

Population Mobility and Ethnic Divisions in the American Electorate

In this book I have detailed a number of ways in which population movement has reconfigured American electoral politics in the waning decades of the twentieth century. The fundamental fact is that native migration flows do not closely parallel those of the most recent immigrants. Asians, Mexicans, and Central Americans, while not always drawn to ethnic enclaves, are far more likely to settle in areas of established coethnic settlement than other groups. Even for states such as Pennsylvania, where the rate of immigrant influx has been rather slow over the last thirty years, Asians and Mexicans are an increasing presence in the places of already established Asian and Mexican settlement but not always where economic prospects are brightest (see table 7.1). With few exceptions, internal migrants are far more capable of avoiding areas of high unemployment than the newer immigrant groups are. Only in states where the internal migrant population is comprised mainly of elderly retirees do we find a sizable proportion of domestic migrants increasing their presence in destinations independent of prevailing employment and economic conditions. This serves to remind us that not all internal migration is occurring for economic reasons. Even if the elderly are not moving to find work, however, they are looking to improve their quality of life, and their choice of destinations is nothing like that of most new immigrants.

Table 9.1 presents a pooled model of the change in the proportion of internal migrants and several immigrant groups across counties for all seven states evaluated in this study. These are cross-sectional results predicting the change in population *concentration* between 1980 and 1990 because more preferable time-series data on these populations are not available. With that methodological caveat in mind, the results serve as a convenient summary of the separate tables presented in chapters 2 through

TABLE 9.1. Influences on Population Concentration in Counties across Seven States, 1980–90

Variable	U.S. Migrants	Asian Immigrants	Mexican Immigrants	Canadian Immigrants	Central American Immigrants
% 1980 group population	-.18** (.03)	.35** (.03)	.20** (.02)	-.29** (.01)	.33** (.02)
% unemployment, 1980	.51** (.22)	-.06** (.02)	-.05** (.02)	-.002 (.002)	-.01 (.03)
Change in real median income, 1980–90	.06** (.01)	-.002** (.001)	-.0005 (.005)	-.0001 (.0009)	.001 (.01)
% net population change	.15** (.02)	-.003 (.002)	.004** (.002)	.0009** (.0001)	-.008** (.003)
Population density	.0001** (.001)	.00002** (.00001)	.000005 (.000037)	.000007** (.000003)	.00001** (.000005)
% college students	-.52** (.14)	.08** (.02)	.003 (.005)	.003** (.001)	-.11** (.02)
Spatial lag	1.37** (.07)	.95** (.08)	.55** (.04)	.008 (.04)	.14 (.10)
Constant	-2.18	.27	.34	.01	-2.15
<i>N</i>	541	541	541	541	541
R^2_a	.61	.72	.81	.67	.55

Note: Spatial autoregressive model, weighted for population; pooled data for California, Colorado, Kansas, Kentucky, Florida, Pennsylvania, and New York. Income coefficients are expressed in thousands of 1992 dollars; dependent variable = change in population group as a percentage of total population. For a full description of variables, see appendix A.

* $p < .10$. ** $p < .05$.

8 for several population groups: Canadian, Mexican, Central American, and Asian immigrants and U.S. internal migrants. Two of the groups, Canadians and U.S. internal migrants, were a generally smaller proportion of the population in 1990 than they were in 1980. The other groups, Mexicans, Asians, and Central Americans, gained a larger share of the population in the areas where they had settled in 1980. U.S. migrants grew more noticeable in areas that began the decade with high unemployment, but their increasing concentrations were also associated with income growth. Growth in the Asian presence across counties is associated with real income losses from 1980 to 1990. The foreign-born groups in table 9.1 became a larger proportion of the population in more densely populated areas, a finding consistent with earlier work showing that immigrants are slow to disperse into suburban and rural areas (Liebersohn 1963).

What does it mean that so many of the new immigrants and internal migrants are not drawn to the same destinations? Because immigrants are drawn to areas where economic opportunities are limited and upward mobility is highly constrained, class cleavages across states and substate regions may increasingly parallel racial ones (Morales and Ong 1993, 77). The selection process in migration sorts people by both race and economic standing, generating a more class-based and race-based politics. Blacks and other minorities, because they lack marketable skills, education, and (in the case of immigrants) English, occupy especially weak positions in local labor markets (Kossoudji 1988; McManus 1985). This restricts their mobility and contributes to their geographic concentration and the increasing size of ethnic enclaves. White migrants, for their part, prefer to live in neighborhoods where whites predominate (Farley et al. 1994; Massey and Denton 1993). Their high mobility patterns contribute to the homogeneity of suburbs and suburban counties. Even in places where there are relatively few immigrants and internal migrants, a sorting process is observable that sends immigrants and internal migrants to different destinations.

Since the apportionment of political representation in most legislative bodies in the United States is spatially based (as opposed to at-large) and not proportional, the concentration of racially and economically monolithic populations inevitably exacerbates racial and economic cleavages in national politics. At the local level, of course, the close linkage of race, economic position, and political views ensures that legislative districts will be internally homogeneous. There can be no racial divisiveness in a city,

county, or congressional district constituted by only one group. But the political representatives from districts lacking internal diversity are less likely than those elected from heterogeneous districts to practice a nonracial politics upon reaching a state or national legislature. Representing homogeneous areas that are most readily identifiable by their racial and ethnic composition, as opposed to some more mutable trait, ensures that the most obvious constituency characteristic determining the nature of representation will be the race or ethnicity of the people who are represented.

Mobility and Balkanization across Neighborhoods

In the foregoing pages, I have examined the settlement patterns of racial and ethnic groups within counties by examining the concentration of those groups relative to whites in census tracts. It is important to note at the outset that there are clear differences across states in the degree of residential segregation of whites from minorities. Pennsylvania and New York show the highest level of residential isolation for blacks and Hispanics. In these states, urban enclaves and ethnic neighborhoods are older, larger, and more entrenched. Industrial decline and economic restructuring have also left black and Hispanic neighborhoods more destitute and hopeless than in southern and western states. Black neighborhoods in Florida, Kentucky, and California are the next most isolated areas.

Hispanic populations in California and Kentucky are also highly isolated, but in Florida the segregation of Hispanic and Anglo populations is minimized due to the fact that there are fewer nonwhite Hispanics there than in the other states. The two most rural states, Colorado and Kansas, show the lowest degrees of racial balkanization across census tracts because they have the fewest minorities. Outside of Denver and Kansas City, comparatively few neighborhoods have reached their tipping point as the result of growing black and Hispanic populations.

As for Asians, the most urban states, Pennsylvania, New York, and California, show the highest degree of spatial isolation of Asians from whites. These states contain significant Asian concentrations within their largest cities. In spite of its small immigrant population, Kansas shows a stunningly high degree of segregation between whites and Asians. The concentration of this population in certain low-skill sectors of the Kansas economy, such as meatpacking, is responsible for their degree of residen-

tial isolation in spite of their small numbers. Asians are least concentrated in Florida and Colorado, where their numbers are far smaller and their levels of skill and education are higher.

The segregation of these groups from white natives is therefore highly variable across states and depends mostly upon the size of the minority population in the state. One clear conclusion is that small and dispersed minority populations may sometimes face discrimination and consequent economic hardship but large and concentrated minority populations are even more likely to struggle with prejudice in labor and housing markets. The reasons for this difference in the experience of dispersed and concentrated minority communities are straightforward. There are two kinds of deconcentrated minority populations. First, there are those with education and means who have easily integrated into the Anglo-dominant society and, because of their small numbers, are not threatening to non-Hispanic whites. The few, but relatively wealthy, immigrants in Kentucky seem to mix well with the native and internal migrant populations in Louisville, Lexington, and suburban Cincinnati. A second group of dispersed minorities are those clustered in isolated rural areas in places like the Central Valley of California or the isolated border towns of South Texas, far from contact with Anglo neighborhoods, business districts, and institutions. These communities do not make regular demands on the majority and are left to their own devices (Lamare 1977; Garcia 1973). Sizable minority communities in urban areas, on the other hand, not only make demands on the institutions of Anglo-white society but enter into direct competition with the majority for jobs, housing, schools, public services, and control of government. Not surprisingly, then, the more blacks reside in a state the more residentially segregated they will be. The same is true of Asians and Hispanics. The association of size with residential segregation is related to the established social scientific finding that income inequality and the concentration of minority populations are directly related (Tienda and Lii 1987; Frisbie and Neidert 1976; Jiobu 1988; Brown and Fugitt 1972; Lieberman 1963). The one exception to this rule seems to be Kentucky, where a relatively small black population is accompanied by an extraordinary degree of residential segregation. This anomaly is perhaps best explained by the legacy of race relations in the southern and border states, where segregated settlement patterns were more likely to be a function of official law and policy than in the northern and western states. Even small numbers of blacks were a threatening prospect to authorities in the Old South.

The geographic isolation of black, Asian, and Hispanic populations from whites across census tracts is clearly a function of recent immigration trends. The more immigrants in an area, the more racial and ethnic segregation one can expect to find, even after controlling for variables such as the high-density neighborhoods where most immigrants find their first homes. The proportion of immigrants arriving since 1970 is particularly related to the segregation of blacks from whites. That blacks would wind up more isolated from whites as the result of recent waves of immigration is a provocative discovery verifying the contention by some that blacks actually lose out to Hispanics and Asians in urban labor markets (Waldinger 1996; Mollenkopf and Castells 1991; Bailey and Waldinger 1991; Waldinger 1986–87; Skerry 1993).

A third influence on the spatial balkanization of ethnic and racial groups has been patterns of internal migration by wealthier white populations. To be sure, the effect of internal migration on residential segregation is more pronounced in some states than in others. For states with high rates of population influx from other states, the locational choices made by the new residents increase segregation. Internal migration has contributed to segregation not only across tracts within counties but across counties themselves, as internal migrants have decided to avoid entire municipalities and metropolitan areas on the basis of their racial makeup and the location of job opportunities (Burns 1994).

Mobility and Participation

To argue that the kind of ethnic balkanization flowing from these population changes has an impact on politics, politically distinguishing states and substate regions, requires evidence that inequalities across neighborhoods and counties in political participation, party registration, and party regularity are causally related to the settlement patterns of migrants and immigrants. Does such an association exist? Certainly the connection between education and participation is well established. Affluent people are better informed and more interested in civic affairs than the poor and uneducated. At the aggregate level, then, we should not be surprised to find lower naturalization and turnout rates in areas with large populations of poorly educated recent immigrants. The county level may be too gross of an aggregation for these familiar patterns to appear in every state, but clearly in California there is a relationship even at this level, with the more homogeneous white counties reporting the highest participation rates. It is

well known that areas with high concentrations of minority voters have been underrepresented for decades due to their low turnout. But it is clear that this pattern of low participation in areas of minority concentration is increasing inequalities in representation across substate regions, cities, and neighborhoods.

Table 9.2 presents summary information on the relationship between patterns of ethnic settlement and turnout rates across counties for all seven states in the early 1990s. Residential isolation of whites from minorities within counties depresses turnout in 1990 and 1994 but not in 1992. Apparently the interest and mobilization generated by presidential contests is sufficient to overcome disparities in turnout generated by segregated neighborhoods within counties. Equally interesting is the result that inequalities in participation can be explained by the proportion of recent immigrants across counties. In 1992, a ten-point increase in the proportion

TABLE 9.2. Impact of Population Mobility and Settlement Patterns on Voter Turnout in Seven States, 1990–94

Variable	1990 ^a	1992	1994 ^a
% college educated	-.15** (.03)	.39** (.03)	.15** (.03)
Isolation of minorities from whites (within counties)	-.04** (.008)	.01 (.008)	-.02** (.008)
% post-1970 immigrants	-.04** (.01)	-.09** (.01)	-.06** (.01)
% born out of state	.04** (.01)	-.09** (.01)	.01 (.01)
% black	-.03 (.03)	.14** (.03)	-.05* (.03)
Population density	-.0002** (.0001)	-.0002** (.0001)	-.0002** (.0001)
Spatial lag	.71** (.03)	.16** (.04)	.73** (.03)
Constant	18.18	53.14	18.54
<i>N</i>	534	534	534
<i>R</i> ² _a	.76	.42	.58

Note: Spatial autoregressive model, weighted for population; pooled data for California, Colorado, Kansas, Kentucky, Florida, Pennsylvania, and New York; dependent variable = percentage turnout by county. See appendix A for a full description of variables.

^aKentucky data are for election years 1991 and 1995.

p* < .10. *p* < .05.

of recent immigrants dropped countrywide turnout by almost one percentage point.

Densely populated urban areas have lower turnout rates than rural ones, but this commonplace finding obscures a particularly noteworthy pattern of mobilization inequality in some states. Rural minority populations may be at a greater disadvantage in politics than urban minority populations because rural minorities have less contact with whites. The issue is distance. Immigrant minorities and native blacks who have settled outside of metropolitan areas face a degree of political isolation far more extreme than the segregation presented by the more widely studied urban setting (Lamare 1977). While minority-dominant urban neighborhoods may be just a few blocks from the schools, housing, and jobs present in affluent white neighborhoods, or at most just a few miles away, rural ethnic enclaves can be tens of miles away from affluent locations. Having even less contact than residents of urban ghettos with the Anglo population, rural minorities may experience less interethnic tension. But the absence of interracial contact in the highly class-homogeneous rural enclave has a demobilizing effect on the minority community. Under such isolated conditions, demands are voiced only within the community. Lacking the large and concentrated numbers of an inner city ward, rural enclaves in places like California's Central Valley, eastern Colorado, and southwestern Kansas are usually not the focus of much attention by political campaigns and party organizations either. The rural enclave is less attractive to the political organizer than the city ward not simply because of its smaller size but because its population is highly transient. With no outside pressure on the rural minority population to engage in civic affairs, these enclaves are typified by an inactivity that makes urban minority neighborhoods participatory hotbeds by comparison (Lamare 1977).

The news is not all good for white suburbia's participation, either. While residents are generally well educated in these places, there are some countervailing forces at work in the fast-growing suburbs that may contribute to low turnout in young neighborhoods. The influx of white internal migrants to a locale dampens turnout in some states, particularly in local elections. With the exception of Florida, there was evidence that places inundated with populations from elsewhere have lower participation rates than those with predominantly stable or declining populations. Within states, there were differences between places with migrants and those without across election years, with presidential elections erasing such differences across jurisdictions but off years heightening them.

Florida is an exception because the peculiar character of the internal migration, consisting of a large number of elderly retirees of long tenure, has been conducive to high participation rates across the peninsular counties. I have argued with the support of a long line of work on the impact of residential mobility on turnout that barriers to reregistration are partly responsible for the low participation rates of suburbs (Teixeira 1992; Squire, Wolfinger, and Glass 1987; Wolfinger and Rosenstone 1980; Campbell, Converse, Miller, and Stokes 1960). But mobility also disrupts (at least temporarily) a voter's social connectedness—that network of family, work, and friendship groups that lowers information costs and rewards good citizenship (Rosenstone and Hansen 1993, 23–24).

Although mobility may place a temporary damper on participation by affluent, upwardly mobile, suburban whites, the combined forces of poor education, low efficacy, and few resources put minority voters trapped in low-income neighborhoods at a more constant disadvantage. The wealthy and well educated are not only better able to learn about politics and participation but they have more resources and so do not persistently face the same difficult tradeoffs that limit the participation of the have-nots. For the poor, participation is often an alien luxury to be pursued after more basic needs have been met (Rosenstone and Hansen 1993; Rosenstone 1982). For immigrants who lack even the most basic knowledge of the American political system, the barriers to political participation are even greater than for native-born minorities (Tam 1996). These barriers to political involvement can be overcome, and usually they are in the second generation, but this often requires English proficiency, a goal that many first-generation Asian and Latin American immigrants never attain.

Still, the sheer volume of immigration in the last twenty years promises to enhance the influence of minorities in the politics of the nation and has already ensured their influence in New York, Florida, and California. Whether their political power in the coming decades will be directly proportional to their numbers depends upon the group's capacity to assimilate. The new immigrants are hampered not only by their lack of English proficiency but by their inferior position in the economy, which is determined by both their lack of skills and discrimination by natives. Political participation is so often contingent upon progress up the economic ladder that whatever holds such progress back is likely to restrain political participation as well. Given that geographic isolation and the expanding size of ethnic enclaves are associated with economic disadvan-

tage, the new immigrant communities retard rather than promote political participation.

Mobility and Party Regularity

Party regularity measured at the aggregate level refers to the extent to which an area's political behavior in major elections can be predicted by its balance of party registrants. Regular areas are those where the balance of party registrants and the outcome of elections neatly match. Irregularity, on the other hand, is observable when either sizable proportions of the electorate consistently fail to turn out or when those who do vote are not loyal to their registration. In democratic systems, party regularity matters because partisanship is a reflection of what divides, animates, and mobilizes the electorate. Party labels provide an accurate guide to the stands incumbent and aspiring officeholders take as well as a standard by which their performances can be judged. When the lines of partisanship are blurred as the result of the relocation of partisans with widely differing attitudes and political orientations, judgments based on party cues are more error prone and electoral accountability can be undermined. In addition, the regularity of an electorate is an important consideration when planning an election campaign. Reliable electorates need not be the focus of the candidate or party organization's attention (Gimpel 1996). Volatile ones, on the other hand, must be carefully studied, targeted, and mobilized. The more areas of a state are unpredictable the more campaign and organization resources must be diffused.

I have theorized that places where recent migrants and immigrants settle are more likely to be irregular—primarily on the basis of their erratic participation rates. The evidence supporting this hypothesis is mixed, depending upon the state. Florida and Kentucky, it should be noted, are more irregular than the other states due to the ubiquity of dual partisans—Democratic identifiers who regularly vote Republican—in the parts of those states that most closely resemble the Old South. Overall, however, it appears that the areas where the recent waves of immigrants have settled are more *regular* than the areas they have avoided—the precise opposite of my conjecture. This makes sense if the majority of naturalized foreign-born minorities are loyal to one party, probably the Democrats. Certainly the individual-level data from exit polls suggests that Asians and Hispanics were strongly Democratic in the early 1990s and less likely to split their bal-

lots than whites were. Regularity in immigrant receiving areas is also understandable given that the places where the recent foreign born are most concentrated are highly urbanized areas dominated by Democratic officeholders and where strong Democratic identifiers greatly outnumber weaker partisans. That so many immigrants reside in predictably Democratic cities is itself an explanation for their low participation. Individual votes matter least in the one-sided electoral settings Peter Skerry has referred to as rotten boroughs (1993). Abstention in such areas is a highly rational act.

In table 9.3, I have pooled the data from all seven states to generalize about demographic correlates of party irregularity in 1990, 1992, and 1994. The presence of large numbers of blacks in an area will usually ensure that party irregularity is kept to a minimum. In 1990, a 10 percent increase in the percentage of blacks across counties was associated with a two-point drop

TABLE 9.3. Similarity of Party Registration to Party Voting in Seven States, 1990–94

Variable	1990 ^a	1992	1994 ^a
% college educated	-.12** (.04)	.02 (.04)	-.22** (.03)
% born out of state	-.02 (.02)	-.02 (.02)	-.10** (.01)
% post-1970 immigrants	.03 (.02)	-.009 (.02)	.06** (.01)
% black	-.21** (.04)	-.08** (.03)	-.08** (.03)
Population density	-.00004 (.0003)	-.00003 (.0001)	-.0002** (.0001)
% turnout	-.02 (.04)	-.21** (.05)	.05 (.04)
Spatial lag	.61** (.05)	.52** (.04)	.67** (.03)
Constant	7.84	18.58	6.34
<i>N</i>	541	541	541
<i>R</i> ² _a	.38	.23	.59

Note: Spatial autoregressive model, weighted for population; pooled data for California, Colorado, Kansas, Kentucky, Florida, Pennsylvania, and New York; dependent variable = Abs (% Republican vote – % Republican registration). High positive values indicate counties where voting differed from registration. See appendix A for a full description of variables.

^aKentucky data are for election years 1991 and 1995.

p* < .10. *p* < .05.

in the difference between party registration and voting outcomes. Providing that blacks turn out, their loyally Democratic ballots will ensure minimal differences between party registration and actual vote choice.

As for internal U.S. migrants, the evidence that they are responsible for party irregularity is not uniformly strong across states. In table 9.3, the evidence indicates that the presence of interstate migrants is consistent with regularity rather than deviation from partisanship. In Pennsylvania, for instance, the areas with the highest proportion of internal migrants, including the wealthy Philadelphia suburbs, are quite regular in highly competitive elections. Similarly, in Florida and Kentucky it is the local, indigenous populations with their dual partisanship that by comparison make areas with out-of-state migrants easy to forecast in the early 1980s. By the 1990s, though, the continued high volume of cross-state migration was showing a marked tendency to increase the difference between registration and voting in Florida. Much of this discrepancy is related to the lower turnout levels of the newest residents. California's out-of-state populations are also associated with party irregularity, particularly in presidential contests and less so in state-level elections. While individual-level data are required to determine precisely whether the out-of-state migrants are the ones that are creating this electoral chaos by their unpredictable behavior, it is a good bet based on survey data that they are (Brown 1988).

Mobility and the Changing Balance of Partisanship

Finally, I investigated the impact of mobility on changes in party registration, hypothesizing that population growth from domestic sources is a sign of expanding economic opportunity likely to attract the best educated, most upwardly mobile populations and therefore likely to benefit the GOP at the expense of Democrats and third parties. Across states, of course, this would predict Republican growth in the Sunbelt and decline in the Rust Belt. GOP registration growth was especially brisk in Florida and California during the 1980s and 1990s. New York and Pennsylvania saw their Republican share of registrants diminish on average. In some states (Kentucky, Kansas) the benefits of migration for the GOP are not decisive, perhaps because the total volume of migration to these states has been low. Any Republican gains have been offset by similar losses. In these slower growth states, Republicans have gained more from generational replacement, specifically the death of old Democrats, than from population mobility.

Keeping in mind that we are dealing with cross-sectional data, a summary analysis of the change in Republican registration from 1980 to 1990 is presented in table 9.4. As expected, the proportion of internal migrants in a place in 1980 is positively associated with increasing GOP registration between 1980 and 1990. Population density is associated with Republican gains, but the more urban places where the foreign born concentrated in 1980 wound up with low Republican growth rates or even decline relative to other parties. Notably, however, *change* in the proportion of foreign-born residents enhances GOP growth. This is not necessarily the reflection of the voting tendencies and political preferences of these populations. But it is striking that in spite of the advance of immigrant populations in the

TABLE 9.4. Impact of Population Mobility on Changes in Republican Party Registration in Seven States, 1980–90

Variable	1980–90
% born out of state, 1980	.03** (.01)
Change in % born out of state	.07 (.05)
% foreign born, 1980	-.12* (.07)
Change in % foreign born	.42** (.10)
% Republican registrants, 1980	-.03** (.01)
% over age 65 in 1980	-.14** (.04)
Population density	.00007** (.00002)
Spatial lag	.82** (.03)
Constant	3.07
<i>N</i>	541
R^2_a	.70

Note: Spatial autoregressive model, weighted for population; pooled data for California, Colorado, Kansas, Kentucky, Florida, New York, and Pennsylvania; dependent variable = change in percentage of Republican Party registrants.

* $p < .10$. ** $p < .05$.

suburbs, Republicans have still gained some work. After all, the majority of Hispanic and a large proportion of Asian immigrants migrating to the suburbs identify with the Democratic Party. Immigrants are finding their way into the suburbs, and their relocation is apparently not putting a complete damper on Republican registration.

Glimpses of what is occurring within states reveal that Republicans have benefited from the movement of new populations into Southern California, northern Kentucky, and the Florida Gulf Coast, particularly in the 1980s and 1990s. The notion that the Democratic Party remains the political hope of those living in declining, impoverished areas is not a mythical one. The results suggest that the socioeconomic distinction between the parties in American politics may only grow wider in years to come and that one instrument of this division is the selective process behind population mobility.

Party support is dynamic and cyclical. Natural equilibrating tendencies in two-party politics militate against the permanent dominance of a single party in a particular area (Sellers 1965; Stokes and Iverson 1962). The two-party, winner-take-all structure of American elections encourages the intense effort by out-parties to build support, recruit more attractive candidates, and work their way into competitive positions. This is a potentially important countervailing force to the trends that shape political stratification that I have discussed throughout this book. While it is easy to see how the balance of party strength has been maintained at the national level and in most states, it is less clear whether localities are ruled by the balancing forces that ensure regular shifts in the political control of government. Indeed, there is some evidence that at the local level these equilibrium cycles are at work to prevent the sustained domination of a single party. Places that began the 1970s and 1980s with a high proportion of GOP registrants often experienced Republican losses. Examples include the waning Republican strength of several counties in upstate New York (including Tompkins and Onondaga) that have seen Democrats make considerable gains since the early 1970s.

Whatever incentives are at work in some areas to keep out-parties struggling to win elections, there are as many areas where the dominance of one party is more secure than ever. Whether a locality is potentially two-party competitive or electorally one sided remains contingent upon the racial and ethnic composition of the local electorate (Huckfeldt and Kohfeld 1989). Blacks and nonwhite Hispanics are sufficiently dedicated

to one party that the spatial sorting that has led to the segregation of neighborhoods, counties, and regions inevitably translates into single-party domination in geographically tied election districts. A state may be two-party competitive, but if that bipartisanship is constructed on the basis of homogeneous, ethnically pure electoral districts that are spatially segregated from one another, it will mean that state (and ultimately national) politics will become even more of an ethnic and racial battleground than it has been in the past.

The Future of Racial Divisions in the American Polity

I have argued that existing patterns of racial and ethnic segregation have not only been very slow to break down but are now being reinforced by both white mobility patterns and the influx of immigrants of color whose upward mobility and capacity to assimilate is limited in a variety of ways: by low skill levels, a lack of English proficiency, and the discrimination of native whites and in some cases native minorities. I have also indicated that sustained residential segregation by race will have an impact on politics as the minority communities grow larger, exacerbating racial and ethnic cleavages in the American political system. One could well argue that it is the nature of politics to cleave the community in one way or another. If race were not the dividing line, something else surely would be, say, class or religion or ideology. Why should we be so concerned that our politics divides us by race and ethnicity?

The answer is that race is the most unpleasant of dividing lines because it is not something people can change about themselves (Rothbart and John 1993). It is a permanent trait, with clear physical markers, even more difficult to disguise than gender and impossible to alter. A person can change his or her ideology through learning and compromise, convert to a new religion, or adopt no religion at all. Economic inequality can be addressed by combinations of individual action and government policy. For many issues that divide communities, resolutions have been achieved, even if they are often temporary. But no amount of government action can make those who are white black or vice versa. Of course, the immutable quality of race is what makes the issue so difficult to resolve.

While people cannot change their race, they can change their racial attitudes, and this leaves room for hope. Integration—or, to use a less politically charged term, “contact”—is the usual mechanism for constructing cross-racial friendships (Sigelman, Bledsoe, Welch, and Combs

1996; Sigelman and Welch 1993; Allport 1954). As Donald Kinder and Lynn Sanders have recently pointed out, segregation reduces incentives for coalition building and only widens the racial divide in opinion (1996, 286–87). The data presented in this book show that some progress has been made toward residential integration in the last thirty years. Asians, blacks, and Hispanics are moving out of central city neighborhoods. But for blacks and nonwhite Hispanics the suburbs they move to are only slightly less segregated than the urban neighborhoods they left behind (Massey and Denton 1993). Further progress will require vigorous enforcement of antidiscrimination laws by state and national governments. But the separation between ethnic groups is only partly kept in place by the prejudices of the majority. Many groups desire to maintain their own identity, language, and subculture, and this collective decision is averse to the type of contact that will reduce prejudice. As sociologist Milton M. Gordon observed in the mid-1960s:

The fulfillment of occupational roles, the assignment of living space, the selection of political leaders and the effective functioning of the educational process, among others, demand that universalistic criteria of competence and training, rather than considerations based on racial, religious, or nationality background, be utilized. The subversion of this principle by ethnic considerations would appear bound to produce, in the long run, confusion, conflict and mediocrity. (1964, 236)

Aside from residential integration, there are only a few alternatives that might help to diminish racial divisiveness in American politics. One possibility is that minorities will leave the Democratic Party and move into the GOP. But usually minority conversions to the Republican Party are associated with upward mobility—rising incomes, educational attainment, and middle-class status. If the economic position of native blacks and new immigrants slips further behind that of native whites, it is difficult to imagine that many of these voters will abandon the Democratic Party, which, for all its faults, capably maintains the image of the party of the downtrodden. For immigrants who have skills, English proficiency, and access to capital, the path to economic and geographic mobility is less blocked—and so, too, is the route to Republican Party identification. Upward mobility comes more easily to most Asians than to nonwhite Hispanics or blacks. Consequently, the prospects for increasing Asian influence within Republican ranks are quite promising (Horton 1995). Asian communities like

Monterey Park, California, are already showing some measure of two-party competition, therefore reducing the level of political balkanization that stems directly from insular settlement patterns.

The other possibility that may contribute to the dissipation rather than the increase in the level of racial tension in American politics is that national immigration policy will be changed, perhaps altering legal immigration preferences to favor more highly skilled and better educated immigrants. More highly skilled immigrants would have more geographic and socioeconomic mobility than the unskilled. In turn, a renewed focus on skilled immigration would lessen the reliance of the immigrant on the coethnic enclave and greatly facilitate the assimilation of the admitted immigrants into the mainstream economy. Moreover, native minorities and older immigrants are concerned about job competition from newly arriving groups. Even economists who favor unrestricted immigration have indicated that the influx of immigrants has the effect of depressing wages in low-skill occupations. Restricting entrance to skilled immigrants would lessen the competition for the unskilled positions and stabilize the wages and employment prospects for low-skill natives. Restricting the flow of legal immigrants would also directly address the anxieties of native minorities, particularly those in low-skill, low-wage occupations. In turn, the prosperity of native minorities and already settled immigrant groups would diminish the extent to which economic grievances based on racial inequities become the foundation for political demands.

Finally, racial cleavages have persisted because of the way in which political jurisdictional boundaries have been drawn. Residential settlement patterns, as I have repeatedly indicated, remain highly segregated by race and ethnicity in most urban and many rural areas. Even when minority populations are small, they are often isolated in a particular area or neighborhood within a county. Spatial isolation confines whatever political influence they have to just one or a few legislative districts (Lublin 1997). While the move from at-large to district-tied elections has succeeded in electing minority representatives to local, state, and national office, it has also wasted minority votes by blocking them into politically homogeneous, ethnically pure election districts characterized by little electoral competition. Inevitably the votes of many minorities in these districts are wasted because the politicians that represent them face only minimal opposition. Lani Guinier, a critic of geographically based, winner-take-all election districts, complains that the votes in support of losing candidates in gerrymandered districts are wasted (Guinier 1994,121). Guinier neglects

to add that when winning candidates are coasting to easy 75 percent victories even the votes in the majority's favor are wasted. The answer to bad representation is not to give voters who supported the loser proportional representation but to draw district lines that promote two-party political competition—and that means, in present times, the abolition of race-based districting. Wasted votes are not just those cast for the losing candidate, as Guinier insists, but all votes that are cast in any noncompetitive election setting. Whereas Guinier objects to territorial districts that encompass heterogeneous groups that are not of like mind, maximizing the value of individual votes requires just these kinds of districts—since these are the districts most likely to generate competitive party politics. Gerrymandering should be designed not to group people on the basis of their similarity but on the basis of their *dissimilarity*! The guiding criteria for drawing boundaries should be to maximize racial, economic, and political diversity within a district. Inevitably, given the concentration of certain economic and racial groups, there are limits to the extent to which any set of boundary adjustments will promote this diversity. Given their small minority populations, Kansas and Kentucky districts are likely to be racially homogeneous regardless of how much the lines are redrawn, although they may still be politically diverse.

The proposal to draw districts that maximize rather than minimize racial and economic heterogeneity is likely to strike some as simply a return to white-dominated, at-large schemes of representation that many municipalities have recently rejected on grounds of inequity. But it is a mistake to assume that a group is well or poorly represented because of the race or economic class of the politicians who are elected. The political presence of a group in a legislature is not determined by the presence of a member of that group in that legislature. Minorities in big cities and white voters in wealthy suburbs are often poorly represented not because the politicians elected to represent them are the wrong race but because the election contests in these areas are not politically competitive. In the absence of competitive contests, voters become cynical and apathetic and refuse to participate—further contributing to the erosion of the threat of electoral sanction. Until the success of candidates is entirely independent of the ethnic and racial composition of district populations, race-based districting should be eliminated at all levels of elective office.

Conflict between groups with differences on some salient dimension is the hallmark of politics in a democratic system. But it is important to distinguish between healthy and unhealthy divisions. The unhealthy divisions

are ones rooted in unalterable traits like race, which divide people based on permanent group memberships. The healthy divisions are those that can be resolved more easily by the movement of individuals into and out of penetrable coalition groupings. It is not inevitable that political conflict in the United States must be based on race and ethnic differences; it only seems that way given the nation's long struggle with this issue. Redefining notions of minority political empowerment to recognize the importance of competitive electoral districts while maintaining efforts to promote minority opportunity and advancement in the economy is essential to creating a democracy in which the issues dividing the polity are more temporary and soluble.