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Racial Segregation in Rural & Small Town America: Does New York State fit the national pattern?

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What is the issue?

Are minorities still residentially segregated from whites in the U.S. today? Is it mostly an urban phenomenon? How does small town and rural NYS fare? Unfortunately, we have limited knowledge to address these questions. Most previous research has focused on racial and ethnic segregation in big-city neighborhoods rather than in rural and small town America. This is understandable since the large majority of racial minorities reside in the nation's largest cities and suburban neighborhoods. Yet, many parts of rural America (e.g., blacks in the Mississippi Delta region or Native Americans on Indian reservations) have been home historically to large concentrations of racial and ethnic minorities. The 1990s also ushered in an unprecedented demographic influx of foreign-born Hispanic immigrants, especially from Mexico and other parts of Latin America, to new rural destinations in the Midwest and South. These emerging rural settlement patterns, including changing patterns of racial and ethnic residential segregation, are poorly understood.

How was this study conducted?

We identified 4,430 places with at least a 10 percent minority population. These places included incorporated cities, towns, or villages, as well as unincorporated communities or housing developments that lack municipal governments across the U.S.. Fifty-eight percent were located in metropolitan (urban) areas and forty-two percent in non-metropolitan (rural) areas. We used block data from the 1990 and 2000 Decennial Census and the dissimilarity index to measure neighborhood racial residential segregation. This index varies from zero (no segregation) to 100 (complete segregation).

What is the national pattern of racial segregation?

Nationally, residential segregation is typically higher in rural areas than in urban areas, regardless of year or racial comparison. For example, looking at Figure 1, the average (or unweighted) black-white segregation index for nonmetropolitan places was 66.6 in 2000, compared with 58.7 for metropolitan places. This means that 66.6% of blacks, in a typical community, would have to move to other neighborhoods in order to achieve parity with whites in their distribution across all neigh-

borhoods. There are similarly large rural-urban disparities in segregation observed for the Hispanic-white and Asian-white comparison. However, these differences are largely erased when we weight these indices by minority population size. That is, the individual average experience with neighborhood racial segregation is the same whether an individual lives in a place located in a rural or urban area.

Figure 1: Average Segregation in Metropolitan and Nonmetropolitan Places, 1990 and 2000

	Black-White		Hispanic-White		Native American-White	
	Unweighted	Weighted ^a	Unweighted	Weighted ^a	Unweighted	Weighted ^a
1990						
All	68.2	73.6	45.9	52.3	46.9	46.7
Metro	63.7	73.5	42.8	52.3	45.4	45.1
Nonmetro	73.7	74.8	53.2	53.1	47.5	47.2
2000						
All	62.3	67.8	44.0	51.7	46.6	46.5
Metro	58.7	67.8	41.6	51.8	44.6	45.8
Nonmetro	66.6	67.5	49.7	49.4	47.3	46.8
Percent Change						
All	-8.7	-8.0	-4.0	-1.1	-0.7	-0.3
Metro	-7.8	-7.7	-2.7	-0.9	-1.7	1.4
Nonmetro	-9.6	-9.8	-6.7	-7.0	-0.29	-0.9

^a Places are weighted by minority population size

Perhaps surprisingly, our results clearly suggest that *racial segregation levels in nonmetropolitan places largely mirror patterns and trends found in metropolitan areas, and rural blacks are considerably more segregated residentially than other minority groups*. Our research also shows that rural Black-white segregation is lowest in rural places outside the South and in nonmetropolitan places adjacent to metropolitan areas. Racial segregation is also lower in places with newer housing stock, a fact that reflects population growth at the peripheries of these places. Perhaps unsurprisingly, black-white segregation is lowest in places with a large military or education function, a fact that presumably reflects more spatially integrated housing conditions in university campuses and towns, and on military bases and their surrounding environs. Black-white rural community segregation also partly reflects black-white differences in socioeconomic status, such as income and education. Educational disparities between whites and Hispanics and Native Americans also contribute to minority segregation from whites.

While the results for Hispanics and Native Americans reveal many similarities with those for African Americans, for both Hispanics and Native Americans, population size is associated with *lower* rather than higher segregation levels that characterized patterns in the black population. This contrasts with recent metropolitan-level analyses which generally show that Hispanic-white segregation is positively associated with metropolitan population size. Hispanic-white segregation is higher on average in nonmetropolitan places than in metropolitan places. One plausible explanation is that Hispanics, unlike blacks, have recently moved in disproportionate numbers into relatively small communities, including single-industry communities with labor-intensive meat or poultry processing plants. These communities often provide temporary housing in trailer parks that are physically removed from the resident population.

What is the Situation in New York State?

In NYS, blacks and whites are somewhat less residentially segregated in NYS than the U.S. as a whole (D 's = 67.8 vs. 63.0 for 2000 – see Figure 2). Moreover, in particular, non-metropolitan NYS is *significantly* less segregated (black-white) than non-metro U.S. (although non-metro segregation in NYS *increased* between 1990 and 2000, whereas it decreased in the U.S. overall). However, Hispanics and whites are *more* residentially segregated in non-metro NYS than non-metro U.S. on average (53.1 vs. 49.4). We had only one NY place that had a large enough Native American population for analysis, so we have not included corresponding segregation measures here.

In rural NYS, scores of racial residential segregation vary from place to place and from group to group. Levels of segregation of blacks from whites range from a minimum of 35 to a maximum of 72. Communities such as Altona and Dannemora (both in Clinton County) have high levels of segregation with scores of 72 and 64, respectively. Significantly, both of these communities have prisons with disproportionate minority populations. Altona Correctional Facility is a medium security institution, and Clinton Correctional Facility (in Dannemora) is a maximum security institution. In contrast,

Calcium (Jefferson County) and Monticello (Sullivan County) have low levels of segregation with scores of 35 and 37, respectively. Calcium is located near Fort Drum with a racially diverse military population. Segregation of Hispanics from whites range between 38 and 73. As an example, Woodridge, New York (Sullivan County) is a community with a relatively large Hispanic population – one in four residents are Hispanic – and a moderate segregation score (48). Segregation in the community reflects, at least in part, socioeconomic disparities between Hispanics and whites. The difference in the average value of homes owned by Hispanics (\$64,000 in 2000) and NonHispanic whites (\$95,000) is large.

Conclusions

Our results support a singularly important conclusion: National levels and changes in recent patterns of rural racial segregation are remarkably similar to patterns observed in larger metropolitan places. Non-metropolitan blacks are America's most highly segregated racial minority – roughly 30 to 40 percent higher than the indices observed for rural Hispanics and Native Americans. However, in rural New York State, the opposite is true. Blacks are much less segregated from whites than are Hispanics. Black-white residential segregation nevertheless is comparatively lower, it still exists in non-metro NYS, and now there is evidence to suggest that it has increased over the last decade, an opposite trend to that measured for non-metro places in the U.S. overall. While rural segregation between Hispanics and whites declined between 1990 and 2000 in NYS as they did for the U.S. as a whole, Hispanic-white residential segregation remains somewhat higher in non-metro NYS than in the non-metro U.S. as a whole.

This study provides a starting point rather than the final answers regarding the causes and consequences of changing patterns of rural racial segregation. Rural racial segregation patterns have been shaped by different historical facts and circumstances (e.g., slavery and the plantation economy) and by geographically uneven economic and demographic change (e.g., the dispersal of new immigrants to rural regions and communities). Current residential segregation patterns – even in rural areas – reflect past and current patterns of racial prejudice and discrimination (e.g., in housing and labor markets), residential preferences, and income inequality. By themselves, highly aggregated census data on rural places shed only partial light on these issues but nonetheless identify new research directions that both inform our current understanding of segregation and build on our study of small places. At a minimum, our results give caution to recent studies showing declining segregation among metropolitan blacks. The majority of America's population today lives outside of central cities, and upwardly mobile minorities have clearly shared in the centrifugal drift of population to the suburbs and perhaps beyond. Given the rapid demographic and economic changes in exurban and rural areas, our study also suggests that segregation scholars and policymakers can no longer leave rural and small town America out of their analyses and policy discussions. ♦

Figure 2: Average Segregation in New York State Metropolitan and Nonmetropolitan Places, 1990 and 2000

	Black-White		Hispanic-White	
	Unweighted	Weighted ^a	Unweighted	Weighted ^a
1990				
All	59.5	68.7	52.4	53.9
Metro	63.1	69.7	49.2	53.6
Nonmetro	47.9	35.5	60.2	57.7
2000				
All	54.3	63.0	50.0	50.8
Metro	56.8	63.6	47.9	50.7
Nonmetro	46.3	38.8	55.2	53.1
Percent Change				
All	-8.8	-8.3	-4.5	-5.7
Metro	-10.0	-8.7	-2.6	-5.4
Nonmetro	-3.3	9.3	-8.3	-8.0

^aPlaces are weighted by minority population size

^{**}for the full length article by the same authors see "National Estimates of Racial Segregation in Rural & Small Town America"; *Demography* 44, no. 3 (2007): 563-81.



