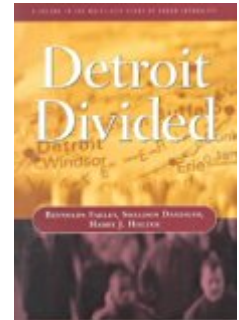


Reynolds Farley Holzer, Sheldon Danziger, Harry J.. *Detroit Divided*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2000. xi + 309 pp. \$34.95, cloth, ISBN 978-0-87154-243-4.



Reviewed by June Manning Thomas

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For years, some of us have been carrying pieces of this book around, like talismen that we pulled out every once in a while to examine and share. We used bits of census data here, a few results of Farley's housing prejudice studies there, and tapped various other pieces of the Detroit Area Studies and other surveys that provide much of the data that are in this book. We used these various pieces in our own books, articles, and public talks, as we tried to help unravel the complexities that make up cities like Detroit. Publication of this book allows us to put aside many of the reports and studies that we have been hauling around. The book collects an important set of information in one place, and also analyzes this information well enough to provide many important insights into several ongoing policy dilemmas.

This book's title would suggest that it describes the division of Detroit on several levels. Unfortunately, the lack of a subtitle does not help to clarify intent. In fact, the book does not address the jurisdictional division of the metropolis, although that division makes this region one of the

most politically fragmented in the country, a fact that has been treated elsewhere to some extent.[1] Neither does it look, except in passing, at division in terms of public transit, political leadership, or development prospects and redevelopment initiatives.[2] It also does not purport to offer a detailed history of racial, spatial, or economic division, although it liberally cites some works that have, and the first two chapters of the book provide some historical context.[3]

What it does cover, however, it covers exceedingly well. Specifically, this book explores racial division, concentrating on three major aspects of this division: the labor market, residential segregation, and public opinion. Three meaty chapters analyze the labor market, including its evolution, employers' perspectives, and workers' perspectives; two chapters examine the evolution and persistence of residential segregation; and one chapter offers insights into "Differing Views on the Present and the Future" by black and by white respondents. A final chapter summarizes policy recommendations.

The general approach of the book, which is to undertake focused inquiries designed to uncover trends and judge alternative explanations, is one of its major strengths. Based on what is already known about certain policy issues, the authors list several theories that could explain key phenomena, such as the reason for relatively high unemployment and nonparticipation in the labor force by African Americans. They then seek to clarify, through analysis of data, possible explanations for each phenomenon. Another major strength is that the authors undertake such inquiry using not only generally available 1990 U. S. Census or Commerce Department data, but also data that the researchers themselves have collected. In some cases, their own data are especially valuable because they undertook similar studies several years apart, allowing them to measure progress or lack thereof from one year to another. (These data are also important because the 2000 census was not available in time to include in this book.) Most of the data look at results for blacks and for whites, and quite often for black men, black women, white men, and white women. Data are also provided which are specific to the central city and the suburbs, which is a common approach, and sometimes specific to selected municipalities, which is less common. The overall result is a numbers-rich approach to examining issues related to racial progress in the Detroit metropolis.

Concerning the labor market, Chapter Four first suggests alternative explanations for the fact that employers are not hiring inner-city African Americans at rates one would expect. The four common explanations for this phenomenon are deindustrialization, skill mismatch, spatial mismatch, and racial discrimination. One of the authors, Harry Holzer, had developed and administered a survey of over 800 employers in the metropolitan area in 1992 and 1993. That survey asked employers about their hiring practices, currently vacant jobs, characteristics of newly hired workers and of their jobs, and other characteristics of their firms. They found evidence that each

of the four possible explanations did affect hiring of black workers. They did find a mismatch between the jobs available and the skills of workers who could fill them, for the central-city labor market. In the suburban job market, however, the most prominent limitations appeared to be spatial distance and racial attitudes of the employers. They, therefore, conclude that suburban employment strategies must focus on access by the workers to the jobs available, but also the hiring behaviors of suburban employers, which they found to be race-biased.

The second chapter on residential segregation, Chapter Seven, asks why segregation persists in the present, so long after discrimination in the housing market has been outlawed. Using information published in pieces elsewhere by Reynolds Farley, they note that four possible reasons have been offered. Three dealt with in the text include economic differences between blacks and whites, suggesting that blacks might seek cheaper housing; different perceptions of housing price, so that blacks might overestimate how much suburban housing costs; and the possibility that blacks want to live in predominantly black neighborhoods.

They use census data to reject the first hypothesis, noting that racial segregation when controlled for income is still very high. Using Detroit Area Surveys carried out in 1976 and again in 1992 to focus on the second and third hypotheses, they demonstrate that blacks and whites had just about the same perceptions about how much housing in specific suburbs cost. They also found that blacks were willing to live in white neighborhoods, if they were not the first ones there, but they were actually unwilling to live in all-black neighborhoods, thus negating that hypothesis. Blacks, in fact, preferred mixed-race neighborhoods. Although white willingness to live in such neighborhoods had improved from 1976 to 1992, at that time whites still shied away from neighborhoods with more than a few black households.

The Detroit Area Study data also figure largely in Chapter Eight, a sobering assessment of how blacks and whites feel about the state of race relations and the future of race relations in their metropolis. These data show that blacks still give higher weight to the importance of racial discrimination and educational lag in explaining their status than do whites, and that whites still hold a number of prejudices about black intelligence, ambition, and talent.

For any reader who is truly interested in issues such as these, this book provides a satisfying diet of information. For the reader looking for more impressionistic or example-rich writing, this is not the best choice. The number of tables and charts is extensive. Although the authors try to lighten and provide a context for the material by offering a short history and various case study materials, suitably noted in boxed text, this can be data-heavy reading. The reward for those who persevere, however, is knowledge that could not be gained elsewhere.

Notes:

[1]. David Rusk, *Cities Without Suburbs* (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 1993).

[2]. For redevelopment, see June Manning Thomas, *Redevelopment and Race: Planning a Finer City in Postwar Detroit* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997).

[3]. Richard W. Thomas, *Life for Us is What We Make It: 1915-1945* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1992), and Thomas J. Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996).

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