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Poverty**

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THE GEOGRAPHY OF EXCLUSION: RACE, SEGREGATION, AND CONCENTRATED POVERTY

Abstract

The late 2000s Great Recession has refocused the nation's attention on poverty, racial and ethnic inequality, and spatial disparities in income. This paper uses newly-released *place* and *county* poverty estimates from the 2005-2009 *American Community Survey*, along with estimates from the 1990 and 2000 decennial census summary files, to provide post-2000 estimates of concentrated poverty in metro and nonmetro areas. We document a 25 percent increase in the number of poor places during the post-2000 period (and growing shares of poor people living in them) after deep and widespread declines in concentrated poverty during the economic boom of the 1990s. Not only are America's poor likely to be living in poor areas, but the post-2000 period ushered in a new pattern of spatial (and social) isolation of America's poor. Patterns of class and racial segregation were distinct but overlapping phenomena. Poor minorities—both in metro and nonmetro areas—are highly ghettoized spatially at the macro-scale level (across communities and counties). Rural blacks, in particular, are especially likely to be concentrated in poor places and counties. Previous studies of concentrated poverty, which have focused largely on inner-city neighborhoods, may be missing an important spatial dimension of growing poverty and racial inequality during the 2000s.

Introduction

The Great Recession has refocused the nation's attention on rising poverty, growing racial and ethnic inequality, and the spatial unevenness of economic dislocations (e.g., unemployment and housing foreclosures). In 2009, for example, 43.6 million people in the United States were poor, compared with roughly 32 million in 2000 (DeNavas-Walt et al. 2010). The poverty rate today is at its highest level (14.3 percent) since the mid-1990s. The majority of America's poor (25.9 million or 57.6 percent) are racial or ethnic minorities—people other than non-Hispanic white. Poverty rates among African Americans (25.8 percent) and Hispanics (25.3 percent) are nearly three times higher than the rate among non-Hispanic whites (9.4 percent). Not surprisingly, poverty rates are highest in regions (e.g., industrial Midwest), states (e.g., California, Florida, Michigan), and cities (e.g., Detroit, Las Vegas, Cleveland) that have been hit hardest by the economic recession, financial crisis, or housing bubble. The recent uptick in poverty and inequality has raised new questions about the reemergence of a racial and ethnic “underclass” living in areas of concentrated poverty (Wilson 2008-09).

Indeed, debates during the 1980s and early 1990s about poverty and racial inequality often centered on the growing “underclass”—the causes and consequences of concentrated inner-city poverty (Massey and Denton 1993; Wilson 1987). This was followed by an economic boom during the 1990s, which brought unexpectedly large reductions in poverty, including declines in geographically-concentrated urban (Jargowsky 2003) and rural poverty (Lichter and Johnson 2007; Lichter et al. 2008). Between 1990 and 2000, for example, the number of high-poverty neighborhoods (i.e., those with poverty rates exceeding 40 percent) in the largest U.S. metropolitan (metro) cities declined by 27 percent, and the number of poor people living in them

declined by 2.5 million or roughly one-quarter (Jargowsky 2003).¹ Lichter and Johnson (2007) similarly showed that the number of U.S. counties with poverty rates of more than 20 percent declined nationwide from 852 to 494 during the 1990s. Of those, 422 (or 85 percent) were nonmetro counties in 2000.

Under current economic conditions, it is likely that concentrated poverty is on the rise once again. This paper uses newly-released *place* and *county* poverty estimates from the 2005-2009 *American Community Survey*, along with estimates from the 1990 and 2000 decennial census summary files, to track emerging patterns of concentrated poverty in the United States. Specifically, we (1) provide new estimates of changing patterns of concentrated poverty and racial inequality over the 1990-to-2009 period; (2) show that poverty has become increasingly concentrated across both counties and places; and (3) fit various multivariate models of within-county concentrations of poverty. Our ecological models identify county-level factors associated with the segregation of poor and nonpoor people across metro and nonmetro places.

Concentrated Poverty Since 2000

The overwhelming share of studies on concentrated poverty have centered on big-city neighborhoods (Dwyer 2010; Massey and Denton 1993; Wilson 1987). Poor people living in poor inner-city neighborhoods are often viewed as being “doubly disadvantaged;” they are both poor and exposed disproportionately to declining employment opportunities, low-wage jobs, high violent crime rates, poor schools, and inadequate public services (including transportation). Wilson (2008-09) has lamented the continuing lack of policy discussion on inner-city poverty, a

¹ Urban and metro are used interchangeably throughout our discussion, as are rural and nonmetro. Technically, metro and nonmetro areas are defined by the U.S. Census Bureau at the county level and distinguished by population size, morphology, and density. Counties are political units used in most U.S. states and are larger in physical size and population than municipalities. Each county has a county seat—a municipality—that is the administrative home of political or governmental activities and the provider of county-wide services (e.g., transportation planning, water and sanitation, etc.).

circumstance reinforced by 1990s declines in concentrated urban poverty (Jargowsky 2003). Indeed, Kingsley and Pettit (2003) reported that the share of the poor living in high-poverty neighborhoods (poverty rates of 30 percent or more) declined from 31 to 26 percent between 1990 and 2000. Absolute numbers also declined. However, the 2000s brought Hurricane Katrina (which exposed inner-city poverty among New Orleans' black population), a significant downturn in the economy, rapidly declining housing values, and unprecedented foreclosure rates in many of the nation's cities (Wilson 2008-09). Clearly, issues of concentrated poverty are once again at the forefront of urban policy.

Outside big cities, the nation's rural populations have continued to face disproportionately high poverty rates (Cotter 2002; Jensen, Goetz, and Swaminathan 2006; Weber et al. 2005). The rural poor nevertheless often remain invisible, hidden away in economically depressed regions or small towns (e.g., Appalachia, Indian reservations, and the "Black Belt"). During the 1990s, the nonmetro poor population became less geographically concentrated (Lichter et al. 2008). Still, approximately 30 percent of nonmetro poor people lived in high-poverty counties in 2000 (i.e., with poverty rates exceeding 20 percent), compared with 13 percent in metro counties (Lichter and Johnson 2007). The late-2000s recession – job declines and high unemployment – has not bypassed rural areas. For example, the average nonmetro county poverty rate was 15.1 percent for the 2004-to-2008 period but grew to 16.6 percent in 2009, its highest rate since the early 1990s recession (Farrigan 2010). Rural America nevertheless has been largely ignored in most public policy debates about concentrated or chronic poverty.

Race and the Concentration of Poverty

Concentrated poverty and spatial inequality—in both metro and nonmetro areas—are inextricably linked to changing residential segregation patterns among America’s racial and ethnic populations. Most of America’s ethnoracial minority populations—including those with historically high poverty rates—reside in racially segregated inner-city neighborhoods (Logan, Stults, and Farley 2004; Timberlake and Iceland 2007). However, during the 1990s, the number and share of ethnic neighborhoods, especially in the suburbs, grew rapidly (Wen, Lauderdale, and Kandula 2009). The fact that U.S. minority populations are overrepresented among the poor has presumably given demographic impetus to a resurgence in spatially-concentrated poverty (Lichter, Qian, and Crowley 2005), especially during the current period of accelerated population growth of historically disadvantaged groups (Johnson and Lichter 2010).

Perhaps unsurprisingly, recent evidence from the 2005-2009 *American Community Survey* indicates clear stagnation in the pace of declines in neighborhood segregation. Logan and Stults (2010) recently reported that black-white neighborhood racial segregation changed very little between 2000 and 2005-2009. Black-white segregation, as measured with the index of dissimilarity (D), declined from 74 to 65 between 1980 and 2000 in the 50 metropolitan areas with the largest black populations, but only to 63 by the end of the 2000s. For Hispanics, the period since 1980 brought virtually no change in segregation ($D \approx 50$), while Asian-white segregation increased slightly over the past three decades, from 42 to 46. Logan and Stults (2010) suggest that progress is at a standstill with respect to white-minority segregation.

Albeit less widely acknowledged, rural communities are also highly segregated by race—often at levels similar to metro areas (Lichter et al. 2007b).² With the exception of Appalachia,

² Lichter et al. (2007b), for example, examined patterns of racial segregation in nonmetro small towns in metro and nonmetro areas. Using block data, they found that segregation of blacks and Hispanics from whites was remarkably

which is overwhelmingly white in racial composition (Pollard 2004), racial and ethnic minority populations are heavily concentrated in geographically isolated rural regions of the United States. African Americans in the Mississippi Delta and the southern “Black Belt” crescent experience exceptionally high rates of poverty (Lee and Singelmann 2006; Parisi et al. 2005), as do Mexican-origin Hispanics in the *colonias* of the lower Rio Grande Valley (Saenz 1997; Saenz and Thomas 1991) and Native American Indians on reservations in the Great Plains states. Nearly 20 percent of the nation’s nonmetro counties have poverty rates exceeding 20 percent (Beale 2004). A large percentage of these high-poverty counties—roughly three-fourths—are linked directly to the economic circumstances of racial and ethnic minorities. Specifically, 210 (47 percent) of these high-poverty counties are black, 74 (17 percent) are Hispanic, and 40 (9 percent) counties reflect the low incomes of Native Americans.³ Some of America’s most impoverished racial and ethnic minority populations live in geographically isolated rural areas. Lichter and Johnson (2007) recently reported that one-half of all rural blacks and 58.2 percent of poor rural blacks—mostly in the South—lived in high-poverty counties in 2000.

More recently, Hispanics have rapidly dispersed geographically into new rural destinations in the Midwest and South—often to work in meat-packing plants, agriculture, or construction (Kandel and Cromartie 2004; Lichter and Johnson 2006). The emergence of rural Hispanic “boom towns” reinforces the fact that informed discussions and analyses of poverty concentration in rural America cannot be separated from growing rural racial and ethnic diversity (Lichter et al. 2010; Park and Iceland 2011). The potential deleterious effects of minority

similar in metro and nonmetro places. This study, unlike the current study, did not examine the concentration or segregation of poor people, including poor minorities, within nonmetro or metro counties.

³ Minority-defined high-poverty areas are defined as such by Beale (2004) when more than half of the poor population is a racial minority or when high minority poverty pushes the county’s poverty rate more than 20 percent (i.e., the white population’s poverty rate is less than 20 percent).

poverty are compounded in rural high-poverty areas, which typically have fewer jobs that pay a family wage, limited educational opportunities (e.g., qualified teachers, advanced placement courses, or community colleges), and inadequate public health and social services (Brown and Swanson 2004).

Current Study

The recent emphasis on neighborhood poverty in metropolitan areas (Iceland 2009; Logan and Stults 2010) or on county (or regional) poverty in nonmetropolitan areas (Crandall and Weber 2004; Lichter and Johnson 2007; Lichter et al. 2008) has arguably deflected attention from theoretical perspectives that emphasize the “political economy of place” (Logan and Molotch 1990). Indeed, metro areas are comprised of many different (and often competing) political and governmental units (e.g., local governments, school districts, and planning districts). As such, they are not political actors in the same way as places, which represent administrative units that create both opportunities (e.g., development of mixed-income housing) and barriers (e.g., restrictive covenants) to racial integration (Lichter et al. 2007b; Logan and Molotch 1990). Communities—unlike most big-city neighborhoods or counties—are political actors that have effectively shaped patterns of concentrated poverty. Communities of all sizes have unique political and economic histories, different housing and economic development policies (e.g., exclusionary zoning), different levels of political receptivity to low-income or minority populations (e.g., mixed-income housing or density zoning), and different man-made or physical boundaries (e.g., lakes, highways, or other barriers) that have separated different populations spatially.

Legal boundaries between *places* are often the battleground where political or economic activities are fought and where different population groups—affluent or poor, white or minority,

or immigrant or native—are included or excluded from the community. Our theoretical and empirical approach thus emphasizes the changing concentration of poverty and racial segregation across U.S. cities, suburbs, and small towns while providing comparative analyses of poverty across the counties in which they are embedded. Our macro-spatial perspective (rather than neighborhood perspective) is consistent with recent studies that have emphasized growing racial and ethnic segregation at multiple levels of geography (Fischer et al. 2004; Parisi et al. 2011).

Our fundamental goal is to provide an up-to-date portrait of spatial inequality and concentrated poverty of America's poor people over the past decade. We use newly released county and place estimates of poverty for 2005-2009 from the *American Community Survey*. Unlike previous research (Beale and Gibbs 2006; Lichter and Johnson 2007), we emphasize spatial variation of poverty *within* rather than *between* counties. Our specific analysis addresses three questions.

First, have the poor become more (or less) spatially concentrated and segregated in places and counties over the 2000s? Are more people or poor people living in high-poverty places today than in the past? Living in poor rural areas is associated with employment dislocations, low education and earnings, and poorer health (Albrecht, Albrecht, and Murguia 2005). It therefore is important to evaluate whether a greater share of the U.S. population is actually exposed to the putative risks associated with living in poor communities.

Second, how have trends in concentrated rural poverty been shaped by the changing settlement patterns of minorities, especially African Americans and Hispanics? That is, have poor rural minorities become increasingly segregated, both from the nonpoor and whites? And how do these rural minority patterns compare with their counterparts in cities and suburban communities?

Third, how are counties and places with highly concentrated poverty populations *within* their boundaries distinguished from other areas in which the poor are less spatially segregated from the nonpoor population? Unlike most previous research (e.g., Beale 2004; Crandall and Weber 2004; Lichter and Johnson 2007), we link *county* social and economic characteristics (e.g., population growth, region, and metro-nonmetro location) to patterns of concentrated poverty in *places*.

DATA

Data and Unit of Measurement

Data for our analysis come from the 1990 and 2000 U.S. Census Summary Files and the 2005-2009 county and place estimates from the *American Community Survey*. We consider changing patterns of official poverty within and between all 3,141 counties in the United States for the period expanding from 1990 to 2009. Counties are classified as metro or nonmetro using the most current (2009) definitions, as defined by the U.S. Office of Management and Budget. Counties reclassified from nonmetro to metro on the basis of the new estimates are treated as metro in 1990, 2000, and 2009 (see Fuguitt, Heaton, and Lichter 1988, for justification of our approach). Our analyses focus on the continental U.S.; like other studies, Alaska and Hawaii are eliminated from our analyses because of the lack of comparable units of enumeration.

Most previous analyses of subcounty poverty have been based on neighborhood data from census tracts, which are used to identify patterns of spatial inequality and segregation within metro areas or big cities (Iceland, Weinberg, and Steinmetz 2002). Census block groups, on the other hand, are typically used in studies that examine differences in patterns of spatial inequality and segregation between metro and nonmetro areas (Lichter et al. 2008). In examining patterns of concentrated poverty within counties, we use neither census tracts nor

block groups but rather places. Following our conceptual framework, places are the most appropriate subcounty units to examine concentrations of poverty, as they play an important role in the stratification of people along class and racial lines (Logan and Molotch 2000). Places provide the spatial settings where people interact and come together to act collectively on locally oriented issues, including the preservation of community resources such as good schools and tax bases (Wilkinson 2000). Places also provide the geographic settings for local societies to emerge and therefore are the backbone of American civic societies (Tolbert et al. 2002). Places also can be identified by name and sets of economic, social, and political organizations that establish the identity and character of places (Gieryn 2000; Molotch, Freudenburg, and Paulsen 2000).

Measures

Poverty. Individuals are defined as poor if they live in families with incomes below the official poverty income line for a family of their size and configuration as defined by the U.S. Office of Management and Budget. For our purposes, we define high-poverty places and counties as those with poverty rates greater than 20 percent.

Segregation of the poor. We use Census place-level data to measure subcounty poverty rates and county poverty residential segregation with the index of dissimilarity (D) (see Iceland et al. 2002). The index of dissimilarity, D_t , is defined as:

$$D_t = \frac{1}{2} \sum_{i=1}^k |p_{it} - p'_{it}|$$

where p_{it} and p'_{it} are the respective percentages of poor and nonpoor populations residing in place i at time t . This index varies from 0, no segregation, to 100, complete segregation. D has a straightforward interpretation: it indicates the percentage of poor (nonpoor) who have to move to other places in a county in order to achieve parity between poor and nonpoor in their percentage

distribution across all places. Indices are also calculated to measure the level and patterns of segregation within and between poor and nonpoor racial groups.

County predictors. Several measures were included in our multivariate models of poverty concentration. Many of these measures are modeled after those used in recent segregation studies (Farley and Frey 1994; Logan et al. 2004). For example, *population size* is measured as the log of the population of a county (to account for skew in the size distribution of counties). *Minority representation* is defined as the percentage of blacks and Hispanics in a county. We also included measures of the *functional specialization* of counties. Specifically, we used percent employed in manufacturing and in government, percent 18 to 25 in college, and percent greater than 65 (as a proxy for the age-dependent population).⁴ We also included *population change* between 2000 and 2009 and *change in housing stock*, defined as percent of housing built since 2000 (Logan et al. 2004).

Finally, we also included three spatial measures in the analysis. One measure is region, which is operationalized as a set of dummy variables classifying counties as falling within the census-defined West, Midwest, Northeast, and South regions. The second measure includes a dummy variable classifying counties as metro or nonmetro. Finally, the average land area of places in a county is smaller in nonmetro than it is in metro counties. As a general rule, estimates of population concentration or segregation (on any trait) also become smaller as the spatial scale of aggregation increases (Reardon et al. 2009). To address this methodological issue, our county multivariate analyses include a measure of the mean size of all places within the county.

RESULTS

⁴ The elderly often share two characteristics: below-average poverty rates and shared physical space (e.g., in aging neighborhoods and retirement or assisted living homes). As a result, we expect lower levels of poor-nonpoor residential segregation in counties with higher percentages of elderly.

The Changing Spatial Distribution of Poverty

Comparing county and place poverty. We begin by juxtaposing U.S. maps which, not surprisingly, show that observed patterns of poverty concentration are affected by the unit of measurement, i.e., whether counties or places define high-poverty areas (see Figure 1). Our analyses based on either counties or places (for 2005-2009) nevertheless highlight familiar patterns in the regional distribution of concentrated poverty (i.e., areas with poverty rates over 20 percent). As in the past, America's poor are concentrated in Appalachia, the black belt crescent that extends from Arkansas to North Carolina, the Delta region, the Lower Rio Grande River Valley along the Mexico-U.S. border, and on Indian reservations in the Southwest and in the upper Great Plains states (mostly South Dakota).

(Figure 1 about here)

The mismatch between high-poverty counties and high-poverty places is best described by the data in Table 1. These data clearly reveal that the geographic distribution of poor places does not necessarily coincide with the geographic distribution of poor counties. Forty-two percent of the nation's high-poverty places were located in low-poverty counties in 2000. This percentage is much higher (60 percent) in metro than in nonmetro areas, which undoubtedly reflects the centrifugal drift of America's affluent population from central cities into the metro fringe or exurbia areas outside urbanized areas. In noncore nonmetro counties, 70 percent of high-poverty places were located in high-poverty counties. Our results also clearly reveal considerably more spatial inequality within metro areas when compared to nonmetro areas.

(Table 1 about here)

Data in Table 1 (bottom line) reveal that roughly one in four U.S. places (26.2 percent) had poverty rates exceeding 20 percent in 2005-2009. America's poor places are

underrepresented in metro areas (17.1 percent in 2005-2009). In addition, data from the 2000 Census (not reported) show that high-poverty places were up 19.5 percent over the last decade. Clearly, concentrated poverty accelerated over the 2000s, if measured by the percentage of high-poverty cities, suburbs, and rural communities.

Poor people living in poor places. Table 2 provides descriptive information about the changing distribution of poor people across all places in the United States. These results reveal large reductions in the number (from 5,664 to 4,185) of high-poverty places (those with poverty rates exceeding 20 percent) during the 1990s but increases during the 2000s (to 5,701). The number of places with very high rates of poverty also increased rapidly during the 2000s. For example, the number places with poverty rates exceeding 30 percent increased from 1,291 in 2000 to 2,094 in 2005-2009, while the number with poverty rates of more than 40 percent increased from 398 to 725, a number nearly as high as observed in 1990 (753). Increases in high-poverty places were observed during the 2000s in both metro and nonmetro areas.

(Table 2 about here)

Recent increases in high-poverty places may be less worrisome from a policy perspective if the share of the U.S. overall population or poor population residing in them has decreased. In other words, poor places may be growing in numbers but not in size. The information in Table 2 addresses this question. These data reveal that the shares of people and poor people living in high-poverty places have not changed appreciably from 1990 to 2009. For example, the percentage of the U.S. population (roughly 23 percent)—and the poor population (roughly 40 percent)—living in places of 20 percent or more poor hardly changed over the 1990-2009 period. America's poor may be growing, but they seemingly are not becoming more concentrated in the growing number of poor places.

The data also reveal large metro-nonmetro differences in concentrated poverty. In 1990, nearly 37 percent of the metro poor resided in poor places. In contrast, 57.2 percent of America's nonmetro poor populations lived in poor places. By 2005-2009, this number had increased to 60.9, up from the percentages observed in 2000 (49.5). These are large percentages by any measure. They also dramatize the extent of poverty concentration among both the rural and urban poor (i.e., about 50 percent).

For comparison purposes, we also examined the share of people and poor people in poor counties (see Table 3). As with places, the number of high (more than 20 percent) or very high poverty (more than 30 percent) counties declined in the 1990s but rebounded in the 2000s. However, this growth was not as high as growth of high-poverty places. In the 2000s, high-poverty counties grew by 20 percent, while high-poverty places grew by 36 percent.

(Table 3 about here)

High-poverty counties had smaller shares of the total and poor populations living in high-poverty counties than their place counterparts. Like the trends for places, the share of the total population in counties grew from 8.2 percent to 10.4 percent in the 2000s. However, the average county share of the poor population declined from 16.5 to 14.3 percent. Divergent county and place trends suggest growing spatial inequality within U.S. counties, as poor are redistributed unevenly between poor and nonpoor communities.

Racial Differences in Concentrated Poverty

Minority population shares in high-poverty areas. Our analyses also reveal—as in other studies—high levels of poverty concentration among racial and ethnic minority populations. As shown in Table 4, only 18.3 percent of all whites and 35.1 percent of the poor white population lived in high-poverty places in 2005-2009. This latter figure is up from 25.9

percent in 2000. The corresponding percentages are much higher among their black counterparts—43.6 and 56 percent—in 2005-2009 but indicate little change after 2000. Hispanics occupy an intermediate position regarding their concentration in high-poverty areas. About 34.2 percent of all Hispanics lived in high-poverty places in 2000, while 46.3 percent of poor Hispanics lived in high-poverty places. By 2005-2009, these figures had declined to 27.1 and 37 percent, respectively. The implication is clear: the dispersion of Hispanics from metro gateways in Texas, California, and elsewhere has been largely in the direction of more prosperous metro labor market areas (i.e., new immigrant destinations) (Crowley, Lichter, and Qian 2006). For Hispanics, poverty has become much less concentrated over the 2000s after increasing during the 1990s.

(Table 4 about here)

Our results also show that nonmetro blacks are considerably more “ghettoized” than blacks living in metro places. For example, 85.8 percent of the black nonmetro poor were living in high-poverty places in 2009. Moreover, 77.7 percent of all blacks in nonmetro places were living in poor communities in 2009. In contrast, 40.6 of all metro blacks live in poor places, and 42.3 of poor metro blacks live in high-poverty places. The data also show that, for rural blacks, the concentration of poverty is exceptional and persistent if measured by the lack of significant changes since at least 1990.

For purposes of completeness, Table 4 (bottom panel) also provides the corresponding estimates of changing patterns of concentrated poverty based on counties. These results point to a singularly important conclusion: Levels of both metro and minority poverty are seriously underestimated when using counties rather than places as the unit of measurement. As an example, only 19.6 percent of metro poor blacks lived in high-poverty counties, but 52.3 percent

lived in high-poverty places. The differences between counties and places in estimates of concentrated black poverty are also evident in nonmetro areas, but the magnitude of the difference is much less extreme (66.8 percent and 85.8 percent, respectively, in 2005-2009).

Segregation of the poor. Concerns about concentrated poverty often center on questions about the putative lack of exposure of the poor population, including poor minorities, to middle-class role models (Furstenberg and Hughes 1997; Wilson 1987). Indeed, the concentration of poverty implies that the poor—heavily concentrated in a “pocket of poverty”—are spatially segregated from the nonpoor. This issue was addressed by examining levels of segregation between places within a county. For our analysis we report only the segregation index weighted by the number of places in the county.⁵

Table 5 provides average county segregation estimates (based on the weighted index of dissimilarity) that reflect the changing spatial distribution of poor and nonpoor people across places. These data reveal several key findings. First, the data reveal continuing increases over the 1990 to 2005-to-2009 period in between-place segregation. Segregation rates increased from 12.6 in 1990 to 16.7 in 2000 to 18.4 in 2005-2009. The implication is that the poor are increasingly sorted into high-poverty cities, small towns, and rural places, while the nonpoor are being redistributed into nonpoor communities. This trend was observed in both metro and nonmetro places. Metro place segregation grew from 16.9 in 1990 to 20.6 in 2000 to 21.4 in 2009. Between 1990 and 2009, places located in nonmetro areas almost doubled their level of poor-nonpoor segregation, from 7.9 to 15.2.

⁵Unweighted estimates are available on request. Our preliminary analyses (not shown) indicated that the segregation of the poor and nonpoor across places in a county was a function of the number of places in a county. Our analysis showed that weighting the index of dissimilarity by number of places in a county produced the most robust and stable results, especially for metro areas. Metro counties tend to have, on average, a greater number of places than nonmetro counties. As a result, for the period from 1990 to 2009, the unweighted D's are on average 35 percent lower than weighted D's.

(Table 5 about here)

Second, these data also indicate that poor-nonpoor segregation (based on places) was substantially higher in metro areas than it is in nonmetro areas (Table 5, line 1). The segregation for metro places, for example, was roughly 40 percent higher than estimates for nonmetro places. One in five poor persons living in metro places would have to move to nonpoor places to equalize the distribution of the poor and nonpoor populations across U.S. metropolitan places. Compared to their nonmetro counterparts, the metro poor are less likely to be spatially blended with the nonpoor.

Third, poor whites—regardless of location—are considerably less segregated from nonpoor whites than are their minority counterparts. This is especially true in nonmetro counties ($D = 16.1$ in 2009), although spatial differences between metro and nonmetro places narrowed considerably over the 1990-to-2005-2009 period.

Fourth, the segregation of the poor from the nonpoor across places was especially high among America's minority populations. For 2005-2009, the D was 25.2 and 33.0 among metro and nonmetro blacks, respectively. The corresponding estimates for metro and nonmetro Hispanics were 28.4 and 37.4, respectively. Moreover, figures for 2005-to-2009 show large increases in within-county place segregation since 1990. The past 20 years clearly have brought a new economic balkanization of residence patterns, as the poor and nonpoor are sorted unequally across poor and nonpoor communities.⁶

Fifth, the residential segregation of the poor from the nonpoor is not simply a reflection of racial segregation (where blacks who are mostly poor are segregated from whites who are

⁶ Why this has occurred awaits additional analysis. Segregation rates, for example, can change through migration patterns of the poor and nonpoor, i.e., the poor moving into nonpoor places or the nonpoor moving into poor places. An alternative and more likely demographic scenario is that rising poverty rates in the late 1990s mean that the nonpoor have been exposed to the newly poor in their communities.

mostly nonpoor). Indeed, poor minorities and poor whites are highly segregated from *each other* across places, at least as measured by D .⁷ Simply put, poor whites, blacks, and Hispanics are sorted unevenly across cities, suburbs, and small towns. Perhaps more importantly, class segregation seems to have increased over the 2000s. In 2000, for example, 39.9 percent of poor blacks would have to move to other communities (within the county) in order to be distributed similarly to poor whites over places. By 2005-2009, this figure had increased slightly to 40.6. Similar increases in segregation were observed between poor metro whites and poor metro Hispanics (34.5 in 2000 to 37.6 in 2005-2009). Unlike the 1990s, the 2000s apparently ended the growth of “melting pot ghettos” – communities comprised of multiracial populations.

Sixth, and finally, the study period also brought large increases in between-place segregation of nonpoor whites and Hispanics. Within nonmetro counties, for example, the between-place segregation of nonpoor Hispanics from nonpoor whites increased from 22.2 to 35.0 between 1990 and 2005-2009. The clear implication is that Hispanics are being ghettoized in small rural communities, where new ethnic enclaves have emerged, and are therefore spatially removed from the mainstream white population. Indeed, these data are consistent with recent studies showing high ethnoracial segregation rates in new rural Hispanic destinations (Lichter et al. 2010) and accelerating “white flight” from new Hispanic immigrant suburban communities (Crowder, Hall, and Tolnay 2011).

⁷ D is aspatial in the sense that the location of the census places within counties does not influence our estimate of segregation (D). So-called “concentration effects” may be larger when high-poverty places are adjacent to each other than when they are physically separated from each other (i.e., places located in different parts of the county). It also may matter whether high-poverty black communities are adjacent to or distant from high-poverty Hispanic places. Other segregation indexes measure the extent to which different high-poverty groups are spatially clustered or not (Iceland et al. 2002). Despite clear conceptual distinctions between different spatial dimensions of segregation, segregation estimates based on different indices are often highly intercorrelated. In fact, Johnston, Poulsen, and Forrest (2007) recently showed that one popular measure of spatial clustering (i.e., spatial proximity index) loaded highly (0.84) on the first dimension of a factor analysis, along with several measures of spatial unevenness, including D .

Models of between-place poverty concentration. Our final objective is to account for county-to-county differences in the *between-place* spatial concentration of the poor. Our dependent variable is the poor-nonpoor segregation index (D), which indicates the extent to which the poor are concentrated in poor places rather than spread more evenly across places within the county. A previous analysis by Crandall and Weber (2004) examined the predictors of poverty rates across census tracts in the United States. Our analyses build on these results by focusing on intercounty variation in *between-place* (within county) poverty concentration. Unlike Crandall and Weber (2004), we link within-county class segregation patterns with various county-level predictors. This is a time-intensive task that requires linking each place to the county in which it is located. Descriptive statistics for the various county-level predictors (defined earlier) are provided in Table 6.

(Table 6 about here)

The multivariate results are provided in Table 7.⁸ We begin with an ordinary least squares regression model of between-place segregation of the poor using all U.S. counties for 2005-2009 (column 1, Table 1). These data show that levels of poor-nonpoor segregation within counties are positively associated with population size ($b = 0.959$) and percent black ($b = 0.061$). In other words, more heavily populated counties and those with more African Americans are most likely to have segregated poor populations. This occurs independently of average county place size ($b = -0.061$), county poverty rates ($b = -0.058$), and various indicators of county growth (i.e., fast growing counties and those with new construction had disproportionately high rates of concentrated poverty). The results also indicate that poverty is more spatially concentrated in counties with large college-aged enrollments and less concentrated in

⁸ The regression models are weighted by the number of places in the county (which gives greater weight to counties with larger numbers of places). We also estimated unweighted regressions, but they yielded estimates that supported similar conclusions to those reported here. These results are available upon request.

communities with disproportionately large elderly populations. These data also reveal that poverty concentration is highest in the Northeast ($b = 3.934$) and lowest in the South. Finally, consistent with the descriptive results, the estimates in Table 6 show that *between-place* poverty concentration was lower in nonmetro ($b = -2.289$) than in metro counties.

Because patterns of class and racial segregation are often overlapping (Lichter et al. 2008; Timberlake and Iceland 2007), our baseline models also included controls for within-county racial differences in segregation (of the nonpoor population). These results show, not surprisingly, that nonpoor racial segregation is positively associated with segregation of the poor, but the effect sizes are small from a substantive standpoint. Moreover, the more segregated nonpoor blacks and Hispanics are from each other, the less likely the poor are segregated from each other across places. In this case, racial segregation has the effect of distributing the poor population more evenly across places within counties. This finding is in line with other research that clearly shows that whites and Hispanics are distancing themselves from blacks, providing further evidence for black exceptionalism, especially at the macro level (Parisi, Lichter, and Taquino 2011).

Our multivariate analyses are also disaggregated by metro status. These analyses do not warrant extensive discussion. Suffice it to say that most of the differences from the baseline model (model 1) are a matter of degree (i.e., size of the estimate) rather than kind (i.e., direction of the coefficient). For example, in both metro and nonmetro counties, segregation of the poor from the nonpoor across places is negatively associated with population size and percent Hispanic but positively associated with percent black, percent population change during the 2000s, living in the Northeast, having a large college-enrolled population, and high rates of black-white and Hispanic-white segregation.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Our overriding goal has been to document changes in concentrated poverty over the post-2000 period, using newly released poverty estimates from the *American Community Survey*. Unlike most previous demographic studies, our theoretical and empirical approach emphasized concentrated poverty at the macro-scale (or place) rather than micro-scale (or neighborhood) level. We documented the changing spatial distribution of poor people *within* and *between* counties, both in metro and nonmetro areas. We conceptualized U.S. cities, suburbs, and small towns as political actors. Community boundaries arguably represent the new battleground of inclusionary and exclusionary policies that sort poor and nonpoor people (and, by extension, white and minority people) differently over geographic space.

Our study of recent trends in concentrated poverty provides several substantive and methodological lessons for future research. First, at a minimum, our analyses clearly documented the recent uptick in the number of poor places (and growing shares of poor people living in them) after deep and widespread declines in concentrated poverty during the economic boom of the 1990s (Jargowsky 2003; Lichter and Johnson 2007). The number of high-poverty places increased by more than 25 percent during the 2000s. Our analyses clearly reinforce the views of William Julius Wilson (2008-2009), who calls for new public policy dialogue on the plight of the urban poor. However, as we have shown here, refocusing public policy on the inner-city population should not be at the expense of the rural poor, who remain highly segregated in geographically isolated “pockets of poverty” across the United States (e.g., Appalachia, Mississippi Delta, etc.).

Second, our results indicated that the poor are likely to be living in poor areas and are highly and increasingly segregated from the nonpoor population. The post-2000 period was not

only marked by rising poverty rates but also by a new pattern of spatial (and social) isolation of America's poor. This represents a clear change from the 1990s. America's poor and affluent populations are increasingly being sorted unevenly across poor (and economically declining) communities and economic winners. Geographic isolation is a central component to the notion of "concentration effects" on employment outcomes, maladaptive behaviors (e.g., drug use), and cultural patterns that reflect and reinforce poverty.

Third, our analyses showed that patterns of racial and class segregation were distinct but overlapping phenomena. Poor minorities—both in metro and nonmetro areas—are highly ghettoized spatially at the macro-scale level (across communities and counties). Significantly, the poor and nonpoor—regardless of race—became more segregated from each other during the 2000s. Concentrated poverty was much higher among America's minority rather than among white populations. Rural blacks, in particular, were especially likely to be concentrated in poor places and counties. Moreover, our multivariate models indicated that counties—even less populated nonmetro counties—with heavy concentrations of racial minorities (especially blacks) are most likely to have spatially segregated poor populations. The policy implications are clear: because spatial and social mobility often go hand-in-hand, the segregation of the minority poor from the nonpoor connotes persistent racial injustice, limited opportunities for upward social mobility, and the reproduction of poverty and inequality from one generation to the next.

Finally, our analyses make a simple but compelling case for new scholarly attention on newly emerging patterns and trends in concentrated poverty at the place level—both in metro and nonmetro areas (Parisi et al. 2011). Indeed, previous studies have shown that poverty rates have increased over the 2000s in America's older suburban communities. At the same time, blacks and other minorities have increasingly resettled just outside older central cities, and

whites have moved even farther from the urban core (Cook and Marchant 2006; Lee 2011). In rural areas, growing racial and ethnic diversity has raised new questions about persistent spatial inequality and concentrated poverty. The Hispanic Diaspora—from established metro gateways to new rural destinations—may now be giving demographic impetus to concentrated poverty throughout historically racially homogeneous (and largely white) areas in rural America (Johnson and Lichter 2010). Previous studies of the urban underclass, which have focused on inner-city neighborhoods, may be missing a large part of the poverty story during a period of high poverty and growing income inequality.

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Figure 1: Poverty Rates Greater Than 20 Percent Across Counties & Places.

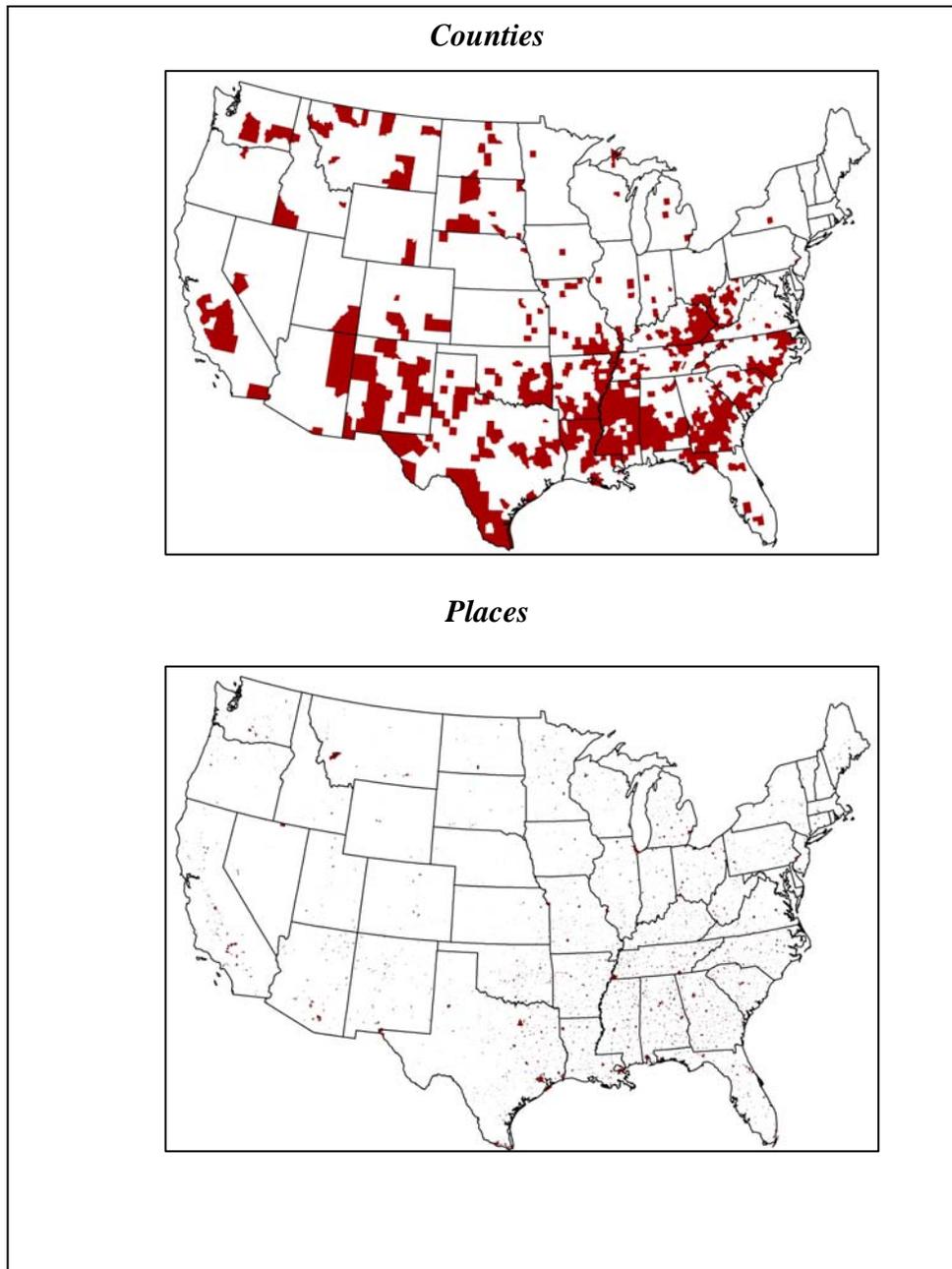


Table 1. *Place and County Concentration of Poverty, 2009*

County Poverty	Place Poverty					
	U.S.		Metro		Nonmetro	
	Low	High	Low	High	Low	High
Low	85.19	42.25	90.82	60.05	77.40	32.71
High	14.81	57.75	9.18	39.95	22.60	67.29
<i>Total</i>	<i>100.00</i>	<i>100.00</i>	<i>100.00</i>	<i>100.00</i>	<i>100.00</i>	<i>100.00</i>
N of Places	18,314	6,286	10,627	2,195	7,687	4,091

Data: 2005-2009 American Community Survey (ACS).

Table 2. Share of People and Poor People Living in Poor Places, 1990-2009

Living in Places with Poverty Population Exceeding:		U.S.				Metro				Nonmetro			
		# of Places	% of Pop.	% of Poor	% of Nonpoor	# of Places	% of Pop.	% of Poor	% of Nonpoor	# of Places	% of Pop.	% of Poor	% of Nonpoor
10%	1990	13,333	63.42	85.41	59.40	5,030	60.54	83.83	56.53	8,303	83.81	93.57	81.37
	2000	11,903	62.96	84.25	59.14	4,602	60.91	83.20	57.09	7,301	78.47	90.68	75.63
	2009	13,177	56.45	87.27	58.37	5,455	66.73	86.04	56.40	7,722	85.00	94.60	75.52
20%	1990	5,646	22.21	40.12	18.95	1,715	20.03	36.81	17.15	3,931	37.66	57.16	32.73
	2000	4,185	22.84	40.37	19.74	1,294	21.76	38.88	18.88	2,891	31.01	49.47	26.67
	2009	5,701	22.79	40.39	19.28	1,913	21.53	36.96	18.42	3,788	42.65	60.94	26.70
30%	1990	2,025	4.14	10.44	3.00	518	2.98	7.71	2.18	1,507	12.34	24.52	9.29
	2000	1,291	2.24	5.73	1.58	353	1.45	3.82	1.02	938	8.22	17.38	6.06
	2009	2,084	8.86	9.85	1.58	592	3.10	7.31	1.05	1,492	13.60	25.03	6.17
40%	1990	753	0.82	2.69	0.48	180	0.45	1.56	0.27	573	3.38	8.49	2.13
	2000	398	0.45	1.45	0.26	101	0.25	0.82	0.14	297	1.97	5.26	1.23
	2009	725	3.34	2.08	0.27	185	0.38	1.12	0.15	540	3.48	7.85	1.31
50%	1990	301	0.20	0.80	0.09	69	0.10	0.43	0.05	232	0.85	2.73	0.45
	2000	125	0.11	0.43	0.05	26	0.06	0.25	0.03	99	0.48	1.52	0.25
	2009	248	1.09	0.55	0.06	55	0.09	0.32	0.03	193	0.66	1.90	0.30

Data: 1990 & 2000 Decennial Census Summary File 3, 2005-2009 American Community Survey (ACS).

Table 3. Share of People and Poor People Living in Poor Counties, 1990-2009

Living in Counties with Poverty Population Exceeding:		U.S.				Metropolitan				Nonmetro			
		# of Counties	% of Pop.	% of Poor	% of Nonpoor	# of Counties	% of Pop.	% of Poor	% of Nonpoor	# of Counties	% of Pop.	% of Poor	% of Nonpoor
10%	1990	2,571	69.05	83.80	66.69	749	65.39	80.89	63.10	1,822	86.03	93.33	84.44
	2000	2,229	63.88	78.94	61.58	618	61.16	76.74	58.93	1,611	77.04	87.59	75.03
	2009	2,507	73.42	76.03	61.08	761	70.55	73.76	58.51	1,746	88.18	85.34	75.08
20%	1990	846	13.25	25.04	11.44	149	9.73	18.72	8.47	697	29.55	45.79	26.14
	2000	488	8.23	16.54	6.98	74	6.30	13.09	5.34	414	17.60	30.13	15.34
	2009	625	10.40	14.30	6.86	107	7.83	11.29	5.32	518	23.63	26.67	15.23
30%	1990	195	1.85	5.17	1.35	18	0.74	2.21	0.53	177	6.99	14.85	5.40
	2000	84	1.38	3.70	1.05	9	1.09	2.94	0.83	75	2.82	6.71	2.14
	2009	90	1.02	3.27	1.07	10	0.58	2.70	0.88	80	3.26	5.60	2.14
40%	1990	51	0.46	1.57	0.29	3	0.20	0.70	0.13	48	1.66	4.45	1.10
	2000	11	0.05	0.19	0.03	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	11	0.29	0.94	0.18
	2009	16	0.06	0.15	0.03	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	16	0.34	0.77	0.21
50%	1990	10	0.06	0.26	0.03	1	0.00	0.02	0.00	9	0.33	1.07	0.19
	2000	3	0.02	0.10	0.01	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	3	0.14	0.51	0.08
	2009	3	0.01	0.08	0.02	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	3	0.03	0.41	0.11

Data: 1990 & 2000 Decennial Census Summary File 3, 2005-2009 American Community Survey (ACS).

Table 4. *Share of Minorities Living in Poor Places and Counties, 1990-2009*

	1990			2000			2009		
	U.S.	Metro	Nonmetro	U.S.	Metro	Nonmetro	U.S.	Metro	Nonmetro
Place:									
White Total	16.06	13.64	30.96	14.26	12.75	23.45	18.30	15.46	35.87
Poor	31.13	27.42	46.06	25.94	23.46	35.28	35.05	31.26	53.09
Black Total	45.76	42.86	77.63	45.06	42.73	71.28	43.58	40.61	77.73
Poor	57.19	53.28	85.85	55.49	52.31	80.41	56.01	52.29	85.81
Hispanic Total	30.83	28.90	64.87	34.16	33.18	50.62	27.14	25.63	52.28
Poor	40.79	38.03	75.29	46.13	45.03	60.98	37.03	34.97	63.60
County:									
White Total	10.24	6.67	24.44	5.42	3.51	12.86	7.84	5.14	18.64
Poor	20.07	13.62	36.31	10.52	6.78	19.57	15.36	11.63	27.27
Black Total	26.90	21.49	64.12	18.17	14.06	48.09	20.80	16.07	57.89
Poor	34.89	26.76	74.27	24.10	17.97	57.70	26.43	19.57	66.80
Hispanic Total	20.72	17.96	57.14	14.12	12.71	32.24	13.65	12.21	31.92
Poor	31.19	27.41	67.26	20.85	19.11	39.33	20.06	18.22	38.74

Data: 1990 & 2000 Decennial Census Summary File 3, 2005-2009 American Community Survey (ACS).

Table 5. Poor-Nonpoor Place Segregation (D), 1990-2009

	1990			2000			2009		
	U.S.	Metro	Nonmetro	U.S.	Metro	Nonmetro	U.S.	Metro	Nonmetro
Total Population	12.62	16.85	7.94	16.77	20.64	12.50	18.40	21.38	15.16
Poor - Nonpoor within Racial Groups									
Poor White - Nonpoor White	11.00	14.32	7.31	15.49	18.12	12.57	18.19	20.09	16.11
Poor Black - Nonpoor Black	22.19	22.52	21.70	24.74	21.47	29.59	28.16	25.17	33.01
Poor Hispanic - Nonpoor Hispanic	27.43	25.64	29.60	29.40	25.16	34.47	32.38	28.35	37.41
Poor between Racial Groups									
Poor White - Poor Black	39.15	44.76	30.96	39.83	38.87	41.21	41.86	40.56	43.83
Poor White - Poor Hispanic	29.03	28.26	29.95	37.22	34.53	40.41	40.00	37.64	42.89
Poor Hispanic - Poor Black	38.26	40.22	35.30	37.29	33.00	43.69	39.67	35.60	46.43
Nonpoor Between Racial Groups									
Nonpoor White - Nonpoor Black	35.36	40.21	29.08	39.08	39.26	38.86	40.36	39.00	42.12
Nonpoor White - Nonpoor Hispanic	21.59	21.07	22.19	29.58	29.06	30.13	33.15	31.47	35.04
Nonpoor Hispanic - Nonpoor Black	33.24	34.99	30.96	34.64	30.54	39.80	37.61	32.05	44.97

Data: 1990 & 2000 Decennial Census Summary File 3, 2005-2009 American Community Survey (ACS).

Table 6. Descriptive Statistics

	U.S.		Metro		Nonmetro	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
2009 Place Population Characteristics:						
Place Size (Square Miles)	6.66	23.30	10.96	27.69	4.34	20.17
Total Population	95,358	307,351	226,819	491,793	24,364	23,799
Percent Black	8.83	14.46	10.59	13.47	7.87	14.88
Percent Hispanic	7.50	12.75	8.07	11.71	7.20	13.26
Percent in Poverty	15.48	6.45	13.11	5.23	16.76	6.68
Labor Force Participation Rate	76.44	9.89	78.81	6.49	75.15	11.10
Percent Change between 2000 and 2009:						
Percent Population Change	2.52	10.45	8.67	11.69	-0.80	7.94
Percent of Housing Units Built	7.83	8.85	12.30	10.82	5.42	6.39
Functional Specialization:						
Percent Employed in Manufacturing	13.11	7.47	12.82	5.87	13.27	8.21
Percent Employed in Government	5.40	3.00	5.21	2.84	5.50	3.08
Percent Greater Than 65	15.36	4.19	12.94	3.19	16.67	4.09
Percent Aged 18-24 in College	28.89	15.68	35.56	14.10	25.28	15.30
Region:						
South	0.46	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.43	0.50
Northeast	0.07	0.25	0.11	0.31	0.05	0.21
Midwest	0.34	0.47	0.27	0.45	0.38	0.49
West	0.13	0.34	0.12	0.32	0.14	0.35
Spatial Characteristics:						
Metropolitan	0.35	0.48	-	-	-	-
Nonmetropolitan	0.65	0.48	-	-	-	-

Data: 2005-2009 American Community Survey (ACS).

Table 7. Ordinary Least Squares Regression of Poor-Nonpoor Segregation on County Characteristics, 2005-2

	U.S			Metro			Nonmetro		
	<i>b</i>		<i>SE</i>	<i>b</i>		<i>SE</i>	<i>b</i>		<i>SE</i>
Constant	0.460		0.835	-8.492	***	1.161	-3.692	*	1.428
2009 Population Characteristics:									
Average County Place Size (Square Miles)	-0.061	***	0.005	-0.086	***	0.006	-0.011		0.007
Total Population (ln)	0.959	***	0.055	1.137	***	0.073	1.053	***	0.116
Percent Black	0.061	***	0.006	0.077	***	0.008	-0.011		0.008
Percent Hispanic	-0.062	***	0.005	-0.085	***	0.007	-0.041	***	0.007
Percent In Poverty	-0.058	***	0.011	0.015		0.017	-0.007		0.017
Percent Change between 2000 and 2009:									
Percent Population Change	0.028	*	0.013	0.140	***	0.017	-0.103	***	0.019
Percent of Housing Units Built	0.091	***	0.014	0.025		0.018	0.303	***	0.021
Functional Specialization:									
Percent Employed in Manufacturing	-0.148	***	0.010	0.001		0.016	-0.141	***	0.012
Percent Employed in Government	-0.032		0.023	-0.020		0.032	0.048		0.034
Percent Greater Than 65	-0.188	***	0.018	-0.284	***	0.023	0.000		0.028
Percent 18-24 In College	0.065	***	0.004	0.141	***	0.006	0.020	***	0.005
Region (South as Reference):									
Northeast	3.934	***	0.201	3.974	***	0.243	1.813	***	0.344
Midwest	0.958	***	0.155	1.382	***	0.200	-0.327		0.231
West	1.751	***	0.180	0.952	***	0.224	2.839	***	0.282
Spatial Characteristics (Metro as Reference):									
Nonmetro	-2.289	***	0.147	-		-	-		-
Place Dissimilarity (D) of the Nonpoor:									
Non-Hispanic White-Black	0.170	***	0.003	0.209	***	0.005	0.104	***	0.005
Non-Hispanic White-Hispanic	0.135	***	0.004	0.168	***	0.006	0.101	***	0.005
Black-Hispanic	-0.040	***	0.003	-0.043	***	0.004	-0.009	*	0.004
<i>Adjusted R</i> ²	44.2			50.3			27.9		

*** p<.001; ** p<.01; * p<.05