Racial Division and Concentrated Poverty in U.S. Cities

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Racial Division and Concentrated Poverty in U.S. Cities

I. What is the spatial nature of America’s racial divide?

II. How does racial separation relate to concentrated poverty?

III. What are the broader societal effects of racial separation and concentrated poverty?

IV. What public policies have exacerbated these problems?

V. How can we address these problems today?
What is the spatial nature of America’s racial divide?

The country is rapidly diversifying

*De facto* racial segregation persists

Case studies: Chicago, Washington, and New Orleans
The United States is becoming an increasingly diverse society.

Share of national population by race and ethnicity, 1990 and 2000

Source: U.S. Census Bureau
This diversity is even greater within the largest metropolitan areas...

Share of population by race and ethnicity in the 50 largest metros, 2000

Source: U.S. Census Bureau
...And it is greater still in the 100 largest cities, which became “majority minority” in 2000

Share of population by race and ethnicity, 100 largest cities, 1990 and 2000

Source:
U.S. Census Bureau
Diversity is also increasing in the suburbs
The share of each racial/ethnic group living in the suburbs increased substantially during the 1990s...

Share of total population living in suburbs by race and ethnicity, 1990 and 2000

Source: U.S. Census Bureau
Such that now more than 1 in 4 suburban households are minority.

Minority share of suburban population, 1990 and 2000

Source: U.S. Census Bureau
What is the spatial nature of America’s racial divide?

The country is rapidly diversifying

*De facto* racial segregation persists

Case studies: Chicago, Washington, and New Orleans
In the United States, as in other countries, racial integration is viewed as a benchmark for social progress.
Unfortunately, fifty years after the court-mandated desegregation of schools and public facilities, high levels of residential segregation persist in most metropolitan areas.
What is a “metro”?

“A large population nucleus” plus adjacent communities having a “high degree of social and economic integration” with the core

A metropolitan statistical area (MSA) can be one or more counties. The U.S. Census Bureau figures out which counties to include in each metro by looking at job and commuting patterns

The U.S. has 361 MSAs, which collectively include 83% of the country’s population.
A study of 15 large metros revealed that, in 2000:

- 63% of whites lived in predominantly white neighborhoods (>90% white)
- 71% of blacks lived in predominantly black or black-Hispanic neighborhoods (>50% black or black-Hispanic)
- 61% of Hispanics lived in predominantly Hispanic or black-Hispanic neighborhoods (>50% Hispanic or black-Hispanic)

Source: The Institute on Race and Poverty (Univ. of Minnesota), “Minority Suburbanization, Stable Integration, and Economic Opportunity in Fifteen Metropolitan Regions,” February 2006
Most metropolitan areas still have extremely high levels of segregation

- 74 metros are “hyper-segregated” (statistical dissimilarity index above 0.6)
- 160 metros are “partially segregated” (statistical dissimilarity index of 0.4 to 0.6)
- Only 83 metros are “less segregated” (statistical dissimilarity index below 0.4)

Source:
However, from 1990 to 2000, slight improvements have occurred in most areas throughout the country.

More than 90% of all U.S. metros were less segregated in 2000 than in 1990.

During the 1990s, the overall level of segregation between blacks and non-blacks fell by 6 percent.

Source:
These improvements have been driven by increases in Hispanic populations rather than by black-white integration.

These neighborhood types have become more common:

- Predominantly Hispanic neighborhoods (large increase)
- Mixed black-Hispanic neighborhoods (large increase)
- Mixed white-Hispanic neighborhoods (small increase)
- Predominantly black neighborhoods (small increase)

These neighborhood types have become less common:

- Predominantly white neighborhoods (large decrease)
- Mixed black-white neighborhoods (small decrease)

Source:
The Institute on Race and Poverty (Univ. of Minnesota), “Minority Suburbanization, Stable Integration, and Economic Opportunity in Fifteen Metropolitan Regions,” February 2006
What is the spatial nature of America’s racial divide?

The country is rapidly diversifying

*De facto* racial segregation persists

Case studies: Chicago, Washington, and New Orleans
A tale of three metros

- Chicago
- New Orleans
- Washington, DC
Chicago, Illinois
Chicago contains about 1/3 of the whole metro’s population

**CITY**
- Pop. (2000): 2,896,016
- Black: 36.4%
- White: 31.3%
- Hispanic: 26.0%
- Asian: 4.3%
- Other: 1.9%

**METRO**
- Pop. (2000): 9,098,316
- White: 59.3%
- Hispanic: 16.4%
- Asian: 4.3%
- Other: 1.6%
- Black: 18.4%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau
The African American population is concentrated on the south side of Chicago and in the southern suburbs.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Percent black by census tract, 2000:

- < 5%
- 5.01 - 10%
- 10.01 - 20%
- 20.01 - 30%
- > 30%
Hispanics are concentrated in the north and west sides of Chicago.

Percent Hispanic or Latino by census tract, 2000

Source: U.S. Census Bureau
Washington, DC
The District contains little more than 10% of the metro population.

**CITY**

- **Pop. (2000): 572,059**
- **Black**: 59.4%
- **White**: 27.8%
- **Hispanic**: 7.9%
- **Asian**: 2.7%
- **Other**: 2.2%

**METRO**

- **Pop. (2000): 4,796,183**
- **Black**: 26.1%
- **White**: 55.3%
- **Hispanic**: 9.0%
- **Asian**: 6.9%
- **Other**: 2.7%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau
In Washington, blacks are clustered on the east side of the region, away from whites and Hispanics.
This east-wide divide is mirrored within the District itself, with whites mainly living in the west, blacks in the east...
...and Hispanics in the middle
In Washington, as in many other metros, the locus of immigration is shifting to the suburbs.

Foreign-born population as share of total population by census tract, 2000

New Orleans
New Orleans contains a little over 1/3 of the metro’s population.

- **CITY**: Pop. (2000): 484,674
  - Black: 66.7%
  - White: 26.6%
  - Other: 1.4%
  - Asian: 2.3%
  - Hispanic: 3.1%

- **METRO**: Pop. (2000): 1,316,510
  - Black: 37.1%
  - White: 54.8%
  - Other: 1.5%
  - Asian: 2.2%
  - Hispanic: 4.4%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau
New Orleans

Share of black and white population by block group, 2000

Source: Greater New Orleans Community Data Center
Despite slight improvements, the Chicago, New Orleans, and Washington DC metros remain “hyper-segregated”.

Dissimilarity Index, 1990-2000

Our examination of these case studies reveals that:

- Most U.S. metropolitan areas have a strong racial divide. In Chicago it is a north-south divide, while in New Orleans and Washington DC it is an east-west divide.
- Both blacks and Hispanics are moving outward into the suburbs in increasing numbers.
- Immigrants are skipping central cities and heading straight to the suburbs.
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Households in poverty are those whose incomes fall at or below a certain threshold set by the federal government.

The 2000 federal “poverty line” for a family of four was $17,463, roughly R129,000.

By way of comparison, median household income in 2000 was $41,994, roughly R307,000.
Poverty rates are higher than average for certain groups, including blacks, Hispanics, children, and city dwellers.

Percentage of people in poverty nationwide, various groups, 2004

Source: 2004 American Community Survey, U.S. Census Bureau

Poverty rates are higher than average for certain groups, including blacks, Hispanics, children, and city dwellers.
Concentrated poverty is a common standard used to indicate areas of economic deprivation.

- **Extreme-poverty neighborhoods** have a rate greater than 40 percent.
- **High-poverty neighborhoods** are defined here as those neighborhoods with a poverty rate greater than 30 percent.

While the total number of poor people in U.S. metropolitan areas is large, and has been increasing for the past two decades...

Number of individuals in poverty within metro areas, 1980-2000

The total number of poor people living in high-poverty neighborhoods actually declined slightly during the 1990s.

Number of poor residents of high-poverty (>30%) neighborhoods within metropolitan areas, 1980-2000

In ten large cities, at least 1 in 4 poor individuals live in extreme-poverty neighborhoods, with even higher rates among minorities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Blacks</th>
<th>Latinos</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fresno, CA</td>
<td>43.5%</td>
<td>44.9%</td>
<td>49.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Orleans, LA</td>
<td>37.7%</td>
<td>42.6%</td>
<td>18.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Louisville, KY</td>
<td>36.7%</td>
<td>53.2%</td>
<td>24.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miami, FL</td>
<td>36.4%</td>
<td>67.6%</td>
<td>18.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atlanta, GA</td>
<td>35.8%</td>
<td>41.0%</td>
<td>14.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long Beach, CA</td>
<td>30.7%</td>
<td>26.8%</td>
<td>36.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cleveland, OH</td>
<td>29.8%</td>
<td>35.6%</td>
<td>24.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philadelphia, PA</td>
<td>27.9%</td>
<td>27.1%</td>
<td>61.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milwaukee, WI</td>
<td>27.0%</td>
<td>39.3%</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York, NY</td>
<td>25.9%</td>
<td>33.7%</td>
<td>33.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washington, DC</td>
<td>23.8%</td>
<td>29.2%</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicago, IL</td>
<td>19.9%</td>
<td>32.0%</td>
<td>6.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>U.S. Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>10.3%</strong></td>
<td><strong>18.6%</strong></td>
<td><strong>13.8%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Percentage of poor living in extreme-poverty (>40%) neighborhoods, by city and race/ethnicity, 2000.

Source: Brookings calculations of U.S. Census data.
How does concentrated poverty relate to racial stratification in Chicago, Washington, and New Orleans?
In Chicago, poor neighborhoods are concentrated in the central city and the south suburbs, the same places where blacks live in disproportionate numbers.

Share of persons living below the federal poverty line, 2000

Percent black, 2000
In Washington, D.C., black residents are clustered on the eastern side of the region...
...And so are neighborhoods of concentrated poverty, although outer Prince George’s County contains a large black middle class.

Percent of the population under 100% of FPL by tract, 2000

Source: U.S. Census Bureau
In New Orleans, poor areas and black areas overlap considerably.

Percent African American Population
- Under 50 Percent
- 50 to 64.9 Percent
- 65 to 79.9 Percent
- 80 Percent or Higher

Poverty Rate by Census Tract
- Under 10 Percent
- 10 Percent to 19.9 Percent
- 20 Percent to 29.9 Percent
- 30 Percent to 39.9 Percent
- 40 Percent or Higher

Sources:
- U.S. Census Bureau
- Greater New Orleans Community Data Center
In short, the problems of racial separation and concentrated poverty go hand in hand. Extremely poor neighborhoods are disproportionately inhabited by racial and ethnic minorities.

Sources:
John Yinger, “Housing Discrimination and Residential Segregation as Causes of Poverty” (Syracuse University, August 2000); Patrick Bayer and Robert McMillan, “Racial Sorting and Neighborhood Quality” (November 2005)
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What are the broader societal effects of racial separation and concentrated poverty?

- Job Access
- Child Education
- Individual Health
- Neighborhood Vitality
In Miami, a spatial mismatch has arisen between high-poverty neighborhoods and areas of high job growth. Poverty is concentrated here, while job growth occurs here.
High-poverty urban neighborhoods are especially detrimental to the labor market prospects of young black men

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metro Area</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Chicago, IL</td>
<td>29,373</td>
<td>58.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Philadelphia, PA</td>
<td>15,923</td>
<td>52.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Detroit, MI</td>
<td>15,322</td>
<td>50.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 New York, NY</td>
<td>14,548</td>
<td>56.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Atlanta, GA</td>
<td>14,524</td>
<td>38.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Washington, DC</td>
<td>14,138</td>
<td>43.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Los Angeles, CA</td>
<td>12,523</td>
<td>56.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Baltimore, MD</td>
<td>11,785</td>
<td>54.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Houston, TX</td>
<td>11,262</td>
<td>50.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 New Orleans, LA</td>
<td>10,550</td>
<td>55.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Number and % of young black men (aged 16-24) not in school and not in employment, 2000

Source: Brookings calculations of Census 2000 data
What are the broader societal effects of racial separation and concentrated poverty?
Neighborhoods of concentrated poverty tend to have high-poverty schools

Percent of students eligible for free and reduced price school lunches at public elementary schools, 2003

Source: National Center for Educational Statistics 2003
Research has shown that children from high-poverty areas are at greater risk of failure than their suburban counterparts.

Educational achievement rates, fourth grade students.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Math</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High-Poverty</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suburban</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
These achievement gaps have exacerbated the disparities in educational attainment among different racial groups.

Share of adults w/ bachelor’s degree, 100 Largest Cities 1990-2000

Source: U.S. Census Bureau
What are the broader societal effects of racial separation and concentrated poverty?

III

Job Access

Child Education

Individual Health

Neighborhood Vitality
Evidence is mounting that living in high-poverty neighborhoods has negative health implications:

- Asthma
- Diabetes
- Obesity
- Heart Ailments
- Cancer
Concentrated poverty is correlated with abnormally high teenage birthrates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Concentrated Poverty Rate</th>
<th>% of Births to Teens</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Fresno, CA</td>
<td>1 Baltimore, MD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>New Orleans, LA</td>
<td>2 New Orleans, LA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Louisville, KY</td>
<td>3 St. Louis, MO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Miami, FL</td>
<td>4 Memphis, TN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Atlanta, GA</td>
<td>5 Cleveland, OH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Long Beach, CA</td>
<td>6 Milwaukee, WI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Cleveland, OH</td>
<td>7 Fresno, CA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Philadelphia, PA</td>
<td>8 Detroit, MI</td>
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<td>Milwaukee, WI</td>
<td>9 Philadelphia, PA</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>New York, NY</td>
<td>10 Fort Worth, TX</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>Washington, DC</td>
<td>11 Dallas, TX</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Memphis, TN</td>
<td>12 San Antonio, TX</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Baltimore, MD</td>
<td>13 El Paso, TX</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Los Angeles, CA</td>
<td>14 Phoenix, AZ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Minneapolis, MN</td>
<td>15 Atlanta, GA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Rank of top 50 cities on concentrated poverty and % of births to teens, 2000

Source: Brookings calculations of Census 2000 data; Annie E. Casey Foundation
A large majority of new AIDS diagnoses now occur among blacks and Hispanics.
What are the broader societal effects of racial separation and concentrated poverty?

Job Access

Education

Individual Health

Neighborhood Vitality
Concentrated poverty affects the broader economic life of the community, depressing private-sector investment.
Local government is also burdened, as it faces heavy demands on public services within high-poverty areas.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Police</th>
<th>Health care</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fire</td>
<td>Homeless shelters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Courts</td>
<td>Social services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public maintenance</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Higher taxes and reduced public spending on key amenities (especially schools) induces further middle-class flight in turn.
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Scholars have pointed to several factors that fueled the emergence of neighborhoods of concentrated poverty:

- **De-industrialization** reduced employment opportunities for inner-city, less-skilled workers.
- **Employment deconcentration** widened the distance between inner-city workers and job opportunities.
- **Economic segregation** and “middle-class flight” removed upwardly mobile families from poor neighborhoods and kept poor families rooted there.
...And these factors have been aided by government policies facilitating the out-migration of people and jobs

- Federal mortgage-interest tax deduction
- Locations of federally subsidized housing
- Federal highway spending
- Federal environmental regulation
- State and local tax incentives for new development
- Local exclusionary zoning laws
- Local building regulations and codes
In New Orleans, nearly all public housing is located in neighborhoods of concentrated poverty.

Source: Brookings analysis of U.S. Census data, the Greater New Orleans Community Data Center, and the Housing Authority of New Orleans.
Residential segregation has not only been fueled by income disparities but by outright racism. “Redlining” was once official government policy.

Excerpt from 1940s underwriting manual, Federal Housing Administration:

“…If a neighborhood is to retain stability, it is necessary that properties shall continue to be occupied by the same social and racial classes.”
Despite the passage of the Fair Housing Act in 1968, racial discrimination in housing still remains.

- Discrimination in mortgage lending by banks
- Discrimination in sales and rentals by owners and landlords
- Neighborhood preferences of purchasers and renters
- Steering by realtors
- Insufficient enforcement of the Fair Housing Act by the federal government

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Patterns of racial division in the U.S. are complex, persistent, and difficult to address politically.

However, because segregation by race is closely correlated with segregation by income, promoting economic integration can help improve racial integration.
Two federal policies have been particularly successful at alleviating economic segregation

Housing Vouchers

Public Housing Transformation
Housing vouchers promote opportunity by investing in people rather than places.

- Housing vouchers have existed as a federal program since 1974.
- Vouchers pay the difference between 30 percent of a recipient’s income and the rent of a moderately priced apartment.
- Now 2.1 million households are served by vouchers.
The housing voucher program is a proven success

- Allows residents to choose where they live, giving them greater access to quality jobs and schools
- Has yielded improvements in health, educational attainment, and employment outcomes
- Has been shown to reduce juvenile delinquency and school dropouts
Fewer than 15 percent of voucher recipients live in high-poverty neighborhoods, while over half of public housing tenants do.

Distribution of assisted housing units by census tract poverty rate, 1997

Source: Newman and Schnare, "...And a Suitable Living Environment" (Housing Policy Debate, 1997)
However, the voucher program’s potential is limited by several factors:

- **Racism and exclusionary zoning** limits the housing choices of blacks and Hispanics.
- Voucher administration is parochial while housing and employment markets are metropolitan.
- There are fewer supportive services and social networks in the suburbs.
Two federal policies have been particularly successful at alleviating economic segregation

Housing Vouchers

Public Housing Transformation
Public housing transformation is best exemplified by the federal “HOPE VI” program.

- 10 year, $6 billion effort to tear down the worst public housing and replace it with mixed-income neighborhoods.
- 235 revitalization grants awarded thus far in 35 states and the District of Columbia.
- Housing vouchers given to relocating tenants.
- Support services offered to returning tenants.
In St. Louis, HOPE VI enabled the demolition of the severely distressed Vaughn Public Housing Project...

Vaughn High Rises

- Four nine-story buildings
- Typical of 1950s-era, urban renewal public housing towers
- 656 units

George L. Vaughn High Rises, 1995
…And the creation of Murphy Park in its place

Murphy Park Development

- Townhouses, garden apartments and single-family homes
- “New Urbanist” design and “defensible space” technique
- 413 units, serving a range of incomes
A key part of Murphy Park’s transformation is a completely overhauled local school

Jefferson Elementary School

- $5 million in corporate and philanthropic money to modernize the school
- One of the most technologically advanced education facilities in the region
- New principal with wider control over teachers and curriculum
Neighborhood conditions have improved markedly because of the transformation.

- The median household income rose by 18 percent between 1989 and 1999, compared to 4 percent regionally.
- Unemployment fell by 35 percent from 1989 to 1999, compared to a 3.7 percent city wide increase.
- Private investment in the form of residential and commercial development has since located in the surrounding area.
The local school, Jefferson Elementary, has witnessed dramatic improvement in student performance.

Share of students reading at grade level, Jefferson Elementary School, 1999-2002

Source: Richard Baron, James W. Rouse Lecture on the American City (2003)
Concerns remain about neighborhood transformation with regard to the original tenants who become displaced.

Many housing authorities failed to plan adequately for relocation or provide sufficient support to residents during the process.

Studies find that less than half of the original residents return, with some estimates as low as 19 percent.

Particular concern surrounds the treatment of “hard-to-house” families that cannot meet the stricter screening criteria of the new developments.
Nevertheless, these strategies hold the potential to break the chains of concentrated poverty and thereby promote racial integration.

Bruce Katz

Introduction

Cities in America's great cities are often struck by the same forces of depopulation that have driven downtowns, major thoroughfares, urban rail yards, and once-grand commercial corridors. In a nation that treasures the "new," these places stand out for their stable poverty and often-dilapidated, sometimes-vacant housing and commercial structures. Scattered in a few of the nation's cities—some are indeed out of place in this prosperous society—a grim reminder of the racial, ethnic, and class divides that persist beneath the surface of this American dream. Since the 1970s, such run-down neighborhoods have held a fascination for scholars and journalists, conservative theorists and liberal thinkers. These projects have been the laboratories for a plethora of foundation experiments, government demonstrations, and federal political and programmatic efforts. The impact of these efforts—measuring in tens of billions of dollars over several decades—remains debatable. Is it true, as many claimants point to real improvements? But many initiatives—despite the best of intentions—have failed to alleviate, and in some cases have exacerbated, the deteriorating economic and social conditions in inner cities.
Urban Center Becomes Metropolitan Program

In a major promotion, the Center on Urban and Metropolitan Policy this month became the Brookings Metropolitan Policy Program—and the first new Brookings department established since 1948. The new status reflects the rising importance of metropolitan issues to the domestic and global challenges Brookings seeks to address.

- read an open letter from Brookings President Strobe Talbott

METROPOLITAN GROWTH

Mechanisms for Market-Based Land Use Control

Using case studies and a national survey, this paper examines transfers of development rights (TDRs) and other market-based land preservation techniques like mitigation banking and density transfer fees.

IMMIGRATION

Washington Goes Polyglot

Metro Washington's "limited English proficient" (LEP) population