

1

Urban Political Boundaries and Metropolitan Fragmentation

I try to convince my students in American Government, State Government, and Urban Politics that the United States is the most fragmented country in the world.

The task is made more difficult by the fact that my contention cannot be proven. So many of the units which are the stuff of American fragmentation have no counterpart in other countries. Tricks of language and definition deprive us of confidence in our comparisons even when we think we have found entities which are comparable across nations. So, when the Department of the Census (1982a) declares that there are 82,341 units of government in the United States, I cannot prove to my students that that is more units of government than exist in any other country—it is not clear that all other countries keep track of such things, nor that “government” and “unit of government” mean the same thing in all countries and all languages. But it is my decided judgement that this is so.

“Consider,” I say to them, “the number of McDonald’s Restaurants in the world.” I use this reference for two reasons—McDonald’s is a palpable presence for almost all university students, and everyone knows that McDonald’s are like grains of sand or like stars in the heavens. As nearly as I can tell, there are about 8,000 McDonald’s in

the world. I point out to my students that there are not one tenth as many McDonald's in the world as there are governments in the United States, and they are duly impressed.

The evidence of our fragmentation is not only governmental. I suspect that the United States has more organized religious denominations than any country in the world. One source reports that there are more than ten thousand organizations that employ lobbyists to pursue their interests at the federal level alone (Prewitt, Verba, and Salisbury 1987). We have experienced massive waves of immigration, making us, if not the most ethnically diverse of countries, certainly as diverse as any other.

We have been fragmented by design as well as happenstance. I would argue that a close reading of Federalist 10 and 51 can support no other conclusion than that American government is intended to be as inefficient as it can possibly be while still maintaining a pretense of organization.

Indeed, I think that fragmentation in the United States, social, political, and economic, is neither random nor inconsequential. Rather, I think that fragmentation is one of the obdurate facts of American society and culture, and that diverse manifestations of fragmentation in every facet of American life have a symphonic relationship to one another. Fragmentation speaks to the essence of our national character, is perhaps the best indication of what we value, and explains a great many social and political outcomes.

Governmental fragmentation at the local level is Jeffersonian in its theoretical origins. Jefferson's commitment to a ward system in which local governments perform the bulk of governmental functions, with higher units becoming progressively less active, is familiar to students of American political thought. The local government was to be the incubator of democracy, training citizens in their rights and responsibilities. Honesty, immediacy, and responsiveness were taken to be the virtues of government close to the people. The American experience of decentral-

ized self-government embodied in the New England town reinforced the Jeffersonian predilection.

Institutional and legal practice soon were brought into conformity with the localist impulse in the independent United States (Teaford 1979). At first, the legislatures of the states reviewed petitions for incorporation singly. As such petitions became more numerous, however, the ability of the legislatures to legislate was impeded. Early on, the pattern of automatic state sanction for incorporations that conformed to certain objective criteria was established. If it could be shown that a proposed municipality would exceed a minimum population requirement, and if a majority of residents of the proposed corporation approved its creation in a plebiscite, then state approval would be forthcoming. This is the legal structure of the creation of units of government that persists today. The creation of units of local government is, for the most part, not supervised by any central governmental unit. Local governments in the United States exist almost entirely as a matter of local volition (Miller 1981; Mowitz and Wright 1962).

This lack of central supervision over government creation may be another unique feature of the United States. Teaford compares practice in the United States with that in the United Kingdom. In the United Kingdom, communities wishing to incorporate must petition an agency of national government. Thus begins a lengthy process of study and deliberation which attempts to determine, among other things, if the community has sufficient population to warrant its own political identity; if the community has the economic resources to support the services and activities incumbent upon government; and if there are no other political entities in the area which might undertake such services and activities so that the creation of an additional unit of government might be avoided. Berry (1973) also emphasizes the relatively decentralized nature of urban development in the United States compared to other industrialized Western nations. Western Europe and the United Kingdom have a long history of urban

planning. Land use and community formation are under public, central control to a much greater extent than they are in the United States. Even in those instances when the creation of suburban communities is encouraged as a matter of national policy, as with the British New Towns program, the French *Schema Directeur*, the Finnish Seven Towns Plan, or the Swedish Master Plan for Stockholm, it is to serve national and public purposes of equalizing economic development, providing services equably, redistributing wealth, and ameliorating housing shortages. Local prerogative is not a high priority.

In this book, "political fragmentation" refers to the proliferation of governments across American society and geography. It denotes the division of urban areas among hundreds of overlapping, autonomous political units, each with an array of powers—regulation, taxation, incarceration, program implementation, allocation of public resources. . . .

Can it be that the pervasiveness of political fragmentation in the United States has no practical significance? Can a country which is so socially diverse and politically and economically fragmented be unremarkable? Perhaps this diversity and fragmentation is simply a curiosity, an interesting trait of Americans to be remarked upon in travel guides in the same way that we remark that certain native peoples in Africa are extraordinarily tall, or wear bones in their noses.

To the extent that fragmentation is a matter of design, however, it must have been meant to accomplish something. Madison argues that an extended, socially diverse—one might say, pluralistic—republic and a government in which the power of factions is divided and balanced are likely to protect the rights of the people. If no faction can gain a monopoly over the power and apparatus of government, the state cannot be used to deprive the people of their freedom and property. Half of Madison's vision has been realized in a society which is diverse and a governmental structure in which it is easier to veto action than to pursue it to its culmination.

The ability of this structure to guarantee equal freedom and distribute rewards equably to the citizens has been questioned, however. Some would argue that pluralism rewards those who already have resources (Schattschneider 1975; Macpherson 1962, 1977), and that the checks and balances built into American government are more likely to preserve the privileges of the few than to protect the freedoms of the many. The existence of thousands of units of local government certainly divides power, if our perspective is national. If our perspective is local, however, the multiplication of local governments is also the progressive entrenchment of power. The atomization of potential national majorities is the simultaneous institutionalization of majorities at the local level. The result may be something different than the thriving cells of democracy envisioned by Jefferson. The result may only be a system of structured inequalities.

This is a book about political fragmentation in the United States. It is specifically about metropolitan areas and about the number of political jurisdictions that exist in American metropolitan areas. In this regard it is not unique. Other books have also addressed the subject of political fragmentation in American metropolitan areas (Danielson 1972, 1976; Miller 1981; Norton 1979; Teaford 1979), and social scientists have produced an immense amount of literature dealing with the implications of this extreme fragmentation. Of particular concern have been the implications of fragmentation for questions of efficiency and equality. In addressing these questions, some analysts are led to call for reforms in the structure of local governance on the grounds of the inequalities that fragmentation generates or the inefficiencies it visits upon the pursuit of public purposes. Others feel that these inequalities are exaggerated, or that far from causing inefficiency, governmental fragmentation and overlap promote flexibility and efficiency in the allocation of resources. Despite this diversity of perspectives, all of these analyses have one thing in common—they are essentially concerned with institutional factors. The debate centers on

the actions and powers of governments. The crux of the debate is what governments do, or how their powers are used by particular groups. To the extent that the geographic structure of metropolitan fragmentation is mentioned, it is only in passing.

The intent of this book is to reverse these priorities to see what follows. Behind this strategy is the conviction that the least ambiguous facet of metropolitan fragmentation is that it is structured by political boundaries. In turn, the least ambiguous function of these boundaries is to demarcate discrete spatial units. I argue that proceeding upon these bases, it is possible to reproduce many of the results that are usually explained by invoking institutional factors.

Ultimately, of course, this discussion has policy implications. The way in which we understand urban governmental fragmentation will have its impact on policy regarding the contours and processes of local governance. If many of the outcomes we attribute to institutional factors actually result from political boundary structures, policies that are meant to modify these outcomes can have only limited success while boundary structures are intact.

Suburbanization and its Social Implications

In the years after World War II suburbanization became irresistible. Pent up demand for new housing along with FHA and VA loan policies and improved transportation systems promoted tremendous growth at the urban periphery (Campbell and Meranto 1971). These developments have been well documented and need not be examined in detail here (Teaford 1979; Berry 1973: 35–36; Danielson 1976: 201–205; Orfield 1976).

By the 1950s, then, suburbanization and urban fragmentation had become a formative social process in the American experience, one of those developments that impinges upon such a wide variety of affairs and endeavors that it reshapes the contours of society. A burgeoning so-

cial science literature began to consider seriously the implications of the changing form of the metropolis.

There was an early understanding that the growth of the suburbs had effects that were not neutral with regard to classes and strata. It has been widely recognized that suburban expansion is more than a function of urban population growth; that it is in many cases driven by class and racial antipathies as well as by simple numbers (Berry 1973: chapter 2; Judd 1979: chapter 6; Farley 1976; Danielson 1976: chapter 1). Two trends are apparent from analyses of the sociological component of suburban growth: first, it has resulted in broad socioeconomic differences between the cities and the suburbs; and second, socioeconomic differences have emerged among suburbs that tend to be jurisdictionally structured.

In the period immediately following World War II, the larger American central cities typically experienced either a decline in population growth or an absolute decline in population. These declines were almost always coupled with increasing suburban growth rates (Berry 1973; Schnore et al. 1976; Sternlieb and Hughes 1976). The experience of St. Louis is representative of this trend. The population of the city of St. Louis peaked in 1950 at about 850,000. From 1950 to 1980, this figure has been reduced by half, while the population of surrounding St. Louis County has increased substantially (Schmandt, Wendel, and Tomey 1983; B. Williams 1973). A similar process has taken place in Chicago (Orlebeke 1983) and New York (Gordon 1976; Sternlieb and Hughes 1976). Nor have the cities of the West been entirely exempt, as indicated by demographic trends in Los Angeles and surrounding counties (Miller 1981: 172-176; Schnore et al. 1976).

Much of the increase in suburban population is the result of emigration from the urban core (Downs 1981: 2). This emigration has not been random respecting the characteristics of the emigres. Definite trends are identifiable with regard to the sorts of people who are likely to move from city to suburb. Such persons tend to be white,

younger, better educated, and more affluent than the persons who remain in central cities (Schnore, Andre, and Sharp 1976; Kasarda 1983; Schmandt, Wendell, and Tomey 1979; Schultze et al. 1976; Sternlieb and Hughes 1976; Campbell and Meranto 1971).

Though the suburbs are, on average, distinguishable from the central cities, one should not conclude that there is no variation between suburban jurisdictions themselves. A great deal of socioeconomic, demographic, and cultural variety exists in suburbia, and a number of observers have noticed that it is spatially structured. Suburban political units tend not only to be spatially and jurisdictionally distinct, but to be identifiable in terms of the compositions and life styles of their populations as well.

The most prominent characteristic distinguishing suburban jurisdictional populations is race, and segregation by this characteristic is more complete than by any other. In those areas where blacks do move from central cities to suburbs, it is predominantly to suburbs that are contiguous with central city ghettos (Orfield 1978: 51; Berry et al. 1976: 236–242; Danielson 1976: 8; Massey and Mullan 1984; Stahura 1988). These are the suburbs with the oldest housing, weakest city services and tax bases, and highest bonded indebtedness (Massey and Denton 1988a; Schneider and Logan 1982). Furthermore, the suburbs in which blacks live are not in any meaningful sense “integrated.” Danielson notes:

As a result of these settlement patterns, most suburbs have only a handful of black residents, while a few have large minority populations. Almost 7,000 of the 10,000 blacks in Southern California’s Orange County resided in Santa Ana in 1970, compared with 170 in Anaheim and 41 in Newport Beach, where they comprised 0.1 percent and 0.08 percent of the population respectively. In northern New Jersey, 89 percent of Essex County’s 72,000 black residents in 1970 lived in East Orange, Orange, and Montclair—all older suburbs bordering on Newark. Fifteen of the 237 suburban municipi-

palties in the Chicago area accounted in 1970 for 83 percent of the 128,300 blacks living in the suburbs. Moreover, as Pierre De Vise has pointed out, the Chicago area's "entire 10-year gain of 50,000 suburban blacks during the 1960s occurred in these fifteen suburbs" (Danielson 1976: 8-9).

What is true of municipalities holds for school districts as well (Orfield 1978: 75-76). Those suburban jurisdictions in which intermediate proportions of blacks do occur are usually in the midst of rapid and inexorable transition from black to white (Orfield 1978: 93). Berry and his co-authors have touched upon the dynamic underlying the ubiquitous occurrence of racial transition. Following Taeuber and Taeuber (1965: 112), they point out that housing occupied by blacks rarely reverts to white ownership. "When an 'integrated neighborhood' was defined as one attracting both blacks and whites, a national survey found a median black population of only 3% in such neighborhoods." (Berry et al. 1976: 222).

Considerations such as these lead Orfield to conclude that "in United States society, physical separation is reinforced by race, a bitter history of race relations, and an increasing tendency for political boundaries to become racial boundaries" (Orfield 1976: 381).

Suburban political jurisdictions have also been found to differ along a number of other dimensions. Distinctions by class, defined roughly in terms of wealth and income, are present, though they are not as rigidly structured as racial differences (Miller 1981: chapter 6; Danielson 1976: 5-14; Hill 1974; Logan 1983; Logan and Schneider 1981). Differences in a wide variety of population characteristics were found by Schnore (1971) to vary with the economic characteristics of suburbs. Dye and colleagues found that suburbs vary by socioeconomic status and that these variations are important for differences in attitudes, policies, and levels of cooperation in the delivery of services (Williams and others 1971; Dye and others 1971). Perhaps the broadest category by which suburban jurisdictions

have been found to vary is that of "life style" or "culture". This category incorporates considerations of income, occupation, education, and sometimes race, ethnicity, and religion. Jurisdictional segregation by life style is at the base of what Berry terms "the mosaic culture" (Berry 1973: 64-66), and Williams argues that life style differences across suburbs are crucial in understanding the fragmentation of metropolitan government itself. Local governments, according to Williams, are willing to surrender autonomy over routine system-maintenance functions; but they zealously guard their autonomy over policies governing areas such as housing and education that impinge upon the life style values of the community (Williams 1980).

A substantial literature, then, supports the conclusion that there is considerable differentiation by political unit along a number of dimensions—race, occupation, education, income, and composite measures of socioeconomic status and life style—among metropolitan jurisdictions. This conclusion is rarely contested.

Recent work by E. Ostrom (1983) provides one of these rare examples. Ostrom notes that a good deal of stratification by political unit exists (p. 92), but that its significance may be overestimated. Though there are small, homogeneous rich and poor suburbs in almost every metropolitan area, these polar examples are not representative of the broader array of jurisdictions. She cites the work of Logan and Schneider which asserts that the "extent to which residential segregation actually is found is often overstated" (1981: 24).

This disagreement over the extent of jurisdictional segregation by income group (Ostrom agrees that the races are jurisdictionally segregated) is in great part semantical. As one group of observers notes, "... neighborhood homogeneity is clearly a relative concept; there is no doubt that 'homogenous' neighborhoods contain a population with an often broad range of occupations, educational backgrounds, and even class affiliations" (Berry et al. 1976: 254).

The problem, then, is to determine at what point we can consider a given jurisdictional population significantly

different from others. Indeed, the widespread use of the term "homogeneity" in this context is misleading in that it makes a stronger claim than most analysts intend. I would rather speak of jurisdictional "eccentricity". Webster tells us that eccentricity occurs when spheres do not have the same center. Eccentricity is "a deviation from an established pattern, rule, or norm" (G. and C. Merriam Company 1966: 261). It is useful to appropriate the term in this context to compare jurisdictional populations with MSA populations or county populations. When jurisdictional means deviate substantially from the means of greater populations, such deviant jurisdictions are described as "eccentric". This is a more accurate term than "homogeneity" because it indicates not that the composition of the population is uniform, but that it is distinguishable from others in terms of the distribution of some characteristic.

Schneider and Logan base their claim (that the distinctiveness of suburbs is overstated) on their use of a two-to-one ratio of poverty or wealth. That is, if a suburb has twice as great a proportion of poor or wealthy families as the metropolitan proportion, it is considered significantly different from other suburbs. By their own standard, Schneider and Logan find 393 of 1,139 suburbs, or 34%, to be distinctive. One questions the givenness of the 2:1 ratio for determining distinctiveness. Why is it necessary for a suburb to have 100% more poor or rich families than the average for it to be considered distinctive? Is a suburb not socioeconomically distinct if it has 75% more rich or poor families than the metropolitan average? Of the 746 suburbs which have "a normal mixture of income classes," we might wonder about the relationship of the poorest to the wealthiest. What are the differences in income, property value, and proportion of home-ownership in these communities?

Schneider and Logan's use of the 2:1 standard is not unreasonable, but many standards and dimensions of inequality might reasonably inform judgements concerning the distinctiveness of suburbs. For instance, the finding reported in chapter 4 is that in suburban Cook and Los

Angeles Counties, more variance in racial composition, education, and occupation occurs among suburban municipalities than within them. Furthermore, any determination about the distinctiveness or lack thereof of suburbs should be made with an eye to the implications of differences in race and socioeconomic status for quality of life, provision of services, and life outcomes. Much previous work, for instance, supports the conclusion that differences in socioeconomic status are correlated with differences in services offered by suburbs (Williams et al. 1971; Dye et al. 1971). There are substantial differences in educational services offered by school districts in metropolitan areas, and these difference correlate closely with the socioeconomic status of residents (Berke, Goertz, and Coley 1984; Wise 1967).

The 2:1 standard offered by Schneider and Logan and, in turn, by Ostrom, appears somewhat arbitrary, and is an incomplete measure of suburban eccentricity in that it does not include race and other important characteristics. The preponderance of the social science literature concerning the sociology of the suburbs has been concerned with their social and economic distinctiveness, not with their uniformity (Stein 1987; Schnore 1972; Dye et al. 1971; Williams 1968). The arguments made by Ostrom, and by Schneider and Logan are not yet sufficient to justify discarding this literature, particularly when Logan and Schneider find in related research (1981) that income inequality in the suburbs of a majority of American cities appears to be increasing.

Explanations of Suburban Eccentricity

Several explanations have been offered for the eccentricity of suburban populations. In this section, three of them are discussed—the “politics of exclusion”, public choice, and neighborhood tipping. Each of these explanations has something to offer, but is for present purposes incomplete. The discussion of these explanations is meant

as a preparation for the introduction of a theory of urban political boundaries and the ways in which they influence segregation by race and socioeconomic attributes, as well as other characteristics, in suburbs. Toward that end, Hirschman's treatment of exit behavior is also discussed (Hirschman 1970).

The Politics of Exclusion

Exclusionary practices have been frequently cited as a cause of segregation by class and race (Danielson 1976; Frieden 1979; Cion 1971; Norton 1979; Miller 1981; Logan and Schneider 1984). This argument would have it that relatively homogeneous communities use political boundaries as defenses against low income and minority intruders.

The first step in acquiring exclusionary powers is to reinforce community identity politically through incorporation (Danielson 1976; Miller 1981; Cion 1971: 228; Mowitz and Wright 1962). Incorporation gives the community autonomy over land use and construction, and over the provision of services that may be essential to expanded development. Zoning ordinances, for instance, may prohibit the construction of all but single family dwellings on large lots. The cost of such housing precludes purchase by many of the types of people that suburbanites frequently consider undesirable. Exclusionary mechanisms have been extensively discussed elsewhere and need not be examined in detail here (Danielson 1976). That communities actually do incorporate toward such ends is not in dispute (See *The New York Times*, 1974).

In addition to politically acquired powers, residents frequently resort to open hostility and violence to frighten off intruders (Berry et al. 1976; Darnton 1974; Hirsch 1983). The exclusionary efforts of localities have been complemented by federal government policies in the underwriting of mortgages and the location of public and subsidized housing (Danielson 1976; Orfield 1976; Downs 1981). Additionally, realtors and lending institutions fre-

quently route minority group members away from white communities (Danielson 1976; Orfield 1976; Downs 1981).

The existence of these practices is often invoked as a means of understanding stratification by jurisdiction. This explanation is at best partial, however. It demonstrates how certain types of persons are kept out of certain communities; but it says nothing about the way in which communities attract new settlers that are acceptable to them. The exclusion that occurs at a boundary cannot account for the persistence of homogeneous or eccentric communities in the presence of steady turnover in community membership (Downs 1981: 24–26, 35). For that, a process of recruitment or selection is required as a complement to exclusion. Not only must the wrong people be kept out, but the right people must be recruited to replace those who inevitably will defect.

Not surprisingly, the literature on exclusionary politics has not included a well articulated treatment of the recruitment function. There is implicit recognition that such a function exists. Berry and others, for instance, make the following statement: "Because Park Forest had been well publicized as an integrated community and many of the suburbs around it are known to be highly resistant to black immigration, increasing numbers of blacks began to seek homes within its confines" (1976: 241). There is a clear assumption here that recruitment of black families into Park Forest is occurring. But the implications of this process are not explored. We understand, therefore, that a recruitment dynamic is in place, but its articulation and implications have yet to be explored with the same thoroughness as the exculsory dynamic.

Perhaps the best example of explicit interest in the recruitment function on the part of "exclusionists" is their attention to the role of the realtor in the sorting process. Realtors are clearly involved in the politics of exclusion by virtue of their practice of steering minority group members and persons of low socioeconomic status away from white, middle class neighborhoods (Danielson 1976: 12; Orfield 1976; Molotch 1972). More important here, how-

ever, are the techniques used by realtors for attracting persons with certain socioeconomic characteristics to housing areas that the realtor deems suitable for them (Judd 1979: 169–74). These techniques range from advertising in local media to supplying information to prospective buyers on the demographic and socioeconomic compositions of neighborhoods.

This explanation of recruitment is not satisfactory, however, because it provokes another question rather than providing an answer. If settlers of the appropriate type are recruited into communities by information supplied to them by realtors, where do realtors get their information? Do realtors use a different frame of reference in organizing information about metropolitan areas than other people might use? Is their information available only to the priesthood of realtors or is it information that any attentive person might obtain?

Suffice it to say that the exclusionist treatment of recruitment is for the most part oblique. One must look elsewhere for a more self-conscious treatment of jurisdictional recruitment.

Urban Fragmentation and Public Choice

In a 1972 article, Elinor Ostrom offered the political economy approach as an alternative to the metropolitan reform traditions of urban analysis (Ostrom 1980). In that article, she discussed the principal assumptions of urban political economists (for a similar discussion, see Bish 1971: 1–17). Central among these assumptions are that the individual will make decisions so as to maximize his/her welfare (Ostrom 1980: 322). Political economists also assume that publicly provided goods and services have different characteristics, such that they will be best provided by governments that differ in the comprehensiveness of their jurisdictions and that are at different levels in the American federal system. This is an approach well suited for analyzing the decisions underlying recruitment. The

basic analytical framework of the political economists consists of individuals with various locational preferences confronted by a variety of jurisdictions offering distinct service packages, each at a different cost. The sorting out of the population occurs when persons with certain preferences choose to locate in jurisdictions with particular service-cost combinations.

The classical statement of this model is Tiebout's (1956). He argues that the existence of multiple jurisdictions ameliorates the chief problem in the provision of public goods. When a settler chooses to live in a particular jurisdiction, s/he in effect reveals a preference for a particular bundle of services at a particular cost. This arrangement promotes the provision of public goods at optimal levels, increasing allocational efficiency by channeling resources to their most highly valued uses. In effect, fragmented local government imposes a market structure upon the provision of public goods. "The consumer may be viewed as picking that community which best satisfies his preference pattern for public goods. . . . the greater the variety among [communities], the closer the consumer will come to fully realizing his preference position" (Tiebout, 1956: 118).

The Tiebout model has had an enduring intuitive appeal. Its fundamental assumptions have informed a number of subsequent analyses (Bish 1971, 1976; Hawkins 1976; V. Ostrom, Warren, and Tiebout 1970). Though many of the assumptions of the model are naive (perfect mobility, complete absence of externalities), Tiebout has isolated the rudiments of a dynamic that is so plausible that we are convinced that it must somehow be at work in metropolitan areas. Subsequent analyses (Stein 1987; Lowery and Lyons 1989) continue to mine Tiebout's initial insight. Writing twenty-five years later, Peterson incorporates much of Tiebout's market logic into his argument about the limitations of city politics: ". . . the closer any locality moves toward the ideal match between taxes and services, the more attractive a

setting it is for residents and the more valuable its land becomes" (Peterson 1981: 37).

The Tiebout model, then, supplies an argument about recruitment. Settlers find their ways to those government units that offer service/tax configurations closest to the ones that they prefer. In this context, however, assumption two of the model becomes specially interesting: "Consumer-voters are assumed to have full knowledge of differences among revenue and expenditure patterns . . ." (Tiebout 1956: 419). This assumption seems innocuous enough—that is, of course, until one recalls the number of government units that may be involved in the delivery of services to a single household.

Depending upon what are usually idiosyncratic considerations of governmental structure, residents may simultaneously receive services from a county, a municipality, a school district, a fire-protection district, a sewage treatment district, a health-and-sanitation district, a transportation authority, and so on. Scott and Corzine note that "San Mateo County, for example, has well over 400 different code areas for taxing purposes with approximately 75 special districts performing 8 to 12 different functions" (Scott and Corzine 1971). Conditions such as these are reproduced in metropolitan areas across the country. St. Louis County has ninety municipalities and twenty-four school districts among its 289 units of government. Harris County (Texas) includes within its boundaries upwards of 300 independent water districts (Perrenod 1984).

Given the complex structure of local government, the warrantability of granting the assumption of full knowledge on the part of consumers is questionable. It is a real chore for settlers to know simply the set of jurisdictions in which some location falls. Knowledge of the full variety of taxes levied in that location may not be easily gained (Scott and Corzine 1971: 204–206). Even more difficult will be the task of identifying each of the services that taxes purchase, not to mention determining the quality

and level at which they are provided. Recent research (Lowery and Lyons 1989) suggests that citizens are not sufficiently aware of local government to be in possession of such detailed knowledge.

The question of consumer knowledge is not trivial. What these observations indicate is that theories of recruitment must make reference to the role of information. The following questions must be addressed: (1) how do consumers impose cognitive structures on metropolitan geographies in order to have some conception of differences between places? and (2) how do these structures condition the locational choices that they make?

The least satisfying aspect of the political economy approach to urban fragmentation is its myopia with respect to exclusionary practices and discrimination manifested in the unquestioning acceptance by political economists of the market as the ultimate, legitimate arbiter of urban locational outcomes. According to the Tiebout model and its articulators, fragmentation in metropolitan government is desirable because it fosters a quasi-market system for delivering public services.

A democratic society may value a number of things in addition to allocative efficiency, however. The problem with this market arrangement is that it permits wealth to determine the enjoyment of benefits that we might wish to be distributed independent of economic status. We might not want the quality of police and fire protection, education, and certain aspects of health to depend upon an individual's ability to buy into a desirable community (see Okun 1975: 1-32; Walzer 1980; Spitz 1977). Miller summarizes this line of criticism by saying "... I would maintain that efficiency is not a sufficient normative basis for making policy recommendations regarding metropolitan organization, despite the fact that that is the only normative criterion that is specifically mentioned by Tiebout himself and most of his followers" (Miller 1981: 187-88).

Part of this myopia is the assumption that the workings of markets are in themselves innocent—that they

work in accord with immutable laws of supply and demand and are therefore divorced from normative considerations. In light of the work done on the politics of exclusion, this assumption is questionable. There is abundant evidence that residents of suburban jurisdictions purposefully structure markets to discriminate on social rather than economic grounds. Their intent is to see that locations not only go to the highest bidder, but that that bidder be middle class and white. It is true that discriminatory motives can be capitalized into real estate values and thus be given an economic representation. This does not alter the fact, however, that under these circumstances the market is primarily an instrument of status discrimination, whatever ostensibly economic functions it may perform.

Neighborhood Tipping Models

A great deal of literature indicates that once black penetration of geographic units occurs, complete transition and succession is nearly inevitable (Massey and Mullan 1984; Berry et al. 1976; Duncan and Duncan 1957). The repeatedly demonstrated instability of integrated neighborhoods has prompted a number of analysts to offer the "neighborhood-tipping" explanation of neighborhood racial change (Steinnes 1977; Grodzins 1957; Schelling 1978; see also Taub, Taylor, and Dunham 1984; Stinchcombe, McDill and Walker 1969; Pryor 1971). According to this theory, once the proportion black of the population of a spatial unit reaches a certain point, an irreversible process of neighborhood transition is engendered.

Neighborhood tipping models are of interest here because they are predicated on the existence of discrete spatial units, and because they explain population dynamics in terms of the aggregate effects of individual decisions. Suburban municipalities and school districts *are* discrete spatial units (indeed, I would argue that they are considerably more discrete than the neighborhoods to which the tipping argument is usually addressed), and as such

would seem to provide the necessary substratum upon which to build tipping point models.

The motivating forces behind the population dynamic described by tipping-point models are the perceptions and preferences of the residents of discrete spatial units (Schelling 1978). Whites have varying thresholds of toleration for blacks in their residential unit. As blacks move into the unit, whites with the lowest levels of tolerance move out, making more vacancies into which blacks can move. When blacks move into these vacancies, those who would have remained in the unit at the original level of black occupancy rethink their commitment, and some of them move, creating further vacancies. This structure of preferences and interdependent decision-making insures that a very small original penetration of a spatial unit by blacks is sufficient to tip it from all white to all black.

Tipping-point models are clearly based on a theory of recruitment (or perhaps it is more accurate to say a theory of recruitment and *dis*recruitment). People choose to leave spatial units based on their preferences about their neighbors. Though tipping point theorists talk mostly about exit, they imply also that those who leave will choose to live only in units in which they find their prospective neighbors desirable—that they will be recruited by such units. As such, they provide at least a partial complement to exclusionary theorists. They also supplement the work of political economists by pointing to additional preferences concerning neighbors and life style which are probably as important in determining residential choices as are concerns over service bundles and taxes. Finally, tipping theory provides an explanation for the racial distinctiveness that characterizes the populations of suburbs, implying that integrated municipalities or school districts should be inherently unstable, and that the majority of such spatial units at any point in time should be either all white or all black.

As with the work of the political economists, however, tipping models beg the question of information. Preferences about residence, whether they concern publicly provided