The Interaction of Individual Preferences and Economic Differentials in the Generation of Racial Segregation: An Agent-Based Model

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**Abstract** 

This paper explores the effect of individual actions and economic differentials on racial

segregation using empirically-calibrated agent-based simulations. The basic simulation model is

based on Thomas Schelling's spatial proximity model. It features neighborhood preferences

about race, and racial segregation emerges as households move to satisfy their preferences. Two

variants of the basic model feature neighborhood preferences about income instead of race, and

neighborhood preferences about income as well as race. I vary the relationship between

household income and race in each simulation, and analyze how the strength of their association

and the type of neighborhood preference affect the dynamics of racial segregation. Results show

that if preferences are based on race, the association of race and income does not affect racial

segregation; if preferences based on income, a stronger association leads to higher racial

segregation; and if preferences are based on both race and income, a stronger association leads to

lower racial segregation.

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