maintains that spending money in Black-owned businesses creates a virtuous cycle in which such businesses expand and hire more Black workers, who in turn spend more money in Black-owned businesses, eventually leading to the local Black community's economic self-sufficiency. Thus, the theory advocates, Black consumers have a vested interest in purchasing their goods and services from Black entrepreneurs, even if at a price disadvantage (Drake & Cayton, 1945: pp. 430-433). Frazier maintained that promotion of the idea of racial salvation through Black entrepreneurship was mainly an effort by the Black business-owning class to gain material and prestige rewards within Black communities, at the expense of working- and lower-class Blacks, by monopolizing and exploiting socially- and spatially-restricted Black consumers. Furthermore, Becker (1971: pp. 22-24) implied that the double-duty dollar theory is impossible in practice.

Of course, Frazier's controversial analysis has been dismissed by many readers as cynically Marxist and/or empirically erroneous. For instance, Butler's (2005) critique of Frazier uses historical and contemporary evidence to document how Black entrepreneurs play vital roles in urban Black communities as builders and supporters of institutions that encourage economic and social stability and advancement. Nonetheless, in its own time, Frazier's scathing evaluation of the Black middle- and upper-classes may have unintentionally encouraged the perception among sociologists that the Black Metropolis was an illusion born of middle- and upper-class Blacks' desires for voluntary racial separatism or racial retreatism. In fact, however, Bronzeville's residents never seriously embraced separatism or retreatism, evincing little or no enthusiasm for Marcus Garvey's "Back to Africa" movement, for example (Drake & Cayton, 1945: pp. 751-753). *Black Bourgeoisie*, not Drake and Cayton's *Black Metropolis* (as Gregory claims), may therefore have done much to undermine sociological appreciation of the Black Metropolis.

4. Evidence for the Black Metropolis Perspective

One study sought to verify the empirical reality of the Black Metropolis by

addressing the two questions posed above, namely: To what extent did the largest urban Black communities of the North become Black Metropolises, and more specifically, to what extent did Bronzeville become a Black Metropolis? That study (Boyd, 2015) quantified a single dimension of the Black Metropolis concept, namely, occupational structure, with an odds-ratio location quotient. The location quotient measured, with available city-level Census data, Blacks' representation in four sets of pursuits that a review of historical and sociological literature suggested were indicative of popular aspirations of the Dream of Black Metropolis in the early twentieth century. These sets included the professions (doctors, lawyers, dentists, ministers, and college professors), business enterprises (bankers, insurance agents, retail merchants, barbers and beauticians), public services (municipal officials and social workers), and cultural expression endeavors (artists, musicians, performers, photographers, and writers). For all U.S. cities with a 1930 Black population over 50,000 ($N = 15$), the odds-ratio location quotient (OR) measured Blacks' representation in an occupation in a particular city, net of city workforce size and Black community workforce size. An OR of 1.00 indicated that, in occupation i in city j , Blacks were proportionally represented relative to Blacks and non-Blacks in all other U.S. cities, that is, the number of Blacks in occupation i in city j was equal to the number that would be statistically expected.

The key results of the multicity analyses are shown in **Table 1**, which displays, for each occupational category, the cities with the five highest median OR values in 1930. For example, the median OR of 2.41 for professional occupations in Chicago indicates that, in Bronzeville, the average number of Blacks in the professions was 2.41 times greater than the number that would be statistically expected, relative to the number of Blacks and non-Blacks in all other U.S. cities (for specific calculation details and complete results, see Boyd, 2015).

Four conclusions about the early twentieth-century Black Metropolis emerge from these results. First, Bronzeville stood out as the preeminent Black Metropolis overall, eclipsing all other Black communities in the professions, businesses, and public services, and trailing only slightly behind Harlem in cultural expression endeavors. These findings suggest that Chicago's locational advantages for pursuing the Dream of Black Metropolis were unsurpassed immediately after the start of the Great Migration, validating Drake and Cayton's (1945) implicit assumption that Bronzeville was the appropriate focal point of early-twentieth-century Black Metropolis research. And while Bronzeville may have gained from unique leadership and/or institutional capabilities, it may also have benefited from its sizable Black industrial working class (Boyd, 2018). Note, for instance, that the respective Black communities of the major midwestern manufacturing centers of Cleveland and Detroit, which, similar to Bronzeville, had large shares of Black industrial workers, are the only communities besides Bronzeville that consistently rank among the "top-five" Black Metropolises.

In this regard, it is notable that, while Drake and Cayton (1945) examine Blacks' representation in industrial jobs (Chapter 9), their analysis of Bronzeville's

Table 1. Cities with the highest median odds ratios for occupational categories in 1930.^a

Occupational Category and Cities	Median Odds Ratio
<i>Professional Occupations</i>	
Chicago	2.41
Cleveland	2.12
Detroit	2.00
Washington DC	1.80
Saint Louis	1.76
<i>Entrepreneurial Occupations</i>	
Chicago	2.87
Cleveland	2.21
Washington DC	1.96
Detroit	1.76
Richmond	1.73
<i>Public Service Occupations</i>	
Chicago	6.50
Cleveland	4.18
Philadelphia	4.11
New York	2.46
Detroit	2.44
<i>Cultural Expression Occupations</i>	
New York	3.11
Chicago	2.92
Cleveland	2.16
Detroit	1.68
Baltimore	1.62

a. Derived from Boyd's (2015) analysis of U.S. Census data.

social-class structure focuses on upper-, middle- and lower-classes (Chapters 19-22) and does not consider the working class separately from these other classes. This apparent oversight may reflect the relative neglect of the Black working class in sociological research, even though, as Horton et al. (2000) point out, this class has been historically much larger than the Black middle- or lower-classes.

Second, Harlem had the most prominent "cultural apparatus" (Gregory, 2005: p. 124) among early twentieth-century urban Black communities, a finding attributed to distinctive opportunities in New York that "attracted and produced a disproportionate number of black artists, musicians, performers, and writers" (Boyd, 2015: p. 142). One of these opportunities was the chance for Blacks in cultural expression occupations to develop what Gregory (2005: p. 129) calls "useful

interactions with whites.” Such interactions, Gregory notes, appear to have arisen from several sources related to New York’s unparalleled “cultural and political freedom.” These sources were, according to Gregory, Whites’ patronage of Harlem’s nightclubs and theaters, interracial exchanges among Black and White artists and musicians, and White philanthropic sponsorship of Black artists and writers.

Third, the early twentieth-century Black Metropolis was mainly a northern phenomenon. Consistent with popular and scholarly beliefs, urban Black communities below the Mason-Dixon Line failed to attain Black Metropolis status in the time of Drake and Cayton’s analysis. This regional difference is no doubt due to disadvantages related to extraordinarily intense prejudice and discrimination rooted in the White Supremacy ideology of the southern slaveholding regions, as well as to the South’s generally lower level of economic development at the time. Yet, the Black community of Washington DC, did achieve Black Metropolis standing on the basis of having the fourth highest median OR value among all 20 occupations analyzed for the 15 cities (Boyd, 2015). This result may reflect locational advantages stemming from Washington DC’s function as the nation’s capital and from the city’s historical attraction for many skilled and educated Blacks from the lower South, which intensified after the Civil War and the end of Reconstruction (Boyd, 2015). This attraction likely expanded the supply of human resources needed to create a Black Metropolis.

Fourth and finally, the northern Black Metropolis of the early twentieth century was characterized more by Blacks’ opportunities to enter public service and to create and support lively cultural expression institutions than by Blacks’ opportunities to economically advance through the professions and business enterprise. This conclusion follows from observing that the OR values tended to be higher for public service and cultural expression occupations than for professional and entrepreneurial occupations (Boyd, 2015). Regarding the notably high median OR value indicating Blacks’ overrepresentation in Chicago’s public service sector, it was suggested that this value signaled Bronzeville’s nascent political clout “which resulted from the organization of a potent bloc of black voters that could influence Chicago’s white elected officials as well as propel black candidates into public office” (Boyd, 2015: p. 139). Bronzeville’s political clout was revealed, too, in the historic election of Chicago alderman Oscar DePriest to the U.S. House of Representatives in 1928 (Drake & Cayton, 1945: pp. 360-370).

Apropos of the relatively high median OR values indicating Blacks’ overrepresentation in the cultural expression occupations of Harlem and Bronzeville, the above study proposed that the most enduring legacy of the Black Metropolis is the early twentieth-century Black Cultural Renaissance, also called the Harlem Renaissance. A lavish outpouring of audaciously novel forms of art, literature, music, entertainment, and journalism, this Renaissance had a lasting influence on America’s popular culture. The Renaissance was anchored in the nightclubs, theaters, cabarets, and dancehalls of these communities’ entertainment districts and in

various other local institutions, including art galleries, studios, newspapers, and book and magazine publishers. The rise of these establishments was central to early twentieth-century Black placemaking, that is, Blacks' agency in the remaking of locations in the largest U.S. cities into Black spaces (Boyd, 2021). Thus, it is intriguing that while Drake and Cayton focus on the significance of Black newspapers and Black churches (Chapter 15), they devote scant attention to other institutions of cultural production and dissemination, even though such institutions were prominent in Bronzeville at the time of their study. For instance, they briefly refer to Whites' patronage of the community's "cabarets and other 'hot spots'" (Drake & Cayton, 1945: p. 198), yet otherwise, their examination of cultural consumption (e.g., investigating variation in tastes and preferences for different types of entertainment, recreation, worship, leisure, etc.) is scattered throughout their analyses of Bronzeville's social-class structure (Chapters 19-22).

5. Lingering Questions

So, was the Dream of Black Metropolis fulfilled in the urban North? Location quotients yield a partial answer at best, for they address only the economic dimension of the Black Metropolis concept. Other dimensions of this concept, identified earlier, include psychological, cultural, and perhaps even spiritual dimensions (Reed, 2011). Thus, additional measures besides the one examined above are needed to more adequately interrogate the Black Metropolis concept. Yet, further consideration of the economic dimension provides a starting point for addressing an issue that is central to the Dream of Black Metropolis, namely, whether or not the Great Migration (1915-1970) substantially paid off for Blacks economically.

Black Metropolis is conspicuously cited in a growing line of scholarship, in sociology and economics, that takes on this issue. Exemplified by such works as *Competition in the Promised Land* (Boustan, 2017), and articles by Tolnay and colleagues (Eichenlaub, Tolnay, & Alexander, 2010; Tolnay, 2003), this literature has generated mixed results. On the one hand, Boustan (2017) finds that the Great Migration was a net plus for Blacks in terms of wage gains but also observes that the gains were moderated by intensification of within-group labor-market competition due to the tremendous growth of the northern Black workforce. On the other hand, Eichenlaub, Tolnay and Alexander (2010) discover that Black migrants' occupational status and income levels in the urban North were not markedly better, and in some cases were worse, than those of southern-born Blacks who remained in the Urban South. Not surprisingly, the sociological side of this inquiry extensively cites Drake and Cayton's (1945) exploration of the Black Ghetto, with its emphasis on the most adverse consequences of racial subordination and racial segregation. And some results of this literature imply that *Black Metropolis's* depiction of the southern Black migrants' living conditions does not square with Census data showing that the initial migrants fared just as well or better than northern-born Blacks regarding family stability, home ownership, and employment status (Tolnay, 2003).

In the end, a definitive answer to the above questions may be unattainable if for no other reason than this: the Black Ghetto and the Black Metropolis are conceptually distinct yet empirically inseparable. Pattillo (2014: pp. 4-5), for example, writes, “Black Metropolis ... is what Blacks create out of the Black Ghetto.” Along these lines, Pattillo further suggests that lingering questions posed by Drake and Cayton’s work are, “Can the Black Metropolis escape, overcome, or defeat the forced nature of the Black Ghetto? Can the two be disentangled?” Unfortunately, a yes-and-no response might be the most reasonable answer to these queries, as well as to the overarching question, Was the Dream of Black Metropolis fulfilled in the urban North?

6. Conclusion: Retrospect and Prospect

The coexistence and tension between the Black Ghetto, on the one hand, and the Black Metropolis, on the other, which Drake and Cayton originally brought to the fore of sociological investigation 80 years ago, remains a worthy topic of research on urban Black communities. The present article’s goal has been to argue that Drake and Cayton’s seminal investigation continues to inspire research on race and urbanism. Given this relatively limited objective, the above presentation has been somewhat narrowly focused. Therefore, future efforts to highlight the legacy of *Black Metropolis* should, ideally, examine a wider range of studies and perspectives than those considered here. However, in the meantime, this article proposes that one of the most salient recent additions to the long line of *Black Metropolis*-inspired scholarship is, *A Haven and a Hell: The Ghetto in Black America* (Freeman, 2019). Freeman historically examines northern urban Black communities from the time before the Great Migration to the present, emphasizing the “paradoxical roles” of the “Ghetto” as a place of racial refuge and a place of racial torment (Taplin-Kaguru, 2021: p. 48). Taplin-Kaguru (2021: p. 48) appraises this work as “a valuable corrective to a sociology of the ghetto that has focused myopically on one side of this paradox”. This appraisal is yet another acknowledgement of the tilt of research on urban Black communities toward the ghettoization perspective and deficit frame. It is also a call for more counterbalancing applications of the Black Metropolis perspective and the asset frame.

An awareness of what might be the unavoidably paradoxical attributes of urban Black communities is further evident in Young’s (2021) review of Freeman’s book. What Young eloquently writes about the book’s subject matter, and about the controversial concept of the Ghetto, in particular, could also pertain to Drake and Cayton’s juxtaposition of the Black Ghetto and the Black Metropolis:

“That concept [the ghetto] has been enduring as much as it has been troubling. For some, it is a disturbing term because it triggers images of the social malaise and turmoil afflicting African-American urban life. However, the ghetto also has been the place where African-Americans built institutions that enriched their lives and the locale where they constructed cultural forms and styles that constitute what many consider to be unique qualities of the

African-American experience. Consequently, black Americans have both rejected and embraced the ghetto as an indelible feature of African-American life” (Young, 2021: p. 1276).

It is noteworthy here that the term “ghetto” is still so frequently used in reference to urban Black communities. Over a decade ago, some influential scholars called for a serious reconsideration of its usage and possible abandonment (Small, 2008). Perhaps the term’s continued use reflects not only the persistent influence of the ghettoization perspective but also a long-term bias toward urban Black communities and a failure to recognize the diversity of such communities. In this regard, it is refreshing to see the emergence of recent scholarship that calls attention to the multifaceted origins of high achievement in Black America (e.g., Charles et al., 2022). This scholarship underscores the point, implicit in *Black Metropolis*, that urban Black communities are far from monolithic.

Keeping Freeman’s insight in mind, provocative new topics arise from the shifting geography and demographics of urban Black communities over the past two decades. The movements of Black populations to suburbs and, in a striking reversal of the Great Migration, to the South and other Sun Belt locations have led to “sizable and substantial Black communities” in places well beyond Bronzeville and Harlem, namely, the metropolitan areas of Dallas, Houston, Miami, and most noticeably, Atlanta (Pattillo, 2014: p. 6). Perhaps the most stunning outcome of these movements is that, by 2012, the Black population of the Atlanta metro area (1,676,710) surpassed that of the Chicago metro area (1,413,447), although Chicago still holds the nation’s second largest central-city Black population behind that of New York City (Pattillo, 2014: p. 7). Thus, the Great Migration’s reversal has created fertile ground for new research on urban and suburban Black communities (Pendergrass, 2013). And to be sure, the movement to the suburbs is not one-way. Black gentrification of urban-core residential quarters demonstrates that Black communities in such localities are still viewed by some middle- and upper-class Blacks as possible “havens” (Taplin-Kaguru, 2021: p. 48).

These movements reflect the improved spatial mobility of Black populations due to late twentieth-century progress in both the material resources and civil rights laws needed to expand Blacks’ residential choices. Given that when Black people relocate in large numbers, they invariably “reconstitute Black Metropolis somewhere else,” and usually in “predominantly Black, class-diverse neighborhoods” (Pattillo, 2014: pp. 16-17), such trends have powerful implications, not only for further study of the “Axes of Life” in Black communities but also for an understanding of the future course of American society (in politics, especially). Case in point: Black voting strength in the Atlanta metro area was sufficient in the 2020 Presidential Election to “flip” the state of Georgia into the Democratic Party’s column in the Electoral College, helping that party to retake the U.S. Presidency. It is notable in this connection that voting support from Chicago’s Black Metropolis figured significantly in the ascendancy of Barack Obama to U.S. Senator and later President of the United States (Pattillo, 2014: p. 10). Hence, the potential for

urban Black communities, like those of the Atlanta metro area, to alter the American political landscape should not be underestimated.

Lastly, in addition to the untrod avenues of Black Metropolis research awaiting in growing urban and suburban Black communities of the South and Sun Belt, new opportunities for scholars to update *Black Metropolis's* insights are also signaled by the migration of Black communities to cyberspace. Drake and Cayton (1945) conducted their investigation when the Axes of Life turned primarily in communities stoutly affixed to physical locations by the mid-twentieth century's relatively primitive communication and transportation technologies. In the twenty-first century, the Axes of Life can and do revolve in geographically-defined places as well as in cyberspace, owing to the proliferation of Internet connections, Smartphones, and social media platforms that are global in scope. A comprehensive discussion of the ways in which these electronic means of social interaction are transforming Black placemaking is beyond this article's purview and should be undertaken in future research. Yet, it is noteworthy that, as Cox (2017) shows, such advanced communications technologies effectively disseminate information that mobilizes communities and organizes protest movements, such as Black Lives Matter (see also research by Hunter et al. (2016) on social media as a factor in Black placemaking). Interestingly, in view of issues brought to the fore of public discourse by the Black Lives Matter movement, including racial disparities in the criminal legal system and mass incarceration, today's readers will likely be surprised that *Black Metropolis* does not include a full chapter on crime, policing, and violence (for an analysis of these issues at the time of Drake and Cayton's study, see Myrdal, 1944). At any rate, one should not assume that because of the aforementioned population shifts, the Black Metropolis is now "more fragile" and "losing some souls to areas beyond its borders" (Pattillo, 2014: p. 17). Social scientists in the interdisciplinary field of urban studies must now consider that Black Metropolis vigor no longer depends on the place-specific features, such as region and population density, that were key influences on Black community dynamics in the era of Drake and Cayton's Bronzeville.

Acknowledgements

I thank the anonymous reviewer for several helpful suggestions. An earlier version of this article was presented at the 2021 annual meeting of the American Sociological Association, which was held remotely (August 6-10 via Zoom) due to COVID-19 pandemic restrictions.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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