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# Race and Regionalism: The Structure of Local Government and Racial Disparity

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## Abstract

How opportunity is distributed among its component racial groups in a metropolitan region is an important question and is likely to become more so as regions become denser economically and socially. The extent to which governmental structure contributes to racial sorting has been debated since the development of public choice theory. To evaluate how various structural, political, and historical factors affect the relative distribution of opportunity between racial groups in urban regions of the United States, the authors apply a cross-sectional approach, comparing regional characteristics at the time of the 2000 census. Their analysis of the correlates and determinants of racial disparities suggests that these factors collectively explain significant amounts of regional variation with respect to residential racial segregation, cost and quality of housing, and income. The number of local governments and fiscal power diffusion explain some racial disparity. Larger size of black population in a region is associated with less segregation, but more economic disparity while the opposite tends to be true for Hispanics. More liberal state policies and political culture occur where metropolitan black-white segregation is higher. Higher central city incomes appear to decrease segregation while higher suburban income increases it.

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How opportunity is distributed across a region among its component racial groups is an extremely important question and is likely to become more so as regions become more integrated economically and socially with increasingly diverse racial and ethnic groups. Historically, municipalities rather than urban regions have been the unit of analysis for understanding disparities in racial opportunity and residential segregation in urban places. But over time, the urban region has become the more relevant geography for understanding urban life (Hamilton 1999). This is particularly the case with regard to policy affecting racial equity and equal opportunity. However, urban regions consist of a jigsaw of municipalities and other units of local government, and so in many places policy making is fragmented. Where local sales and property taxes are heavily relied upon, fiscal capacity varies with where people live, as do housing values and educational and economic opportunities. Thus levels of racial disparity in income and housing within regions may be related to underlying structures of government that mediate the distribution of local resources.

Governance and regional structure may operate in a variety of ways to influence equality of opportunity for different racial groups in a place. The very size of a region affords members of groups the opportunity to segregate themselves spatially in ways they may not be able to in smaller place (Gordon and Monastriotis 2006). Second, a wide variety of local governments could be used to create policies that create exclusion based on the correlation of income with race, operationalized through zoning (Rothwell and Massey 2009), transportation modes and routes, and location of different types of economic development or access to jobs (Preston, McLafferty, and Liu 1998). States vary in how decision making is allocated to the state or local levels (Zimmerman 1995). This affects the ability of municipalities within regions to act independently of wider political cultures. Finally, because of a plethora of factors, political actors in different places vary in their interest in promoting equality of racial opportunity or in their indifference to it (Soss, Fording, and Schram 2008). Thus as suburbs are increasingly populated by members of minority groups, it is essential that we expand our thinking regarding how and why disparity of opportunity and segregation may be occurring and how government may operate to cause or mitigate disparity. For policy makers to focus their time and resources on what will be most

effective, it is essential to understand correctly the probable causes of social disparities.

This study advances this understanding in three significant ways:

It considers the role of political culture in analyzing the impact of regional characteristics on various forms of racial disparity such as segregation, quality of housing, and incomes. In some places, and for some types of jurisdictions, political boundaries preexisted the political cultures that currently exist. However, state and local policy preferences may lead to decisions to preserve or to change jurisdictional boundaries or, more importantly, determine whether those lines have meaning for patterns of economic or housing development, school choice and quality, tax policy, and other key determinants of racial equity (Leland and Thurmaier 2005). The political culture of a state, which has a significant impact on what is possible locally, might be a determinant or an indicator of whether a region overcomes jurisdictional obstacles in pursuit of racial equity or, indeed, whether it even values very highly racial equity. While many studies cited below have looked at various aspects of race and regions, a state's tendency toward progressive or conservative social policies as a possible predictor of whether a region achieves racial equity has not been considered in the literature.

Second, this work considers that because patterns of residential racial segregation and opportunity are different for different income groups, regional structure may have disparate impact on different income levels, even among a single racial group. Earlier studies considered racial groups as if they are economically homogenous. In fact, significant policy interest differences exist between low- and upper-income Blacks and Hispanics, who may have different views on redistributive income or housing policies (Dawson 1995). This has important implications for policy in that strategies regarding economic development, affordable or public housing, affirmative action, and zoning may have positive effects for one income level within a group but not for others (Wilson 1987).

Finally, this work asks not only whether regional characteristics have an effect on racial residential patterns but also whether they affect racial disparity in income, housing cost, and housing quality. Because of the strong relationship of both economic development and housing policy to jurisdiction, politics, and other regional social characteristics, we might hypothesize that racial disparity in income and housing quality might follow upon many of the same causes as residential segregation. Studies such as those by Huffman and Cohen (2004), Cassirer (1996), and others began to investigate the link of segregation and employment in metropolitan areas but did not consider in their analysis possible political and governmental variables considered here.

This analysis, then, investigates the following questions:

- How evenly are incomes and housing quality distributed among different racial groups across the nation's metropolitan regions?
- How important are governmental structures, political cultures, and regional demographic and social characteristics to the distribution of housing and economic opportunity?

## **The Growing Importance of Regions for Understanding Racial Disparity**

By 2000 all large regions had become racially and ethnically diverse places. African-American migration began in the early twentieth century and continued into the post-World War II years from the rural South to the North and into southern cities. Black suburbanization has resulted from migration of Blacks from central cities to specific suburbs and the inclusion of satellite cities with large Black populations into the metropolitan nexus as some regions expanded. The most recent significant migration started in the 1990s with Hispanics and foreign-born immigrants moving in unprecedented numbers into the suburbs of large cities (Kotkin 2001; Schneider and Phelan 1993; Frey 2001).

Regional integration operates across any number of domains. Job commutes interlock over ever greater geographic areas, making economic development and job opportunity a regional concern. As a result, housing policy is a concern at a regional level as well as a local level (Wiewel and Persky 2002). Lack of affordable housing in communities that adjoin areas of high job growth circumscribe opportunities for members of minority racial groups from taking full advantage of those job opportunities (Covington 2009). In an increasingly economically integrated region, the failure of schools in some districts or municipalities has a direct effect on the capacity of businesses in other, erstwhile distant areas to hire the quality of workers they need. The economic costs of racial isolation have been well documented (Massey and Denton 1993), and the costs to fiscal health of local governments stemming from economic isolation are also in evidence (Bahl 1994; Hendrick 2004). Residents across regions have an interest in having strong social capital and a positive race relations environment.

The initial studies of racial segregation focused on cities, but in recent decades urban sprawl and the realization that housing markets transcend municipal boundaries have led to studies considering segregation regionally. Farley and Frey (1994) found a positive association between size of a

metropolitan area and level of racial integration. Rusk (1993) categorized cities on a continuum from elastic to inelastic, arguing that cities with more potential for annexation or less dense central cities produced less racial segregation and disparity. However, his analysis did not account for regional variations and other potentially confounding factors that could have been addressed through a multivariate analysis. Pendall (2001), utilizing multiple regression techniques, found that sprawl was not associated with increased segregation. Higher-density communities tend not to incorporate more racially and economically diverse residents. This was very likely because of the countervailing effect that more rapidly growing and newer areas tend to be more integrated than older, more stable ones and that higher income across a region has not led to racial integration (Farley and Frey 1994; Massey and Denton 1987).

### **Why Opportunity May Be Distributed Unevenly**

Opportunity may be distributed unevenly across regions for a variety of reasons potentially linked to the structure of governance, the local political culture, and the size of the region. An individual's choice of residence can be limited because affordable housing is located only in particular places or because local custom, land-use policies, or overt discrimination tend to close neighborhoods to one or another racial group (Massey and Denton 1993). As a result, quality employment opportunities may be more accessible to some neighborhoods than to others (Chapple 2006). On the other hand, integrated housing makes location of economic opportunity easier, reduces the likelihood of concentrated poverty, and facilitates racially equitable distribution of financial resources for schools (Ong and Rickles 2004; Rivkin 1994; Clotfelter 1998).

States and localities may implement economic development and redistributive policies that have an effect on the level of equality of White and minority incomes. Levels of job growth and location are the result of local development preferences and related policies. Local governments influence the location of business growth through their zoning policies, the use of tax and business support incentives, investment in infrastructure, and commercial and industrial district planning (Goetz 1994). Industrial location across regions influences the types of jobs to which persons of different racial groups will have access, and hence their opportunities to earn higher or lower incomes (Ihlanfeldt and Sjoquist 1991; Martin 1997). Tax policies, related to residential and business wealth, favor some places over others, meaning that school or municipal service quality can be uneven (Hoxby 2001; Miller 2000).

Municipalities also invest in amenities critical to attracting an educated, creative workforce that in turn stimulates economic growth (Florida 2004), and if these amenities are unevenly distributed across communities of varying racial composition, so too economic opportunity may be. In addition, states and localities may operate redistributive policies, such as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, earned income tax credits, and affirmative action programs, with varying degrees of effectiveness that, in turn, may affect the size of the gap between the average income of Whites and minorities in a region (Acs, Loprest, and Ratcliffe 2010). The racial gap in income has a significant impact on the level of racial disparity in housing cost and quality.

Government jurisdictional boundary lines have had a significant impact on major policy outcomes, in some instances providing seemingly impenetrable barriers to regional equality of racial opportunity. The historic civil rights battles that opened the door to opportunities for racial minorities were fought against city rather than regional leaders and interests. When Chicago Mayor Richard J. Daley met with Martin Luther King to discuss open housing it was principally about housing policy for Chicago rather than for the entire Chicago region (Cohen and Taylor 2000). Individual suburban policies were largely out of reach. The *Milliken* decision regarding segregation in Detroit area schools effectively meant that school desegregation would be segmented along school district lines, which are usually coterminous with municipal or county boundaries and not metropolitan-wide (Orfield and Eaton 1996).

Given the high degrees of segregation of housing and racial disparity of income and housing quality and the history of central city–suburban administrative isolation in most parts of the country, we then might consider whether the political structure or characteristics of a region lead opportunity to be distributed more or less equitably. For instance, the number of local governments in a region could work in at least two ways either to support equitable allocation of opportunity or to inhibit it. Larger numbers of local governments may be associated with economic prosperity as they are encouraged by increasingly economically empowered consumers of housing who can afford to choose where they live to satisfy their desires for different packages of public services. Conversely, the proliferation of local jurisdictions could inhibit equal distribution by creating a variety of barriers to housing choice. Bickers and Stein (2002) found a strong relationship between the volume of intergovernmental agreements and general purpose governmental units, and the amount of federal aid awarded to a region, suggesting that fragmentation could be a barrier to the federal resources that might be used to

improve racial equity in housing or income. Peterson (1981) suggested that greater municipal competition should be related to less social spending, which could diminish racial equity. Following the same principle, Schneider and Logan (1981) argued that growth in intergovernmental transfer payments tended to mitigate the adverse impact of municipal fragmentation. Parks and Oakerson (1989) argued, on the other hand, that there was a vital difference between “metropolitan fragmentation and complex metropolitan organization” that need not inherently prevent policy solutions to social problems.

A number of studies have considered the interaction of local government structure and social organization. The landmark theory by Tiebout (1956) argued that consumers selected bundles of local administration that best matched their preferences. An extensive body of work followed analyzing the applicability of Tiebout’s theory to various types of social sorting (Hill 1974; Neiman 1976; Ostrom 1983). Lowery (1999), reviewing much of the literature, concluded that the implications of Tiebout’s theory and its progeny, as well as the contending “social stratification government inequality” theory, remained an open question. For example, Bollens (1986) found support for the interaction of municipal structure and racial sorting across 100 standard metropolitan statistical areas. Stein (1987) found support for the Tiebout model in his finding that racial segregation correlated with intermunicipal variation in service activities and that larger numbers of municipal governments contributed to more sorting.

Some studies have focused on racial grouping as a potential cause of governmental fragmentation rather than as its result. Fisher and Wassmer (1998a) included the racial proportions of urban areas as a potential predictor of the number of local governments. They found that greater dispersion of racial categories tended to be associated with smaller numbers of general purpose local governments. In a longitudinal study covering the 1950s through 1980s, Martinez-Vazquez, Rider, and Walker (1997) did not find any evidence that increased racial homogeneity would increase the number of school districts. Nor did racial heterogeneity appear to influence creation of special districts. Nelson (1990, p.452), in a study of change from 1950 through 1990, found that “greater racial homogeneity is associated with more units of government—a finding contrary to expectations.”

Other studies have considered the opposite, the impact of governmental structure or fragmentation on policy outcomes, finding that in some instances fragmentation matters and in others it may not. Aurand’s (2007, p. 393) study of metropolitan statistical areas (MSAs) nationally found that “greater fragmentation is associated with a greater relative supply of affordable housing for extremely low and very low income households, but does not affect its

distribution.” Bischoff (2008), applying Tiebout’s logic to school districts and segregation, found that fragmentation was related to racial segregation across regional school districts. On the other hand, Post and Stein (2000) found no relationship between structure of metropolitan area government and regional economic growth, nor a relationship between measures of fragmentation and change in suburban per capita income. While the analytical question was somewhat different, Meier, Polinard, and Wrinkle (2000) found that school district size was positively related to Latino representation, in this instance a form of equity, in Texas school districts. This was in contrast to earlier work by Ostrom (1983) and others suggesting that minority representation would be enhanced by smaller jurisdictional size.

However, it is also possible that historical or cultural factors affect levels of racial segregation and disparity across regions. The efforts at regional governmental consolidation notwithstanding, for the most part governmental structures are inherited by present-day policy makers, and the age of the central city and region to a large degree has predefined much of housing patterns. Thus, while they may create an environment conducive to integration or segregation and equality or disparity, the intentions of current political actors would seem to be of importance as well. While at the local level we know of no way to empirically measure this, we can consider the growing literature on latent political culture to at least infer the policy environment of states within which regions lie (Elazar 1972; Erikson, Wright, and McIver 1993; Gray, Lowery, Fellowes and McAtee 2004). We know of no literature that has yet examined the role of latent political culture in urban regional racial disparities and segregation.

In summary, an extensive literature documents racial disparity in cities and regions and points toward viewing regions as single social systems. While sprawl, as measured in terms of population, may not contribute to racial segregation, it is less clear whether the administrative components of sprawl, that is, proliferating local governments, contribute to or dissipate racial segregation and disparity in income or housing quality. Little or no work has considered whether the political culture of states has any impact on racial segregation and disparity in urban regions located within them.

## **Method**

To evaluate how various factors affect the distribution of opportunity in urban regions of the United States between racial groups, we created a model treating various measures of distribution as dependent variables and other measures describing the characteristics of regions as independent variables. An ordinary least squares (OLS) regression can be utilized to describe

the explanatory value of the array of independent variables and the relative contributions of each particular characteristic to overall variance in the dependent indicators.

We applied a cross-sectional approach to data analysis, comparing regional characteristics at the time of the 2000 census. We utilized primary metropolitan statistical areas (PMSAs) as defined by the Bureau of the Census in 2000. PMSAs are the best accessible and uniformly documented unit of analysis to document regional social and economic diversity among a plethora of local governments. The PMSA is an acceptable unit of analysis because it is large enough that location of residence in different portions of the region can exert meaningful influence on job choices or opportunities and also be large enough to be able to test the proposition that the number of local governments has an effect on allocation of opportunity.

Deciding which local governments to use in an analysis requires determining which local governments affect social policy regarding housing and economic opportunity. Moreover, the authority of local governments varies in different regions of the country. For instance, all regions have some form of county government, yet they vary widely in the extent to which the county is the functional entity for various domains of policy making. In the Southeast, for instance, they are very strong. In the Midwest, in urban areas, their functions tend to be much more narrowly circumscribed and have little to do with allocation of housing, economic development, or civil rights enforcement (Miller 2002). In some places, special districts have a great deal of power to conduct regional planning in important spheres, such as transportation or environmental protection, while in other places they do not (Zimmerman 1995).

We included municipalities, townships, and school districts in our initial database. In urban areas, housing quality, quantity, and accessibility are largely determined by decisions around zoning, recruitment of developers and approval of their developments, quality of streets and city services, and other elements primarily determined by municipalities. Most economic development is also a local purview as individual municipalities generally either compete for location of businesses or effectively exercise veto power over the location of businesses considered undesirable. School districts were included because they exert enormous power over the quality of facilities, curricula and teachers, and desegregation strategies. Although their ability to affect social opportunity and economic development outside New England and the middle-Atlantic states is questionable, townships were included because in these areas they operate alongside municipalities and are equally important in determining any number of local policies.

Counties and other special districts were not included because there is little variation in the number of counties composing regions and in most cases

they do not independently determine the shape of economic development, housing, or education, and at this point there is no valid means for measuring the authority of special districts in economic or social policy.

## Definition of Variables

### *Dependent Variables*

To operationalize the allocation of opportunity across regions, a set of variables is created that measure racial segregation and ratios of White to racial minority conditions. Variables cover the domains of residential segregation, income, and housing quality.

*Segregation.* The index of dissimilarity, probably the most commonly utilized and most reliable measure of separation versus integration of two groups, is used (Massey and Denton 1987). The index ranges from a high of 100, indicating that all of the members of one group would need to move to achieve perfectly even distribution of population of two groups across a geographic area, to a low of 0, which indicates that the two groups are already evenly distributed. The analysis utilizes measures computed for PMSAs from 2000 census data for poor, middle-income, and affluent individuals at the Mumford Center (n.d.) at the State University at Albany.

*Income.* Income is considered as a ratio of Black, Hispanic and Asian to White median income, respectively, across cities and suburbs, calculated from 2000 census data. A high score indicates equality between Whites and the minority group.

*Housing.* Two measures of housing quality are computed. For each region, the average amount of rents paid per racial group is computed, and minority to White ratios are computed. A high score indicates greater equality in housing across the region. Following Kahn (2001), to consider possible rent premiums paid by minorities, a measure is computed comparing the number of rooms in a residence per capita for each racial group. The final measure is the minority to White ratio for each minority group. Unlike the other measures, the sign is reversed as the measure is actually reported as persons per room such that a lower score indicates greater equality.

### *Independent Variables*

The independent variables are categorized into a set of target variables aimed at measuring different political characteristics of regions and controlling variables. Government fragmentation was measured in three ways: the number

of governments, state versus local regulatory power, and the fragmentation of their fiscal power.

The 2002 Census of Governments was utilized to calculate the number of municipalities, townships, and school districts in each PMSA. In instances where the census lists no school district, a single district was counted. Numbers of units of local government are reported in the census by county. In most places, PMSA definitions align with entire counties. In some instances, particularly in New England, where they do not, estimates of the number of municipalities or townships falling within the PMSA were made.

As per the discussion above, we controlled for the relative power of townships in different parts of the country by using a dummy variable called *overlap* in PMSAs located in states where townships exist but the land-use functions are far more the purview of municipalities. The variable's coefficient was significant when included in some regression equations, but it added little to the overall *R*-squared and was collinear with the regional code for Midwest, and so it was not included in the final analysis.

The number of local governments was then operationalized in the equations by combining school districts, municipalities, and townships. A measure of the percentage of a PMSA that was central city was computed by calculating the percentage of each PMSA's population living in the largest city within the PMSA. The number of local governments per size of geographical area was normalized into the variable labeled *town density*. A number of forms of this variable were tested prior to the final analysis presented, including ratios of municipalities to land area and to population and ratios of all three types of governmental units combined to land area and to population. A non-normalized measure, total local governments, was also tested. Which of these measures was used had a trivial effect on findings, and so town density, the ratio of regional square miles to the number of municipalities, was utilized in the results presented, so a high value indicates fewer towns.

Miller's (2002) Metropolitan Power Diffusion Index (MPDI) was utilized as an indicator of the impact of fragmented local government on governmental decision making. The index measures the diffusion of fiscal power by the amount of concentration of an MSA's aggregated governmental expenditures with higher figures indicating greater diffusion.

Some states exercise more control over local governments than do others, which can affect the ability of local governments to enact economic or social policy. To account for possible effects of state control of local decision making, we applied Zimmerman's calculation of the functional authority of cities (labeled *state regulation*). Zimmerman's calculation provided a single

parameter for each state, which this study then applied to each PMSA within the state. The variable ranged from a score of 5, indicating high state regulation of the local government's functions, to 1, indicating strong local autonomy.

Political culture could have a strong effect on the amount of segregation and/or racial equity found in an urban region. To control for this possibility, we used two measures of state political culture. Elazar (1972) and Sharkansky (1969) pioneered this work, first subjectively and then quantitatively, categorizing political culture at the state level. An extensive literature followed, attempting to categorize and validate state and local political cultures. We elected to utilize indices developed by Erikson, Wright, and McIver (1993) and Gray, Lowery, Fellowes and McAtee (2004), which utilized a combination of state-level survey data and analysis of the liberalism of state policies. Both indices were utilized in the formal analysis as they had only a modest correlation, utilized different measurement techniques, and covered different time periods. Higher scores on the *statehouse democracy* index (Erikson, Wright, and McIver 1993) indicated greater liberalism. Lower scores on Gray and Lowery indicated liberalism.

### *Control Variables*

The analysis controls for other regional characteristics that one might expect to affect residential and economic patterns: a region's location in the United States, age and land size of each PMSA, population size, racial composition, and overall prosperity. In the analysis, only the 311 PMSAs with populations over 100,000 were used as it is questionable whether a PMSA any smaller than that constitutes what we are considering when we discuss an urban or metropolitan region. Each PMSA was assigned to one of five regions. These were West Coast, Mountain or Great Plains, Midwest, South, and Northeast. National region correlates to varying degrees with patterns of land use, period of settlement, and political culture, however not so much as to create collinearity, and so they were included in the formal analysis. To control more carefully for the possibility that racial patterns are in part determined by age of housing stock and resultant enduring settlement patterns, the percentage of a region's housing units constructed before 1939 was used.

The effect of the size of a PMSA is represented by two measures, the total square miles within the PMSA and the population density, disaggregated by central city and suburbs. Total square miles rather than landed square miles was selected because the total area is relevant to whether measures such as racial segregation are influenced by actual amounts of physical separation. The regression equations utilize two dummy variables representing midsized

PMSAs (500,000 to 1.5 million) and metropolitan areas (over 1.5 million). The alternative would have been to use the log-transformed population total. Which alternative is used has little impact on the overall regression equation, but using the dummy allows for more detailed inspection of the impact of different sized places. The proportion of a geographical place occupied by a member of a racial group can exert a significant impact on dissimilarity indices, and so the percentage of the target minority group of each regression equation is included as a control.

Finally, the education and income of a region's residents might be expected to play a role in its inclination to work for, or achieve, racial equity in various domains. The analysis includes central city and suburban percentages of residents with a college degree and the median income for each.

## Findings

We begin by reviewing means and dispersion of data. As shown in Table 1, we find wide variation in the breadth of local governance. The mean number of school districts per region across the nation was about 19. However, analysis by percentile indicates skewness created by relatively few regions that have extremely high numbers of school districts—75% have 21 or fewer. As we would expect, districts vary greatly in their population and geographic size, with mean averages influenced by the largest of them. Municipalities and townships (towns) follow a similar pattern. Regions average around 40 towns across the nation, but 75% have fewer than 46. Towns average 195 square miles and 35,000 residents, but the majority are smaller than these means, with 50% with fewer than 21 towns and fewer than 19,000 residents.

Most regions in the United States have high levels of racial segregation between Blacks and Whites. As shown in Table 2, whether discussing poor, middle-class, or affluent persons, over half of the regions have dissimilarity scores exceeding 60, a high level of separation. About 20% of regions might be termed “hyper-segregated,” with scores exceeding 70. Only about 5% of the regions have dissimilarity scores below 40, indicating a high level of segregation for the vast majority of metropolitan areas.

Regions do a much better job integrating Whites with Hispanics and Asians. The highest scores for these two groups tend to be around 60 with averages in the 40s compared to a dissimilarity index over 20 points higher for Blacks. Hispanics are the most integrated out of the three with an average dissimilarity index of 37.0, well below that for Blacks at 60.4. While few

**Table 1.** Distribution of Urban Regions by Measures of Governance, U.S. Primary Metropolitan Statistical Areas over 100,000 Population, 2000 Census

	<i>M</i>	5th percentile	25th percentile	50th percentile	75th percentile	95th percentile
Number of school districts	19.4	1.0	5.0	10.0	21.0	70.0
Square miles per district	332.9	29.0	71.8	131.4	357.6	1,261.5
Population per district	77,850	8,975	17,025	30,804	83,263	281,953
Total municipalities and townships (towns)	40.3	3.0	9.0	21.0	46.0	133
Square miles per town	194.8	14.7	26.5	66.6	166.9	868.7
Population per town	34,572	3,207	7,945	18,527	36,812	105,675

regions boast complete integration, many integrate Hispanics and Asians with Whites fairly well.

The tables also illustrate the prevalence of White population when regions rather than central cities are considered. The mean composition of the regions studied is three-fourths White. Although many central cities have large Black and Hispanic populations, in some cases relegating the White population to minority status, the suburban population is overwhelmingly White. Only 5% of the metropolitan areas have a White population of less than 41% of the total population. Blacks are the next largest segment of the population, with an average of little more than 10%, but are followed closely by a fast-growing Hispanic population that averages a little less than 10%. In around 10% of the regions, Hispanics outnumber Blacks.

Analysis of economic and housing variables, as shown in Tables 2 and 3, reveals tremendous disparity across the country in income and housing characteristics of the four groups, both between regions and between racial/ethnic groups. In most regions Whites have higher incomes, occupy more expensive housing, and have fewer persons per room. Blacks and Hispanics consistently are from 15% to 20% lower on these measures than Whites. Asian populations in some regions are better positioned than Whites but are worse off in other places. At the 5th and 25th percentiles, they have lower median incomes

**Table 2.** Distribution of Urban Regions by Measures of Segregation, U.S. Primary Metropolitan Statistical Areas over 100,000 Population, 2000 Census

Index of dissimilarity	M	5th percentile	25th percentile	50th percentile	75th percentile	95th percentile
White/Black	60.4	40	51	60	69	82
White/Hispanic	37.0	21	28	36	44	59
White/Asian	40.0	28	35	40	46	53
White/Black poor	62.8	40	54	64	71	84
White/Hispanic poor	43.3	29	36	42	49	62
White/Asian poor	51.9	38	46	53	57	64
White/Black middle income	64.1	40	56	64	73	87
White/Hispanic middle income	44.1	29	39	44	49	60
White/Asian middle income	51.0	39	46	51	56	62
White/Black affluent	65.5	42	56	65	74	91
White/Hispanic affluent	44.4	29	39	45	50	59
White/Asian affluent	47.9	36	42	48	53	61
Racial composition						
Percentage White	74.1	41.2	64.2	78.3	86.6	94.2
Percentage Black	10.7	0.6	2.5	7.4	15.4	33.6
Percentage Asian	2.5	0.4	0.8	1.4	2.6	8.7
Percentage Hispanic	10.2	0.8	1.9	4.7	10.9	42.6

than Whites, but at the 95th percentile they have greater incomes. Both Blacks and Hispanics exhibit a wider range of regional disparity than do Whites. Their 5th to 95th ratio exceeds 2:1 on median income compared to a White 5th to 95th ratio well under 2:1. Although the ratios are different, the same pattern obtains for persons per room. The lone exception to the pattern is Hispanic

**Table 3.** Distribution of Urban Regions by Income and Housing, U.S. Primary Metropolitan Statistical Areas over 100,000 Population, 2000 Census

	<i>M</i>	5th percentile	25th percentile	50th percentile	75th percentile	95th percentile
Median income						
White (\$)	45,039	34,242	39,025	44,120	48,946	60,230
Black (\$)	29,169	19,187	23,725	27,352	33,111	44,667
Hispanic (\$)	33,114	22,357	28,424	32,762	36,890	45,360
Asian (\$)	46,038	24,506	37,488	45,987	52,719	70,877
Per capita housing cost						
White (\$)	288	174	225	269	328	471
Black (\$)	212	124	170	201	246	337
Hispanic (\$)	162	103	135	158	187	234
Asian (\$)	253	145	201	249	295	382
Persons per room						
White	0.43	0.40	0.41	0.43	0.44	0.47
Black	0.61	0.48	0.53	0.58	0.64	0.83
Hispanic	0.82	0.63	0.73	0.80	0.91	1.054
Asian	0.72	0.56	0.64	0.70	0.77	0.94

housing costs, which tend to be much more similar per region than those of other groups, ranging from only \$135 per person at the 25th percentile to \$187 per person at the 75th. This could be a result of the disproportionate number of Hispanics found in lower-cost southeastern and southwestern housing markets.

How equitably opportunity is distributed across regions between racial groups is indicated by the White to minority group ratio on a measure within a region as indicated in Table 4. On each of the three measures, regions vary widely in their White to minority ratios. In the most equitable 5% of regions, White and minority characteristics tend to be similar. Blacks and Hispanics have lower median incomes than Whites virtually everywhere, in a few places on housing costs, and in a few places on numbers of persons per room. However, beyond the 10 to 15 regions with equitable distributions, Blacks and Hispanics fare much less well than do Whites. At the 75th percentile Blacks earn on average only 70% as much as Whites and Hispanics 81% as much. The means across all regions are only 50% and 58%, respectively. Hispanics in particular have far lower per capita housing costs than do Whites. All three racial/ethnic minorities consistently experience more residential density than do Whites and, in the regions with the least equity, as much as twice as much. The data show that Asians fare much better than the other

**Table 4.** Distribution of Urban Regions by Ratios of White to Other, U.S. Primary Metropolitan Statistical Areas over 100,000 Population, 2000 Census

	M <sup>a</sup>	5th percentile	25th percentile	50th percentile	75th percentile	95th percentile
<b>Median income</b>						
Black/White	0.65	0.49	0.57	0.63	0.70	0.86
Hispanic/White	0.74	0.53	0.68	0.75	0.81	0.89
Asian/White	1.03	0.61	0.87	0.99	1.16	1.52
<b>Per capita housing cost</b>						
Black/White	0.75	0.53	0.66	0.75	0.84	1.01
Hispanic/White	0.58	0.41	0.51	0.60	0.65	0.81
Asian/White	0.91	0.59	0.76	0.86	1.01	1.37
<b>Persons per room</b>						
Black/White	1.42	1.16	1.26	1.34	1.43	1.92
Hispanic/White	1.92	1.49	1.67	1.84	2.11	2.47
Asian/White	1.67	1.34	1.51	1.64	1.88	2.10

a. Unweighted metropolitan averages.

groups, even surpassing Whites in median income and housing costs at the 75th percentile.

### Multivariable Analysis

To what extent, then, does the nature of local governance or the characteristics of regions account for differences in levels of segregation, economic characteristics, and housing value among the nation’s urban regions? The following tables present the results of OLS regression equations used to account for variation in the dissimilarity scores and White to minority ratios on economic and housing indicators across urban regions. Standard measures for possible collinearity were calculated, and all variables used were within acceptable ranges. Because the history and sociology of each of the three major minority groups have been so different, we consider how each has fared at the regional level in turn.

## African-Americans

OLS regression analysis was conducted on the variables considered in the correlation analysis, and additional controlling variables were added for the proportion of the racial group in the region, age and income level of the region, political culture, and autonomy from state governance. Table 5 shows the results of the regression. As indicated by *R*-squareds ranging from .248 to .377 for the four equations predicting dissimilarity index scores, the combination of governance and control variables does an adequate job of explaining variation.

The MPDI had a modest effect on segregation, with higher resource diffusion associated with greater segregation in general and for the poor. A state's political liberalism, as constructed in statehouse democracy, was also associated with greater segregation. This result appears counterintuitive, but it is possible that liberal policies are in part produced by racial segregation if it leads to stronger interest group politics where voting blocks of minority legislators and other liberals and independents friendly to them drive politics to the left (Hero and Tolbert 1996). A related possible explanation is that Blacks simply moved from the South into northern cities whose built environment and racial culture leant themselves to Black-White segregation. To test this possibility, a separate regression modeling Black-White segregation, including only liberalism scores, fragmentation, the age of the place, and the percentage Black and excluding the southern states, was run. In that analysis, only liberalism scores were a significant predictor of segregation, suggesting that cities with segregated housing in fact are located in more liberal states but that the number of Blacks living there has little to do with the state's overall political culture. Clarifying the causal direction of this relationship is beyond the scope of this analysis, but it would seem to merit further investigation.

Although the number of towns appears significant in partial correlations not reproduced here, the overall effect of adding the control variables to the regression equation is to suppress the independent effect of the number of local governments, which becomes statistically insignificant, although the sign remained in the direction of greater numbers of towns being associated with greater segregation.

The regression compared each national region. The West Coast and the Mountain or Prairie areas were distinctive for their high association with Black-White segregation and the Northeast with low.

Higher median income in the central city had strong and consistent effects on segregation, associated with less of it. The percentage Black in a region also depressed segregation scores as more Black persons tended to re-segregate in some suburbs but also moved into previously White ones.

**Table 5.** White-black dissimilarity index regressed on political and controlling variables PMSAs over 100,000 persons

	Total dissimilarity score	Dissimilarity score, affluent	Dissimilarity score, middle income	Dissimilarity score, poor
(Constant)	58.911***	66.973*	65.042***	62.472***
MPDI	.519*	.447*	.477*	.628**
State regulation	.614	.172***	.291	.184
Town Density	-.002	.002	-.001	-.003
Statehouse Democracy	3.873***	2.185	2.729**	3.524**
GrayLowery	.142*	.135	.104	.157*
Median income central	-4.502***	-3.278	-3.144*	-3.023***
Median income suburbs	2.136*	1.074	1.352	1.632
Education central	-.014	-.044	-.139	-.072
Education suburbs	-.107	-.064	.023	-.150
Over 1.5 million	5.093*	5.013*	3.752	5.422**
500,000 to 1.5 million	3.895**	2.612	3.472**	3.183*
West Coast	5.739*	10.606***	7.019**	8.655***
Mountain	10.985***	12.602***	11.102***	11.791***
South	.957	.969	1.180	1.617
Northeast	-6.706***	-5.635**	-5.755**	-2.017
Region square miles	-.00008733	.0001	.00005	.000048
Housing before 1939	.123	.217*	.179	.014
Central population density	.001	.0001	.0001	.0001
Suburb population density	.001	.001	.001	.001
Percent black	-18.326**	-48.723***	-46.485***	-38.018***
Adjusted R Squared	.248	.377	.368	.326

\*p < .10. \*\*p < .05. \*\*\*p < .01.

For the most part, the impact of the tested variables on White–Black segregation was not affected by the income level of different segments of the Black population. State liberalism as defined in statehouse democracy, the region's percentage Black, or the income level of a region's central city affected residential patterns of the affluent, middle class, and poor equally.

As indicated in Table 6, regression equations were far less predictive of economic and housing characteristics of regions than they were of patterns of segregation, generating lower *R*-squareds. For each of the measures, the percentage Black in the region was a significant predictor of equity. On income and housing costs, the greater the proportion of the population was Black, the less racial equity was obtained in the region. The opposite was true of crowding. Political liberalism was associated with less equity on two of the measures. Regions on the West Coast and in Mountain and Northeast states had less disparity in income. The South was strongly associated with more disparity within regions in housing cost and rooms per person. Places with more older housing were also associated with less equity on the housing cost and crowding measures.

### *Hispanics*

Table 7 indicates the dissimilarity results from the regression for Hispanics with Whites. Regression equations were effective in predicting levels of Hispanic segregation across regions for all economic levels aggregated, for middle incomes, and for the poor but less so for the affluent. For the poor and for Hispanics aggregated, the greater the percentage of regional population that was Hispanic, the greater the segregation, reversing the Black pattern. However, the opposite was true for affluent Hispanics, where greater Hispanic presence meant less separation.

Power diffusion raised segregation of the poor in particular, as it did for Blacks. Unlike for Blacks, for whom there was no effect, greater numbers of local units of government was associated with more affluent segregation. Unlike for Blacks, regions in states with greater political liberalism experienced reduced segregation of affluent and middle-income Hispanics, suggesting that Hispanic and Black political cultures likely operate differently.

Higher suburban median income was also associated with greater segregation, with the exception of affluent Hispanics. Hispanic segregation was lower on the West Coast and in the Mountain states and higher in the Northeast. Central city population density was associated with greater segregation of all Hispanic income groups, but in the suburbs density had no effect.

**Table 6.** White-black economic and housing disparity measures regressed on political and controlling variables, PMSAs over 100,000 population

	Median income	Housing cost	Rooms/ Person
(Constant)	.745***	1.069***	1.056***
MPDI	-.004	.0001	-.012
State regulation	.002	.009	.009
Town Density	-.000032	.0000006	.000
Statehouse Democracy	-.017	-.047***	.159***
GrayLowery	.0001	-.002*	.003
Median income central	.024***	-.023*	.072**
Median income suburbs	-.008	-.001	-.018
Education central	-.002***	.0001	.002
Education suburbs	.0001	-.004**	-.002
Over 1.5 million	.012	-.014	-.064
500,000 to 1.5 million	-.011	-.019	-.078
West Coast	.078***	.021	-.034
Mountain	.097***	.032	.112
South	-.003	-.069**	.242***
Northeast	.096***	.049*	-.033
Region square miles	-.000001	-.0000005	.00001
Housing before 1939	-.003***	-.003**	.008**
Central population density	-.000001	-.000004	.00005
Suburb population density	.000006	-.000006	-.00004
Percent black	-.405***	-.397***	-.493*
Adjusted R Squared	.277	.223	.123

\* $p < .10$ . \*\* $p < .05$ . \*\*\* $p < .01$ .

As shown in Table 8, with the exception of the ratio for the number of persons per room, the equations were reasonably effective predictors of disparity between Hispanics and Whites in the economic and housing characteristics. The percentage Hispanic, the national region, and the median income of the region were the most consistent predictors of disparity. For median income, housing cost, and persons per room, the greater the Hispanic representation within a region, the more Hispanic-White disparity on the measure. The median income measure produced statistically significant, but smaller, effects on the housing measures. Higher regional median income was associated with more disparity in housing costs between Whites and

**Table 7.** White-Hispanic dissimilarity index regressed on political and controlling variables PMSAs over 100,000 population

	Total dissimilarity score	Dissimilarity score, affluent	Dissimilarity score, middle income	Dissimilarity score, poor
(Constant)	11.025**	42.882***	35.005***	28.472***
MPDI	.165	-.059	.204	.349*
State regulation	-.259	1.044	.824	.325
Town Density	-.003	-.003*	-.002	-.003
Statehouse Democracy	.022	-1.598**	-1.798***	-.626
GrayLowery	.127**	.007	.022	.011
Median income central	-.024	-.664	-1.912***	.405
Median income suburbs	3.846***	.626	2.659***	2.545***
Education central	-.101*	-.042	.044	-.113**
Education suburbs	-.011	-.112	-.134*	-.088
Over 1.5 million	2.181	-1.98	1.070	3.370*
500,000 to 1.5 million	4.091***	-1.526	.514	3.992***
West Coast	-2.516	-3.585	-4.299**	-6.24***
Mountain	-1.025	-4.263*	-8.023***	-5.729***
South	-.928	-.699	-1.73	-.818
Northeast	8.468***	-1.173	5.925***	7.273***
Region square miles	.000	.0001	.0001	.0001*
Housing before 1939	.031	.202**	.074	-.010
Central population density	.001***	.001***	.001**	.001***
Suburb population density	-.001	-.00003	.0001	.0001
Percent Hispanic	32.387***	-6.183	5.848*	10.464***
Adjusted R Squared	.463	.205	.377	.489

\* $p < .10$ . \*\* $p < .05$ . \*\*\* $p < .01$ .

Hispanics and less disparity in rooms per person. Location of a region in the Northeast increased income inequity relative to the Midwest. Location on the West Coast or in the South increased housing disparities. Older housing was associated and more disparity in rooms per person. The political and governmental measures were of little to no importance.

**Table 8.** White-Hispanic economic and housing disparity measures regressed on political and controlling variables PMSAs over 100,000 population

	Median income	Housing cost	Rooms/ Person
(Constant)	.847***	.821***	1.351***
MPDI	-.001	-.002	.001
State regulation	-.004	.010	.008
Town Density	.000009	.00002	.0001*
Statehouse Democracy	-.001	.006	.023
GrayLowery	-.00004	.001*	.0001
Median income central	.014	-.009	.053*
Median income suburbs	-.004	-.036***	.056*
Education central	.0001	.0001	.003*
Education suburbs	-.002	.0001	-.004
Over 1.5 million	.003	.014	-.066
500,000 to 1.5 million	-.035**	-.011	-.049
West Coast	.006	-.046 *	.300***
Mountain	-.021	-.036	.026
South	-.006	-.033	.148**
Northeast	-.122***	-.002	.028
Region square miles	.000001	.0000027	.000015**
Housing before 1939	.0001	.0001	.001
Central population density	-.000005*	-.0000009	.0000001
Suburb population density	.00002**	-.000002	-.000015
Percent Hispanic	-.279***	-.317***	.162
Adjusted R Squared	.323	.295	.134

\*  $p < .10$ . \*\*  $p < .05$ . \*\*\*  $p < .01$ .

### Asian-Americans

Table 9 depicts the results of the regression with the Asian-American population. The White-Asian equations generated sufficient *R*-squareds to have explanatory power over regional differences in segregation. The impact of density of local governments was strongest for Asian populations. For all of the segregation measures, more local governments meant more segregation. For the aggregated segregation of Asians, higher state regulation and less local autonomy were associated with greater residential segregation. Higher median income in the central city and suburbs drove down segregation. Urban regions located on the West Coast and in Mountain or Prairie and Northeast areas had more Asian integration relative to regions located in the

**Table 9.** White–Asian dissimilarity index regressed on political and controlling variables PMSAs over 100,000 population

	Total dissimilarity score	Dissimilarity score, affluent	Dissimilarity score, middle income	Dissimilarity score, poor
(Constant)	44.938***	55.676***	57.765***	54.531***
MPDI	.209	-.087	.209	.287*
State regulation	1.56***	.788	.842	.941
Town Density	-.005	-.002*	-.004***	-.004***
Statehouse Democracy	-.933	-.305	-1.394**	-1.26*
GrayLowery	-.031	.021	-.024	-.077
Median income central	-1.837***	-.350	-1.271**	-.680
Median income suburbs	-.529	-1.628**	-.324	.469
Education central	.150***	.049	.085**	.014
Education suburbs	-.166**	-.178**	-.163**	-.070
Over 1.5 million	.635	-1.099	-1.463	1.463
500,000 to 1.5 million	2.55**	-.758	.939	3.476***
West Coast	-7.926***	-5.570***	-6.806***	-10.713***
Mountain	-8.883***	-3.823**	-6.075***	-8.542***
South	-1.745	.594	-1.765	-1.202
Northeast	-3.873***	-4.481***	-1.077	-.892
Region square miles	.0001***	.0001	.0001	.0001***
Housing before 1939	.175***	.336***	.112*	-.025
Central population density	-.00006	.0001	.0001	.0001
Suburb population density	.0001	.0001	.0001	.0001
Percent Asian	55.633***	15.741	5.964	-4.555
Adjusted R Squared	.329	.348	.289	.306

\* $p < .10$ . \*\* $p < .05$ . \*\*\* $p < .01$ .

Midwest. Places with older urban cores tended to segregate Asians more heavily. Places with larger Asian populations were more likely to be segregated, although the effect was present only in the aggregate.

As Table 10 indicates, liberalism was associated with more disparity in rooms per person, but none of the other political variables had a strong impact on economic and housing disparities between Asians and Whites. Higher education of the general public in both the city and suburbs was associated with more disparity between Asians and Whites in income. Places with older housing and the South were associated with more equity in income.

## Discussion

Analysis of data for metropolitan regions across the United States reveals substantial differences in the racial makeup of those places. Because regions function as social and economic communities, one measure of a region's quality may be how well resources are distributed to all of its residents and how little disparity exists between racial/ethnic groups. As can be observed in the various measures of racial segregation and in the disparity in distribution of income and housing between Whites and minority groups, regions across the nation vary widely in how equally resources are distributed across racial groups.

People from different social groups may or may not ultimately decide to live together, but the nation's history as well as the sociological evidence suggest that sorting people along ethnic, religious, or racial lines contributes to social and economic disparities. As Douglas Massey, Nancy Denton, William Julius Wilson, and many others have attested, the segregation of the minority poor can be especially toxic. For this reason, it is important to consider what contributes to racial/ethnic disparity in residence, income, and housing cost and quality. Different bodies of research have begun to evaluate the power of governmental structure such as placement of political boundaries, regulation, and fiscal power. Other research has focused on how latent political culture affects policy. The organization of the built environment, growth patterns, and local and historical traditions can also affect how different racial/ethnic groups regard one another.

Much research has attempted to identify the influence of governmental structures on sorting. Indeed, our analysis of the correlates of racial disparities indicated that a zero-order correlation exists between the number of local governments in an urban region and the degree of racial disparity in measures of allocation of opportunity. The size of the region accounted for about half

**Table 10.** White-Asian economic and housing disparity measures regressed on political and controlling variables PMSAs over 100,000 population

	Median income	Housing cost	Rooms/ Person
(Constant)	.976***	1.333***	1.493***
MPDI	.0001	-.006	.006
State regulation	.017	.023	.028
Town Density	-.000006	-.000015	-.000048
Statehouse Democracy	.029	-.033	.066***
GrayLowery	.0001	-.002	.002
Median income central	.066**	-.025	.030
Median income suburbs	.008	-.030	-.019
Education central	-.005***	.0001	.002
Education suburbs	-.009***	-.004	-.002
Over 1.5 million	.066	.085	-.176***
500,000 to 1.5 million	-.002	.0001	-.100***
West Coast	-.096	-.159**	0.089
Mountain	.038	-.147**	.015
South	.128**	-.046	.077
Northeast	.010	-.014	-.103*
Region square miles	-.0000003	-.0000035	.000009
Housing before 1939	.007**	.003	.001
Central population density	-.000008	-.000004	-.0000004
Suburb population density	.000016	-.000026	.0000024
Percent Asian	-.330	-.393	1.001*
Adjusted R Squared	.146	.145	.036

\* $p < .10$ . \*\* $p < .05$ . \*\*\* $p < .01$ .

of the variation. And so we considered three ways of considering governmental fragmentation: (1) Miller's measure of fiscal fragmentation of regions, (2) Zimmerman's measure of state versus local regulatory authority, and (3) the concentration of the number of local governments in a region. When these three measures, as well as other influences, were considered (the region's age, wealth, location, and other elements of political culture), the number of units of local government had fewer effects. Only in the instances of segregation of some Whites and Hispanics and White-Asian residential segregation did the concentration of governments have any effect. In these instances, more governments did appear to lead to more segregation. So while fragmentation of governmental units probably has some impact on social disparities, the analysis suggests that other factors are equally or even more important.

Miller's power diffusion index was a significant predictor of disparity. Power diffusion predicted some Black–White residential disparity. It was also associated with low-income White–Hispanic residential separation. The greater diffusion of government financial power could serve as an enabling tool for communities that choose exclusionary practices if it were to relieve them from having to conform to a larger regional standard of diffuse affordable housing or a regional school desegregation program, for instance. So we conclude that the fiscal structure and authority of local governance does have a measurable impact on various types of regional racial disparity. However, the degree of state versus local regulation had little statistical impact on segregation or disparity.

Turning to the possible impact of a state's political orientation, measured here as liberal or conservative, we observed the counterintuitive correspondence of liberal state politics with high levels of residential segregation among Blacks and Whites. In this instance, the cause and effect of the model specification may be reversed. While one would expect that more liberal states would adopt policies that tend to promote desegregation, it may be that the more powerful effect is that the large, segregated regions within states tend to produce strong racial/ethnic caucuses in their state legislatures that drive politics to the left (Preuhs 2006). The dominant legal paradigm of legislative redistricting established by the U.S. Supreme Court, which seeks legislative districts populated by at least 65% minority persons, certainly suggests as much. Thus the segregation may lead to liberal policy rather than liberal policy leading to segregation. In fact, residential segregation has been a more enduring social construct than has any particular set of public policies. On the other hand, it is also possible, as additional analysis suggested above, that the finding is an artifact created by the movement of Blacks into built environments that leant themselves to segregation, particularly in the north-east, that have long had more liberal political tendencies.

For affluent and middle-income Hispanics and middle- and lower-income Asians, the opposite was the case: More liberal state political environments were associated with less segregation. Historically, Hispanics and Asians have been less consistently liberal in their politics than Blacks, have been more willing to be represented by Whites than have Blacks, and have tended to be less segregated in most places. As a result, state legislators elected from districts with the greatest concentrations of Hispanics or Asians may tend to be somewhat less liberal than their Black counterparts, who are more likely to be elected from districts that are almost entirely Black.

The analysis shows that in most metropolitan regions across the country, Whites and Blacks remain substantially separated. Whites on average make

more money and live in superior housing. And these patterns tend to be stronger where there are more Blacks present: The more Blacks living in a region, the more disparity in incomes and rents paid. In other words, fewer Blacks are easier, or more likely, to separate. However, the size of the region in either population or spatially had almost no effect on levels of separation, suggesting that latent preferences, resources, and culture are stronger tools of social organization than is the amount of space people have to work with to separate themselves. These findings are generally consistent with those of Huffman and Cohen (2004) and to some degree to those of Cassirer (1996) that indicated a correspondence of higher population percentage Black and greater segregation of Black workers, and Black men in particular, in jobs and greater disparity in income.

The findings suggest that in spite of the battles that have been fought in recent decades over school desegregation and affordable housing, the locations of those boundaries appear to be less important determinants of inequity and separation than are the cultures that may be operating within them. Southern cities were shown to be less segregated on average than northern ones, but this is more a result of their history than because they have fewer units of local government.

While Hispanics and Asians may experience discrimination in housing and employment, they do not bear the historical weight that African-Americans have. Hispanics are relative newcomers to most of the nation's regions, and while most live in definable Hispanic neighborhoods, their White dissimilarity scores are consistently lower than are Black scores. Hispanics have experienced more disparity and separation in older, larger American communities, in the South and Midwest, and in regions where they compose a greater share of the population (Logan, Alba, and Leung 1996). In these places, Hispanics have gathered in large and definable enclaves that have grown with immigration. This also occurs to a lesser degree with Asians, where Southeast Asian refugees and chain migration may increase segregation before the second step of migration to suburbs may occur. For both Blacks and Hispanics, municipal borders have constituted only temporary barriers to intraregional migration as municipalities adjacent to high concentrations of Blacks and Hispanics have often become substantially Black or Hispanic within one or two decades.

Asians constitute a third story because outside of Southern California they make up relatively small portions of regions, rarely reaching even 5% of the total population. While Asians suffered severe discrimination as recently as the Second World War, since then they have increasingly come to be viewed

as a “model minority.” Asians are far more likely than Blacks or Hispanics to reach, or exceed, parity with Whites on the various measures across regions (Park 2008; Thrupkaew 2002). Moreover, Asians have far fewer historic cultural barriers to overcome, and their higher average level of education makes much more of the labor and housing markets accessible to them, reducing income disparities and dissimilarity scores. As a result, fewer Asian enclaves have developed, and the proportion of a region that is Asian is less likely to determine its level of Asian–White separation.

Higher central city income tended to drive down Black–White and Asian–White segregation, while higher suburban income drove up Hispanic–White and Black–White segregation. This pattern would be consistent with the long-term separation of the White population based on its interest in or tolerance of racial diversity. While it would not be true of all suburbanites, some portion of them or of their parents were persons who had adequate resources to flee urban racial integration by moving to predominantly White suburbs. Many Whites who remained in urban neighborhoods or who have returned to them as through gentrification may have a higher tolerance for integrated neighborhoods. Hence higher income facilitates suburban separation but central city integration.

While there were a few exceptions, among Blacks and Hispanics we found no clear distinctions in the correlates of segregation based on the income level of the residents considered. Factors such as state political environment, governmental structure, and regional size, age, and demographic characteristics appeared to affect the poor and nonpoor similarly. The most important exception was higher-income Hispanics, whose segregation was less well defined by the regression equation than were those of other Hispanics, Blacks, and Asians. Asians were less likely to be segregated where suburban education levels were higher.

### *Income and Housing*

Economic or housing disparities for the three minority groups were generally not affected by the political culture or structure of government. However, political liberalism of a state did have a striking effect on White–Black housing disparities, with liberalism consistently correlated with more disparity. This is consistent with the finding of more Black-White segregation associated with liberalism. While reduction in disparity can be very slow to come, net of other factors, places with these pervasive problems appear more likely to have more liberal policies.

For both median income and housing costs, larger minority presence meant more disparity. Large, segregated Hispanic populations have been fueled by the huge immigration of low-skilled, low-income immigrants from Mexico and Central America. Most of the regions with large Black populations have had established Black communities dating back generations and within their communities, have significant concentrations of very low income Blacks. Thus white-minority differences would tend to increase with higher black and Hispanic populations.

The measures of fragmentation of local government had no impact on any of the income or housing measures for any of the three racial/ethnic groups. While fragmentation may have an impact on the ability of groups to segregate, this tendency need not translate into disparate income or housing quality outcomes. The number of suburban municipalities is a less significant factor than the sheer distance of jobs from where segregated people may be located. The number of municipalities evidently has little to do with how much Whites and minorities vary in their ability to find quality housing.

### *Conclusions and Policy Implications*

Most regional characteristics related to governance structure appear less important than other factors in creating or maintaining racial/ethnic segregation or disparities. Minorities suffering from disparity do not benefit from a more efficient or broadly based structure of government if the policies of the broad-based government are operating against them (Bollens 1997). For this reason some Blacks have begun to turn away from integrationist goals, arguing that their interests will be better served in Black communities that have more homogenous policy interests (Cashin 2001; Wiggins 2002; Boudreaux 1999). It remains unclear whether, in fact, residents of these enclaves are better off and whether it is beneficial, or even possible, to usefully distance themselves from the majority culture, although the analysis herein seems to suggest that segregated urban regions may actually have more liberal social policies. History shows that the large regional governments of the South could, during the civil rights period, be as tolerant of disparity and segregation as the smaller, fragmented towns surrounding Boston or Chicago.

As Parks and Oakerson (1989) argued, effort placed on reducing the number of governments in a metropolitan area as a way to reduce segregation of minorities and promote economic and housing equity would not solve the problem alone and would have little impact on the segregation of Blacks and Whites. Partial consolidations appear unlikely to promote much equity and opportunity, as the association of number of towns and segregation was

weak. Assuming it would be in the hands of leaders interested in promoting desegregated housing, the evidence here suggests that greater concentration of government spending power (as measured by the MPDI) could lead to policies and programs aimed more at decreasing residential segregation. However, the analysis did not suggest that changes in regional governmental structure were likely to have a significant impact on disparities in income or housing quality.

It has long been a staple of redistricting litigation that racially homogeneous, though not overly minority concentrated, districts are often needed to elect minority legislators, who will tend to be more attuned to the interests of their minority group than will Whites. This was suggested in this research, as evidenced by the association of liberal states with racially segregated regions. Local activists often argue the political costs of desegregating low-income African-American neighborhoods in particular, a key point of contention, for instance, in the redevelopment of public housing in Chicago, which had the effect of dispersing poor Blacks across more city and suburban neighborhoods. And this analysis is consistent in several ways with the idea that minority legislators, or legislators who must be accountable to minority groups, are probably helpful in developing policies that lead to less White–minority disparity. However, it was also true that outside the South, liberal states contained more segregated regions irrespective of the number of Blacks living in the region.

Much remains to be explained, but it appears that understanding the reasons for the patterns and persistence of racial segregation and inequality at the regional level requires the consideration of historical factors, state and local political orientation or culture, and the form and operation of governance structures.

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