



## **America Becoming: Racial Trends and Their Consequences, Volume 1**

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## Geography and Opportunity

*Manuel Pastor, Jr.*

Place matters. Throughout the last several decades, this simple statement has driven much of the research and policy regarding race in America. Investigations of minority unemployment, for example, have often focused on issues of spatial mismatch; research on community social capital has queried about the health of such capital in areas of concentrated poverty; policy on environmental clean-up has recognized that hazards are disproportionately located in minority neighborhoods.

This paper looks at these concerns in terms of geographic distribution of economic and environmental opportunity in major urban areas. The central argument is that historic patterns of suburbanization have contributed to both racial and income inequality. Resources and economic dynamism have abandoned central cities, where most racial minorities live, leaving diminished community structures and hazardous waste in their wake. The resulting racially and socially disparate character of cities and suburbs, and the increasing importance of the suburbs in national voting, has led to a declining political will to deal with poverty, race, and urban decline.

Several recent trends, however, may offer a way out of this pessimistic policy box. First, suburbs themselves are changing. There is an increasing minority presence in suburbs, and many of the older, “inner-ring” suburbs are experiencing economic stresses and, hence, have interests similar to those of their adjacent central cities. Second, the emergent “new regionalism” or “smart growth” framework emphasizes the economic complementarity of cities and suburbs within regions, and gives

suburbanites strong reasons to support relinking geographic spaces and diminishing inequalities in opportunities and outcomes. Third, inner-city advocates themselves have begun to realize that the best ticket out of poverty and environmental degradation is to relink their neighborhoods and their residents to regional economic dynamics and environmental decision-making processes.

Whether all this will come together to offer a brighter future for low-income communities of color will depend on federal and local policy. Historically, federal policy has, on balance, encouraged regional fragmentation and urban sprawl. New strategies should be more supportive of regional collaboration on economic policy, regional connection through public transportation, and regional fairness in the distribution of environmental negatives. Locally, fiscal and other factors have led to increasing division and separation of municipalities. New modes of collaboration and dialogue should be developed that also can have positive impacts on racial inequities/reconciliation by building a regional sense of common purpose and common ground.

This brief paper develops these points with reference to general trends in urban America. Because such broad-stroke analysis can obscure the specificities illuminated by the analysis of particular locations, I draw on a number of examples from Los Angeles, a region where urban sprawl, social inequity, environmental degradation, and explosive unrest have often been particularly dramatic.

### HISTORICAL TRENDS

Beginning with Kain (1968), various researchers have stressed that the poor economic outcomes of racial minorities, particularly Blacks, are partly the result of patterns of housing segregation that have prevented minorities from moving in pace with the suburbanization of employment (see Massey and Denton, 1993). This “spatial mismatch” hypothesis has been particularly important in the work of Wilson (1987)—living where the jobs aren’t, it is argued, has a negative effect on employment, particularly when fixed rail and bus lines are not conducive to “reverse” commuting.

To examine the general historical pattern, I have drawn data from The State of the Nation’s Cities (SNC), a database developed by Rutgers University under a U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) contract, which incorporates information for 74 of the country’s largest cities and metropolitan areas, with most variables drawn from the 1970, 1980, and 1990 censuses.<sup>1</sup> As can be seen in Figure 14-1, both popu-

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<sup>1</sup>SNC was compiled by Norman J. Glickman, Michael Lahr, and Elvin Wyly. It was initially assembled under a U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development contract

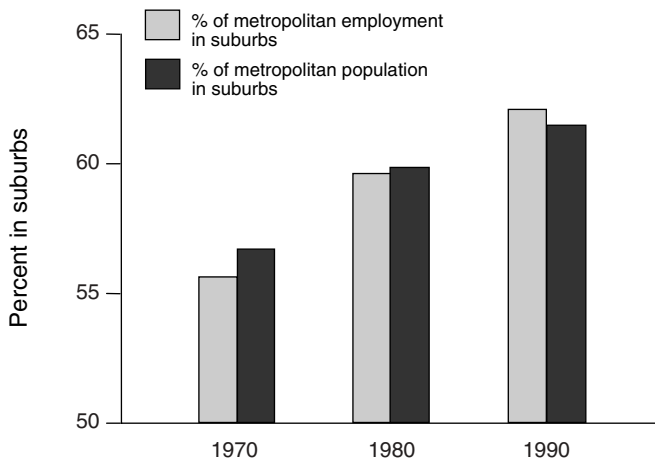


FIGURE 14-1 Suburbanization of employment and population in 74 metropolitan areas, 1970 to 1990. The percent of employment and population in suburbs has been rising, with employment rising faster.

lation and employment have been shifting to suburban areas, with the change slightly more pronounced for employment. Of course, minorities have also participated in this movement to the suburbs; in fact, their outward movement has been slightly more pronounced than for Whites. Still, as Figure 14-2 indicates, in 1990, only about 40 percent of Blacks and Hispanics lived outside of central cities in these 74 metropolitan areas, as compared to 67 percent of Whites and Asians. Looked at another, and a perhaps more politically relevant, way, in 1990, about 44 percent of those living in the 74 central cities were Black or Hispanic; but these groups constituted only approximately 16 percent of the suburban population in these 74 metropolitan areas.

Given the documented job shift away from, and the concentration of minorities within, central cities, it is not surprising that joblessness, low wages, and a lack of opportunity disproportionately affect racial minorities, even though formal discrimination has declined in the wake of Civil Rights legislation. Figures 14-3 and 14-4 indicate that the ratio of suburban to central-city population has risen over time, and that the ratio of

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to the Center for Urban Policy Research to meet the data needs of the United Nations' Habitat II Conference held in Istanbul, Turkey, in June 1996, and has been expanded in variable coverage since. I specifically used version 2.11A (September 22, 1997).

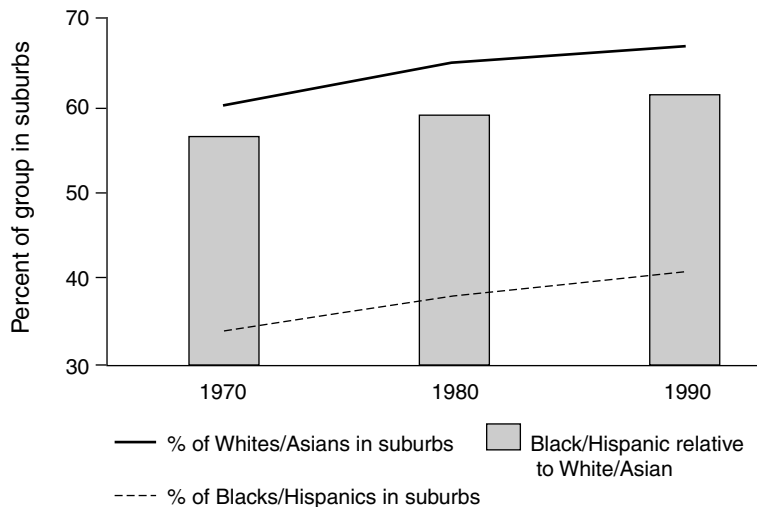


FIGURE 14-2 Suburbanization of the population in 74 metropolitan areas, 1970 to 1990. The percent of Blacks and Hispanics residing in suburbs is rising faster than for other groups, but the suburbanization ratio (percent of group residing in suburbs) is still only about 60 percent of that for Whites and Asians.

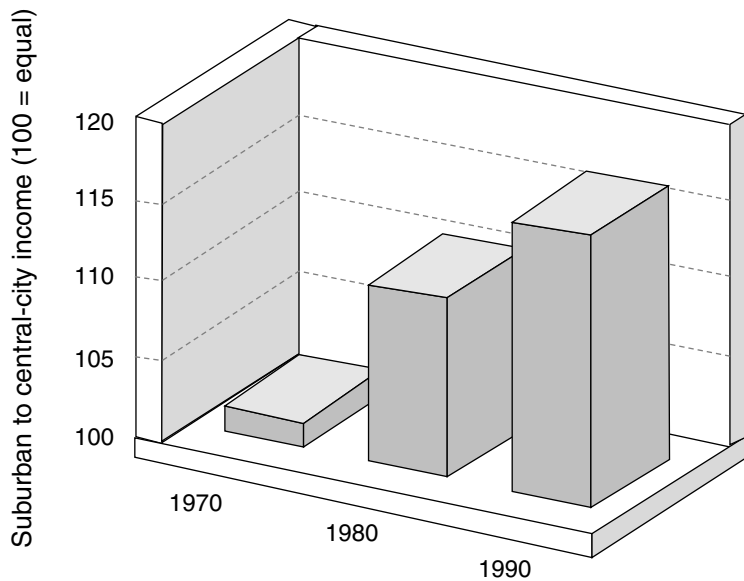


FIGURE 14-3 Ratio of suburban to central-city income, from 1970 to 1990. Suburban income is higher than central-city income, and the imbalance has been rising over time.

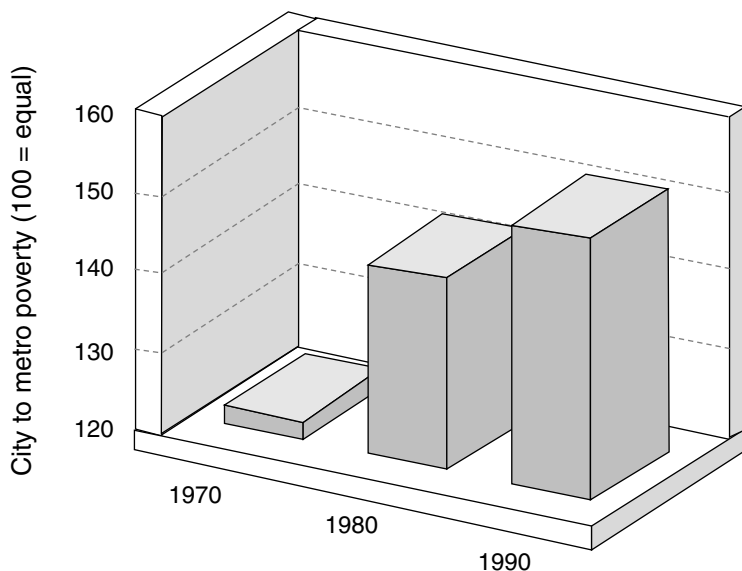


FIGURE 14-4 Ratio of central-city to metropolitan poverty, from 1970 to 1990. Poverty is relatively higher in the central city, and the differential with respect to suburbs is rising over time.

central-city to metropolitan-level poverty has also been on the rise. Given the demographics, the implications for racial equality are clear. There has also been a rise in income inequality within regions (see Figure 14-5), as well as a rise in the variability in income growth between regions (see Figure 14-6). The variability in income growth between regions, however, is not a good candidate for explaining racial inequality. Breaking the 74 metropolitan regions into slow, medium, and fast growers, the proportion of the population that is minority is roughly the same across groups. A more likely explanation is that there are increasing differentials between city and suburb within nearly every region.

To see how this plays out in one specific case, and to get a more detailed analysis that goes beyond broad categories of city and suburb, I combined data on residents from the Public Use Microdata Sample for Los Angeles (L.A.) County with data from the local Association of Governments on the employment base—i.e., where the jobs are actually located—by census tracts for 1980 and 1990. To link the two, I aggregated the tract-level employment data for L.A.’s 58 Public Use Microdata Areas (PUMAs). L.A. County PUMAs have a median population of less than 150,000 and are generally recognizable neighborhoods whose size, scale,

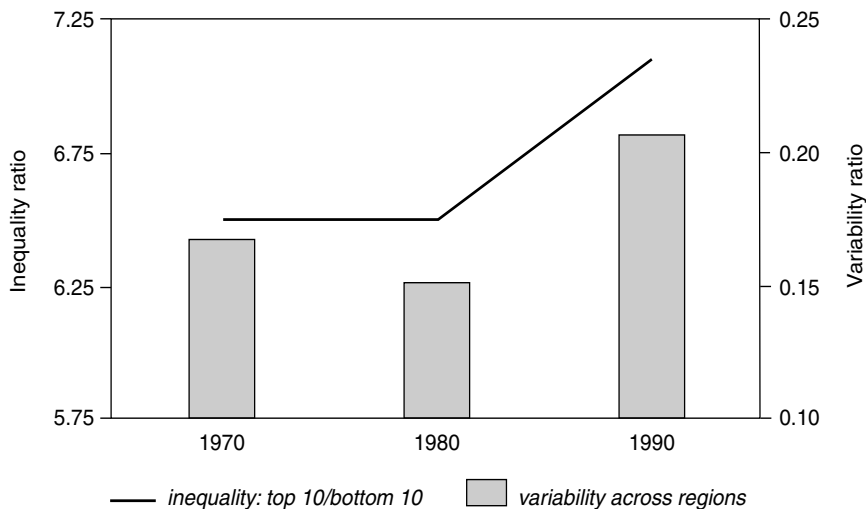


FIGURE 14-5 Metropolitan-level inequality in 74 metropolitan areas, 1970 to 1990. Income inequality within regions increased during the 1980s, and the variation between regional patterns of inequality increased as well.

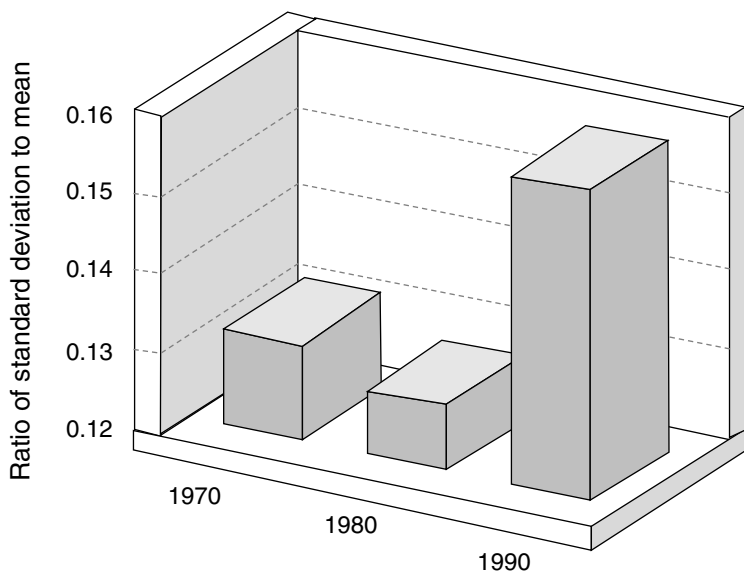


FIGURE 14-6 Variability of income growth by metropolitan area, 1970 to 1990. The variability of per capita income by region has risen, suggesting increasingly different economic performance by region.

and borders seem to approximate localized labor markets (see Pastor and Marcelli, 2001). Using PUMAs allows us to go beyond the usual city/suburb distinction, which is especially important in the case of L.A., where the central city contains many of its own suburbs, and inner-ring suburbs in the County often exhibit economic conditions worse than the city of Los Angeles.

The 58 PUMAs were arranged in order of job growth during the 1980s; Raphael (1998), Stoll (1997), and others have suggested that this sort of job-growth measure is better than the usual job-density variable, especially for first-time labor-market entrants, like minority youth, because it captures the rate at which job possibilities appear and therefore proxies labor-market tautness. After arranging the sample, I took the fastest growing one-third and slowest growing one-third of the PUMAs and calculated the demographics. The results (Figure 14-7) are striking—the low job-growth areas are 67 percent Black and Hispanic; the fast job-

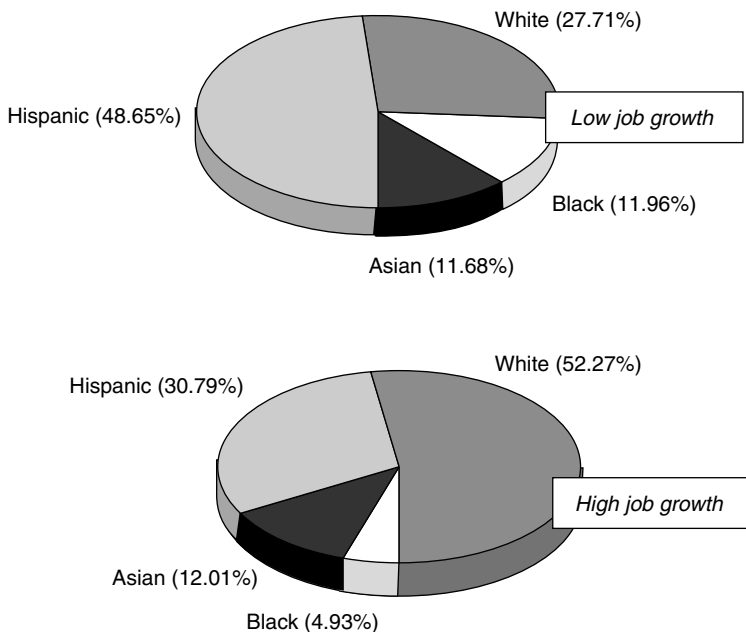


FIGURE 14-7 Ethnic composition of low and high job growth areas in Los Angeles County, 1990. Throughout the 1980s, the percentage of Blacks and Hispanics increased by 8.0 percent in low job growth areas and 6.1 percentage points in high job growth areas, suggesting increasing concentration of minorities in low job growth areas.



growth areas are only 41 percent Black and Hispanic. As noted in Figure 14-7, the minority percentage actually rose more in the low-growth areas, suggesting that Whites may have been more likely to (or able to) follow the jobs, while minority residents were more likely to stay put.

Of course, the problem is not simply one of slow employment growth or job scarcity, *per se*, in the central city. Many authors have stressed that living in areas of concentrated poverty tends to diminish the relative strength of social networks critical to obtaining jobs (O'Regan, 1993; Pastor and Adams, 1996; Oliver and Lichter, 1996; Ellen and Turner, 1997). O'Regan (1993:331) makes the argument most eloquently; she notes that "networks are largely determined by location" and that "there is a negative externality associated with increased concentration of the poor." Galster and Killen (1995) note that the evidence on space and networks is somewhat tentative (and generally under-modeled), but it does indicate the direction of a spatial effect on network "quality."

Wilson (1996) and others have also stressed what might be called "social-ecologic factors." In neighborhoods where work and wages are scarce, individual survival strategies tend to incorporate skills and behavior patterns that are not conducive to obtaining and retaining employment. For example, developing a tough demeanor or avoiding eye contact may enhance self-protection in a high-poverty, high-crime neighborhood, but these techniques are less successful in a job interview (Wilson, 1996:63-64). Wilson stresses that fundamental values regarding the importance of work and family are quite similar between ghetto residents and others; what differs is the "structure of opportunity" within which to act on those values (see also, Acs and Wissoker, 1991; Galster and Killen, 1995).

If these hypotheses carry weight, then the problems of poor social networks and inadequate incentives are especially important for U.S. minorities. After all, Jargowsky's analysis of the 1990 Census data suggests that poor Blacks were more than five times more likely, and poor Hispanics nearly four times more likely, than poor Whites to live in neighborhoods of concentrated poverty (Jargowsky, 1997:41). Wilson (1996) has argued that the problem of joblessness and limited social networks has become more pronounced as joblessness has grown in ghetto, or high poverty, communities. As Briggs (1997:209) points out, however, there are "dangers of confusing spatial proximity with social interaction" (see also Tienda, 1991).

To check the impact of spatial and "social" (or network) factors on individual level outcomes, L.A.'s Survey of Urban Inequality was used. I regressed (the log of) wages for male workers on a series of typical human-capital and demographic factors (education, work experience, English language proficiency, recentness of immigration, marital status, race/ethnicity) and three other "social ecological" variables (network

quality, local job growth, and local/skill mismatch). Network quality is an overall measure of the strength and “quality” of networks, with strength representing the number of ties and the extent of favors that one expects would be extended by network contacts, and quality represented by the labor-market position of those in one’s networks.<sup>2</sup> Local job growth is simply the 1980-to-1990 employment increase in the PUMA in which an individual resides. Local/skill mismatch measures the difference between the PUMA-level demand for skills—i.e., the educational levels associated with local jobs—and the supply of skills—i.e., the educational level of the residents in that PUMA. Note that local/skill mismatch doesn’t address the individual skill level; it simply suggests whether there is a skill-based spatial mismatch in one’s neighborhood that could lead higher-wage employers to look somewhere else for employees (see Holzer and Danziger, 1997). The results, fully presented in Pastor and Marcelli (2001), suggest that location does matter to individual level outcomes and that the quality of one’s network—or stock of social capital—is important.<sup>3</sup>

An additional dimension of spatial inequality has to do with the unequal distribution of environmental hazards that are often the byproducts left in central cities by older industrial processes as newer and cleaner employment has radiated outward. Although there have been doubters,<sup>4</sup> a wide array of research indicates that there is a pattern, nationwide, of toxic storage and disposal facilities (TSDFs), toxic air releases, and other locally undesirable land uses (LULUs) being concentrated in minority neighborhoods. Because much of the pattern of industry, and hence waste, is regional, I turn once again to metropolitan Los Angeles.

The entire Southern California area (five counties excluding San Diego) is linked together in a regional association of governments. Figure 14-8 indicates the percentage of Southern California Whites, Blacks, and

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<sup>2</sup>Although the network quality variable is individually based, many analysts have argued that the quality of one’s contacts, at least in terms of their access to employment opportunities, may be profoundly affected by location, in that those living in areas of concentrated poverty are more likely to have poor and poorly connected individuals as their cohorts.

<sup>3</sup>It is interesting that one of the traditional measures of spatial mismatch—average neighborhood commute time—is not a significant predictor if substituted for the better measures described here; this suggests the need to go beyond that usual variable in regression analyses, at least in the case of Los Angeles. For more on spatial mismatch in L.A., and how it might differ from other metro areas, see Pugh (1998:36-38).

<sup>4</sup>Anderton et al. (1994) best represent the doubters. Been (1995) is one of the more careful national-level studies indicating that disproportionate environmental exposure exists, confirming the less rigorous cross-sectional work of United Church of Christ (1987) and the U.S. General Accounting Office (1983). For a recent comprehensive review of the literature, see Szasz and Meuser (1997).

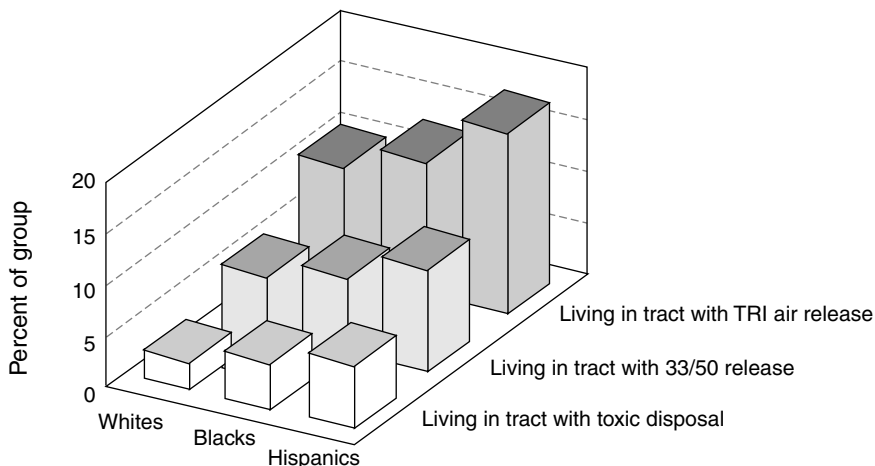


FIGURE 14-8 Exposure by group to environmental negatives in Southern California. The figure charts the percentage of each group living in a tract with the specified release. For example, 5.4 percent of Whites live in a tract with a 33/50 release, but 10 percent of Hispanics live in such a tract.

Hispanics who live in a census tract in which one of three types of hazards occurs—TSDFs, a toxic or (TRI) air release, or a 33/50 air release (classified as higher priority for reduction by the Environmental Protection Agency). As it turns out, Hispanics are particularly likely to live in such areas. Moreover, population ethnicity (especially percentage Hispanic) seems to factor into the location of these hazards, even in a multivariate regression, which controls for land use, population density, income levels, residents employed in manufacturing, and other relevant variables (Boer et al., 1997; Sadd et al., 1999).

With jobs leaving, social capital slipping, and environmental negatives accumulating, ethnic minorities living in the areas where hazardous waste accumulation is occurring are experiencing distress.<sup>5</sup> Of course, both everyday experience and the wage and employment “penalties” evidenced in most multivariate regression analyses suggest that race still

<sup>5</sup>One issue not covered here is education, another realm where place and race have often intertwined to produce negative and self-reinforcing cycles. Indeed, the spatial difference in educational quality is, along with the racial composition of schools, one factor that has likely driven trends toward suburbanization; and the resulting shifts in test scores and population simply induce more shifts. This important topic deserves a full and separate treatment, precluded by the brevity of this paper; as a result, I focus on the direct employment and environmental dimensions of space.

matters significantly and independently for economic success (or lack thereof). But in a world in which legal discrimination has eroded, place and race have become intertwined and geography has become a predictor of both opportunity and outcome.

### UNDERSTANDING THE TRENDS

The 1970-1990 patterns of suburbanization are a continuation of a longer pattern in post-World War II America (Jackson, 1985; Mollenkopf, 1983). Suburbanization was not simply a response to individual preferences for low-density living and proximity to nature (which, in any case, was often eliminated for earlier suburbanites by the later development of yet another out-lying suburb). Certain federal policies, such as the 1956 Interstate Highway Act and the Federal Housing Authority and Veterans Administration home mortgage loan program, were key contributors to metropolitan decentralization, or what by the 1970s was being called urban sprawl. School desegregation and episodic social unrest in inner cities (again, one of the most dramatic examples being offered by Los Angeles with its 1965 Watts riots) pushed the process along by stimulating widespread White exodus from more established central-city neighborhoods and inner-ring suburbs. Continuing practices of housing market discrimination ensured that Blacks got left behind in the outward movement. As a result, inner cities increasingly became repositories for low-income individuals, as the suburbs enjoyed higher tax bases and fewer social program costs—a process that has deepened fiscal divisions between central cities and their suburbs (Massey and Eggers, 1993; Abramson et al., 1995).

As Dreier (1998:10) notes, “since federal policy is typically associated with minority urban dwellers, the assertion that federal policy has tilted the metropolitan playing field toward better off suburbs may seem counter-intuitive.” Yet, Dreier calculates that tax “expenditures” (foregone taxes) for the home mortgage interest deduction, a benefit that can only be taken by home-owning, mostly higher-income suburbanites, totaled approximately four times more than HUD directly spent on housing subsidies in 1997. Furthermore, real expenditures on homeowner subsidies (including the interest rate deduction as well as the deductibility of property tax and deferral of capital gains) rose nearly fourfold between 1978 and 1997, while HUD subsidies declined by more than 80 percent during the same period (Dreier, 2001).<sup>6</sup> Meanwhile, federal funds tar-

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<sup>6</sup>As for the distribution, the top 12 percent of taxpayers received 71 percent of the mortgage-interest benefits in 1995 (also taken from Dreier (2001) with the calculations based on data provided in *Estimates of Federal Tax Expenditures for Fiscal Years 1996-2000*, Washington, D.C.: Joint Committee on Taxation, U.S. Congress, September 1, 1995).

geted to already fiscally starved cities declined by 66 percent in real terms between 1981 and 1993 (Eisinger, 1998). Shorting the central city on development funds, and expanding a system in which housing subsidies rise with home ownership and home values, has provided incentives for further suburbanization.

The impacts of federal policy have often been made worse by state and local measures. In California, for example, tax limitation statutes have constrained government investment in infrastructure and social support. One local-level response has been an increasing reliance on sales tax revenue. This strategy induces municipalities to pursue “big-box” retail (i.e., warehouse retailers), which tends to favor outlying suburban areas, where land is abundant and consumer incomes are higher. Poorer areas, including the older inner-ring suburbs, are unable to assemble large parcels of vacant land and instead rely on redevelopment strategies; however, even wealthier suburbs have caught on to the strategy of declaring “blight” and passing on tax benefits, which gives yet another push to the suburbanization of employment and fiscal resources (Fulton, 1997; Schrag, 1998).

What about the changing distribution of environmental hazards? As noted earlier, several studies have suggested that LULUs are disproportionately located in minority communities; however, there is no standard database that looks at changes in hazard exposure over a long period. The lack of a national database makes a general analysis problematic. To get at this, at least in part, Jim Sadd and I have constructed a database of the high-capacity (over 50 tons per year) TSDFs in Los Angeles County. The database includes both the TSDF locations and date of siting.<sup>7</sup> Coupling this with a database that arranges the 1970 and 1980 Census data into the 1990 tracts, we were able to calculate the changing demographics of toxic areas. To get beyond the fact that the percentages for the minority populations were increasing in both toxic and nontoxic areas, we instead calculated exposure rates—i.e., the percent of the total population living in the County who also live in a tract within one-quarter mile of a high-capacity TSDF—for Blacks and Hispanics versus all others for 1970, 1980, and 1990.

The results are pictured in Figure 14-9. As can be seen, the exposure has been rising over time. Part of this increase is simply that new TSDFs are sited and begin operation in each decade, so all groups are likely to see exposures rise. The increase in the percent of Blacks and Hispanics who are living in tracts within one-quarter mile of a TSDF, however, is

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<sup>7</sup>Obtaining the date sited involved significant archival work; in the case where a tract has two or more sites, we choose the earliest date.

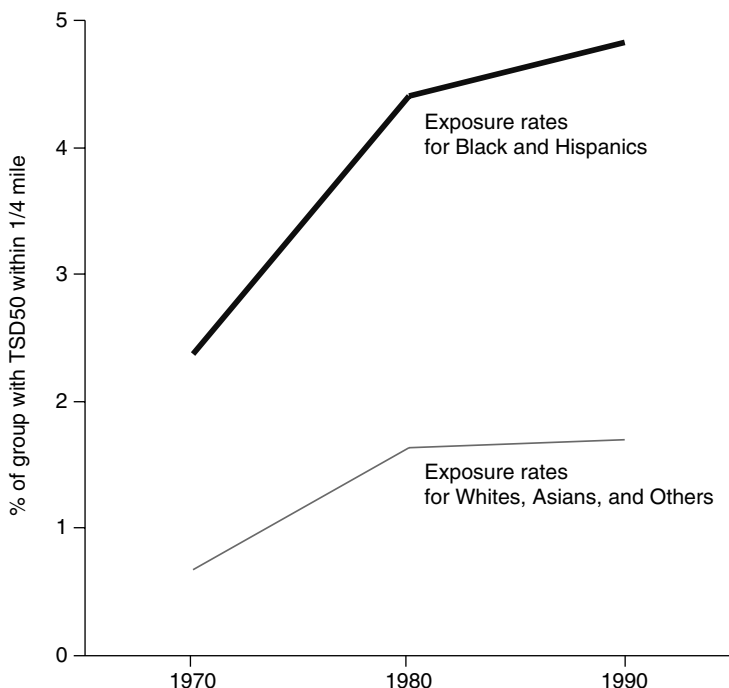


FIGURE 14-9 Exposure to high-capacity toxic facilities over time in Los Angeles County. The exposure to high-capacity toxic storage and disposal facilities (TSD50s) has generally risen over time for both Whites and minorities. The increase has been greatest for Blacks and Hispanics, leading to an even greater exposure differential.

consistently higher, and the differential has been rising over time. One usual response is that minorities are choosing to move into toxic areas, perhaps because of lower property values. Our preliminary examination of this TSDF-dated database, however, suggests that neighborhoods that received new TSDFs in any particular decade had a larger percent of minority residents prior to the siting, suggesting at least some disproportionality in the actual location decision process. Moreover, our logistic analysis of the 1990 data suggests that a higher percent of minorities also live near toxic facilities. Because we have controlled for income, the independent role of race suggests that there is something more occurring here than low-income individuals moving into low-value areas.

The central point is that these patterns in economic and environmen-

tal trends are not simply market-driven; they are the result of policy actions at many levels. Sometimes the impacts of policy are indirect and unintended. Those who sought to make the dream of home ownership accessible via federal loan programs and interest rate tax deductions were not consciously out to raid the central cities of America; tax cutters in California may not have had the irrational fiscalization of land use as their main goal; owners of TSDFs may have been more worried about minimizing political resistance than about poisoning people of color. Still, the impacts have been real—and they both reflect a politics of division and isolation by race and place, and reinforce such politics as social distance that result in economic gaps that widen over time. Indeed, it is the resulting political calculus—as suburban votes increase, central cities decline—that makes it difficult to launch and sustain national-level programs for tackling poverty and racial/economic inequality.

### POSSIBLE FUTURE TRENDS

The patterns discussed above, and the fact that they have been partly the result of policy, may lead one to despair. If geography is important to opportunity, the current economic and political configuration situation is sure to exacerbate existing divisions by space and race. Yet, although it is certainly possible that this pattern of disparity will simply continue to worsen, we may actually stand at a unique and positive turning point, in part because of the changing geography of the economy and the shifting demographic and economic nature of suburbs.

The increasing divergence of economic performance by metropolitan area, discussed above, has led Barnes and Ledebur (1998) to characterize the contemporary United States as a sort of common market of economic regions, each with distinctive business clusters and growth patterns. Although the theoretical explanations for this “emergence of the region” remain a bit underdeveloped, one common story suggests that because internationalization has rendered national policies less effective, economic action has descended to the regional or metropolitan level. Why? The region, it seems, is an economic level large enough for economies of scale but small enough for lasting ties between firms and their suppliers as well as between the business, government, and social actors needed to achieve consensus on growth. These ties, i.e., this social capital, is the glue that holds regions together and allows them to become successful (Putnam, 1993; Peirce, 1993).

Recognizing this, a new body of research has suggested that regions plagued by rising inequalities—hence, eroding social capital and lowered “trust”—may experience lower growth. Figure 14-10 illustrates this point by plotting per-capita income growth during the 1980s against the per-

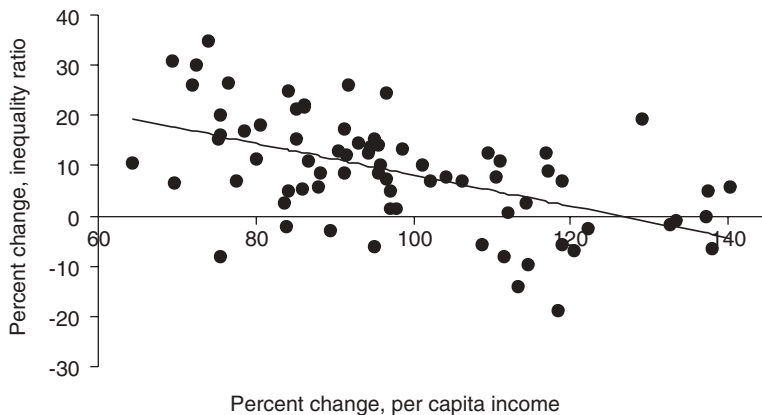


FIGURE 14-10 Per capita income growth and change in inequality in 74 metropolitan areas, 1980 to 1990.

cent change in our inequality measure over the same period. Of course, the pictured correlation is not causation; relatively rapid growth should also help diminish inequalities (Jargowsky, 1997:162), and much of the past research, which has looked at the relationship between employment, income, city/suburb differentials, and other measures has been plagued by methodological problems.<sup>8</sup> Two newer studies try to control for simultaneity, and still find that dealing with inequality, poverty, and city-suburb differentials may indeed help growth (Voith, 1997; Pastor et al., 2000). As noted below, however, much more work needs to be done.

Despite the unfinished state of this research, some proponents of this “new regionalism”—i.e., the notion that regions are now the fundamental economic unit—have stressed the importance of linking city and suburb in the new metropolitan economies (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 1996). A reconfiguration of political space to reflect the new reality—i.e., the resurrection of the concept of regional government—seems unlikely in most areas if only because few citizens desire yet another level of government. Still, Swanstrom (1996) argues that the new thinking about collective regional destinies opens up the opportu-

<sup>8</sup>Barnes and Ledebur have conducted a number of studies on city-suburban links, most of which are summarized in their 1998 volume; see also Savitch et al. (1993). For careful reviews of the evidence and its limits, see Gottlieb (1998), Harrison (1998), Hill et al. (1994), and Ihlanfeldt (1995).



nity for a political alliance between cities and their suburbs and informal, multisectoral collaborations on regional development (Downs, 1994).

Another approach to new regionalism, best typified by Orfield (1997), is more confrontational than collaborative. This view suggests that the data used above, which showed only a slow diversification of the suburban population and rising city-suburb differentials, mask an important part of the picture. In fact, suburbs may be distinguished by their proximity to the central city, with many older inner-ring suburbs experiencing changing demographics and economic pressures similar to those experienced by inner-city minorities, and many outer-ring suburbs enjoying high tax bases and few social problems.

As a result, Orfield argues, the central city and its immediate ring—and some low-tax-base cities on the fringe—have a common interest in both reducing urban sprawl and shifting fiscal burdens. In his view, the best solution is regional tax-base sharing because this would eliminate certain incentives for fringe development and allow low-tax areas to improve their social spending. This is a classic coalition strategy—rather than take the “we’re all in it together” approach, this new approach stresses that most of us will win if we distribute from those who have gained the most from the United States’ contemporary metropolitan configuration.

Although both the collaborative and coalitional approaches differ in their politics, each stresses the changing character of metropolitan areas and the increasing importance of regional economies. Both raise the possibility of a new political calculus supportive of inner city residents—but only if inner-city advocates themselves “think and link” to the region.

This may be quite a stretch from the traditional models of place-based development.<sup>9</sup> Given the pattern of concentrated poverty, many federal and state efforts have targeted particular communities; such is the logic of enterprise and empowerment zones. This has intersected well with the growing importance of community development corporations (CDCs), who themselves have a geographically determined political base and seek to serve and maintain their local constituencies. Such place-based strategies, which often focus on neighborhood revitalization and housing development, also have a racial dimension inasmuch as they can be part and parcel of a minority community’s attempt to ensure some control over their environment (Gottlieb, 1997).<sup>10</sup> But as Nowak (1997) warns, CDCs

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<sup>9</sup>For an excellent review of urban development strategies and a categorization of place-based approaches, see Gottlieb (1997).

<sup>10</sup>Fernandez (1997:93) makes a related point with regard to how minority politicians might resist housing mobility, or “dispersal,” strategies because this could dilute a hard-won political base.

risk becoming “managers of decline” unless they reach out and affect regional decision making. In short, overcoming the geography of hardship, in which large-scale forces of deindustrialization and declining wages disproportionately affect particular neighborhoods, requires connecting to the emerging economic dynamism evident in the geography of the region.

Fortunately, inner-city advocates have begun to rethink old models of community development in a way that is potentially conducive to such regional linkages. The new community-building movement, for example, insists on the importance of restoring community fabric (the “bonding ties” of social capital) to encourage development (Walsh, 1997). Some of these community builders have also stressed regional networking as a way to connect individuals and community organizations to external opportunities and resources. They argue that although bonding (within-group) social capital does tie together individuals with immediate common interests, ethnic identities, neighborhood allegiance, or other salient features, what the poor need is bridging (across-group) social capital—the kind that can tie inner-city communities together with individuals and opportunities outside their usual immediate reach.

The notion that linking outside the neighborhood can be beneficial is gaining ground for several reasons. First, a variety of studies of the famous Gautreaux experiment and HUD’s evolving Moving to Opportunity program have suggested that actually moving out of a neighborhood expands networks and enhances opportunity (Popkin et al., 1993). Because few community developers really want to encourage exodus, replicating the benefits through links to jobs and other assets seems to be a positive idea. Second, recent research has found that CDCs with better access to regional actors and opportunities tend to have better luck at placing low-income residents in jobs and wielding political and policy influence than do those that remain disconnected (Harrison and Weiss, 1998). Recent research on 10 higher-poverty neighborhoods in Los Angeles County likewise confirms that those better connected to the region exhibit stronger performance in terms of income and employment (Pastor et al., 1997).

Regional approaches may also have something to offer to those worried about issues of environmental justice. Disproportionate exposure is clearly neighborhood-based, but political resistance to such demographic dumping is weak when it occurs at the level and rate of one community at a time. In this context, linkages between communities can be critical. Concerned Citizens of South Central, a mostly Black environmentalist group in inner-city Los Angeles, was able to resist the siting of a waste incinerator in their neighborhood, partly because the group formed powerful alliances with White working class and suburban residents afraid

that allowing a waste incinerator area in South L.A. would lead to a series of incinerators placed in their own neighborhoods (Blumberg and Gottlieb, 1989:168).

More broadly, there is one explicitly environmentalist variant of regionalism that focuses on the benefits of compact living and reduced auto dependence, all of which require a more tightly integrated region.<sup>11</sup> Although proponents of this approach are sometimes more concerned with preservation of rural land than the preservation of low-income people, the resulting strategies—which tend to constrain sprawl and force more concentrated development—may be conducive for inner-city revitalization. Portland's experience is that urban growth boundaries have benefited older and poorer suburbs (Rusk, 1998). The "Smart Growth" initiatives gaining ground in Maryland, Florida, and elsewhere may open up possibilities for integrating central-city concerns even as growth is channeled inward by limiting fringe development. Finally, a coalition of St. Louis congregations, led by Black churches, has taken on urban sprawl as a central issue, using this to form alliances with suburban neighbors and redirect resources to urban revitalization (Rusk, 1998). Clearly, equity can be served under the banner of regional environmental sustainability.

Of course, regional thinking on economic and environmental issues is still nascent, and those explicitly calling for links between regionalists, community developers, and minority residents have been few and far between (for emerging voices, see Bollens, 1997; Nowak, 1997). Resistance has come both from inner-city leaders, worried that their concerns will be submerged in a broader regional agenda (Gottlieb, 1997), and from suburbanites still hesitant to hitch their wagons to the rebirth of the central city. The new regionalist approach is also open to the criticism that it represents a rather indirect way of getting at the deeper problems of race in America. Like Wilson's focus on broad- or class-based remedies, it targets the geography of opportunity and networks in a race-neutral policy framework, which may evade some of the harder questions about persistent discrimination and segregation.

This critique may be particularly appropriate inasmuch as one of the reasons for our contemporary urban geography is exactly the racial dynamics of residential settlement in which Whites avoid settling in traditionally Black areas and tend to move when the number of nearby Blacks increases (Massey and Denton, 1993). Still, in an era in which the political will to tackle issues of race and poverty seems minimal, the regional approach at least has the chance for addressing concerns about poverty, even if out of the pure self-interest of threatened suburbs. Moreover, the

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<sup>11</sup>See Summers (1997) for a characterization of the variants of regionalism.

dynamics of forging regional consensus can bring sectors together for discussions with their neighbors—even those who may live at some distance—and replace the abstract discussions of policy in Washington with the face-to-face (and race-to-race) interactions that can begin building bridging social capital.

## RESEARCH AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The argument here is simple—economic opportunity, social capital, and environmental exposure are often spatially based. Given differential patterns of residential settlement, this has had disproportionately negative consequences for racial minorities. The new focus on regions, which tends to stress city-suburb ties and environmental sustainability within a metropolitan area—may offer one way out for both new politics and new policies.

For the argument to really stand up, however, much remains to be done on the research side. First, one of the central premises above is that the federal and state playing fields have been tilted against inner-city residents. Unfortunately, the general writing on this issue tends to be suggestive or interpretive.<sup>12</sup> While it is quite likely that federal highway spending, housing policies, and tax breaks did push along the process of suburbanization, reliable estimates of the size and effect of the subsidies remain elusive. Recovering the past may be difficult; understanding the future might be easier, and profit us better. We could use better mechanisms for geographically disaggregating the impacts of federal spending and policy, hopefully down to the tract or neighborhood level. A recent report by the National Academy of Public Administration (1998) offers some general guidelines for such work, and the Brookings Institution's Center for Urban and Metropolitan Policy has launched a study of this topic for selected metropolitan regions.

Second, we could use much more information about the dynamics of regional economies, with a critical first step being the consolidation of a

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<sup>12</sup>For an exception, see Parker (1995). Parker concurs with the notion presented here, that researchers would benefit from further disaggregation of federal spending. However, although Parker's evidence suggests that federal expenditures favor central cities (although suburbs have been gaining ground), his analysis is confined to spending from 1983 to 1992, his city-suburb definitions are overly broad, and he includes transfers like Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) but ignores transfers due to tax expenditures on housing. This is a useful contribution, but it is only a partial answer to the question of whether federal policy has promoted suburbanization—and it explicitly ignores the fact that welfare spending only partially covers the costs of poverty, and so cities receiving significant AFDC payments actually experience fiscal strain (see Gyourko and Summers, 1997).

complete and uniform database on major metropolitan regions. Currently, researchers studying regional dynamics draw on widely varying databases; the consequent variations in variable and geographic definitions, including which U.S. metropolitan areas should and shouldn't be included, mean that discussions that should be about perspectives and hypotheses instead become debates about sample bias and statistical proxies. The SNC database helped advance the discussion, with its attempt at uniformity, but its coverage of both variables and areas should be expanded; especially important would be linkages with data on industrial clusters, employment location, journey-to-work, and environmental hazards.

With a database in place, more could and should be done on the growth-equity linkage. As noted above, the current work has a hopeful message, but there are problems of simultaneity and inadequate model specification. Gottlieb's (1998) excellent review and Harrison's (1998) recent comments indicate just how far behind the methodology really is. As Harrison (1998) points out, documenting more fully whether cities and suburbs are linked—and understanding how—is absolutely necessary to establishing the material base for metropolitanism.

Third, we need more work by political scientists and others on the political dynamics of regions. Traditional studies have tended to look at the presence or absence of metropolitan governments. Yet, in Los Angeles, for example, regional planning is "not controlled by SCAG (the local association of governments) or any other single agency. Rather it is centered—if that is the word—in scattered meetings and negotiations and skirmishes that occur over this 100 square mile region" (Fulton and Newman, 1992). Overall, dynamic regions seem to be characterized by informal public-private alliances that may bridge political jurisdictions (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 1996). In especially successful regions, like the Silicon Valley, leadership has come from the business sector as well as from other civic entrepreneurs from all walks of life (Henton et al., 1997).

What are the conditions that lead to regional collaboration? Saxenian's (1996) exemplary volume comparing the Boston electronics complex and the Silicon Valley notes that certain industrial clusters and interfirm linkages can create fertile ground for collaboration on growth policies, but many more case studies need to be done (see also Foster, 1997; Savitch and Vogel, 1996). Especially important would be studies of how and when community organizations and inner-city leaders become part of regional efforts. Indergaard's (1997) study is useful in this regard as is Nowak's (1998) review of the Delaware Valley Community Reinvestment Fund's efforts at job placement, venture capital, and regional-jobs policy. More tracking of the evolution of these bridging networks and

their impacts would be helpful to policy makers figuring out how targeted regional collaborations can acquire a forward momentum that will lead to more regional efforts in the future (Peirce and Johnson, 1997).

Fourth, we need more work on the changing demographics of the suburbs. To determine whether the inner-ring suburbs share economic and demographic similarities with parts of the central city, we need to go beyond the usual simplified city-suburb typology (Frey and Geverdt, 1998). For example, the City of Los Angeles shows roughly similar demographics and occupational structure as the rest of the County; economic conditions are worse in the City but the differences are less than might be supposed and housing values were actually higher in the central city (Table 14-1). But the City of Los Angeles includes its own suburbs—e.g., the San Fernando Valley—and excludes parts of what is known to residents as South L.A.; these are listed as either unincorporated County territory or separate poor cities. Reconfiguring the geography to include the inner city and adding its inner-ring neighbors shows sharp differences in demographics, economic outcomes, and housing values. Trying another cut—breaking the county into PUMAs, based on demographic changes during 1970 to 1990—offers yet another view that gives a better idea of the stresses minority residents face whether they reside in the center or in the shifting suburbs (Table 14-1). Obviously, much may be gained by finer urban breakdowns than those used thus far.

Fifth, we could use more research on the impacts of the efforts of networks and labor-market intermediaries to connect individuals to employment, particularly at the regional level. The Survey of Urban Inequality, referred to above, asked some important questions about networks. More such survey efforts need to be undertaken,<sup>13</sup> particularly to understand how networks work for different groups. For example, preliminary econometric and anthropological evidence seems to suggest that networks are important for Hispanics in obtaining employment, but reliance on these networks actually leads to lower wages because of the labor-market position of the network members (Falcón, 1995; Pastor and Marcelli, 2001). In short, more attention needs to be paid to the differences between bonding (within-group) and bridging (across-group) social capital and networks.

There is a similar need for more attention to labor-market intermediaries. Such intermediaries arise, in part, because employers want to screen possible workers, and job seekers need resources when social networks

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<sup>13</sup>For one interesting micro-survey, see Fernandez and Weinberg's 1998 study on how networks affect hiring in one retail bank. The results square well with views that networks matter for both employer and (potential) employee.

TABLE 14-1 Comparative Views on Los Angeles County, 1990

	Demographics, % of Population					Population Growth since 1970
	Anglo	African-American	Latino	Asian		
City of L.A./other						
L.A. City	37.3	13.0	39.9	9.8		24.3
Rest of county	43.1	8.9	36.5	11.5		27.5
City-suburb						
Inner city	15.8	19.8	55.0	9.4		27.5
Rest of county	50.9	6.8	30.9	11.4		25.7
Neighborhoods by demography						
Anglo-stayed Anglo	72.8	4.6	14.1	8.6		25.3
Ethnic-stayed ethnic	3.4	38.1	55.1	3.4		18.9
Anglo-large ethnic transition	18.8	12.5	59.1	9.6		37.0
Average transition-now ethnic	23.0	8.1	53.0	15.9		32.7
Average transition-now Anglo	51.2	5.7	31.3	11.9		21.9

Economics

	Blue-collar, %	Job Growth Since 1980, %	Poor, %	Income to Mean	House Value to Mean
City of L.A./other					
L.A. City	42.6	15.0	17.5	95.6	106.4
Rest of county	41.4	37.0	12.7	102.5	96.4
City-suburb					
Inner city	55.9	7.7	24.3	67.1	74.8
Rest of county	37.4	35.8	11.3	110.5	107.4
Neighborhoods by demography					
Anglo-stayed Anglo	25.9	50.3	7.5	135.0	140.9
Ethnic-stayed ethnic	60.7	22.7	28.9	55.2	58.0
Anglo-large ethnic transition	52.8	4.8	18.1	81.5	79.8
Average transition-now ethnic	49.4	21.6	16.4	87.8	82.1
Average transition-now Anglo	37.0	30.3	11.5	105.7	105.6

Note: Economic figures are simple averages across L.A.'s 58 Public Use Microdata Areas. Demographic figures are weighted by population in Public Use Microdata Areas.



are too weak or tend to connect one to lower rungs of the job hierarchy. Unfortunately, those workers who most need intermediaries are those who lack social capital and encounter spatial mismatch, so they are often constrained in their ability to access services or have limited knowledge of their availability. As temporary and contingent work have risen in importance, the intermediary role has also become more important. Understanding which of these intermediaries works best for low-income, spatially isolated residents, and why, will be important for policy (Kazis, 1998).

Sixth, more research on transportation connections to employment would be useful. Gottlieb (1997) bemoans the relative lack of studies using journey-to-work data. The Public Use Microdata Sample contains detailed information about commuting, but even though the place of residence is quite specific—i.e., at the PUMA level—the place of work is simply “the city,” implying a loss of specificity for larger areas like Los Angeles. As a result, Pastor and Adams (1996) were forced to drop any subject who worked in the City of Los Angeles or other multi-PUMA jurisdiction in order to look at whether living in a poor neighborhood but working in a wealthier one raised one’s income. It did, with interesting implications for reverse commuting programs; but this is based on a selective sample that could be broadened if the Census Bureau collected and geocoded more complete work-address information in 2000.

Seventh, we need more regional-level case studies of the patterns of environmental exposure by race and other variables. Recent research has gone beyond anecdotes and case studies; but in the search for empiricism, there has been a tendency to reach to national levels and large aggregate datasets. This has the advantage of broad coverage; however, industrial structures are often regional in nature, and so is the nature of pollution. Moreover, at a regional level, researchers can generally access such variables as land use and employment as well as the traditional demographic measures available from the U.S. Census. This allows for a fuller picture; and the local-level data will often allow for more serious investigations of, for example, whether the pattern of toxic location is a phenomenon that occurs before a demographic transition or whether there is a minority move-in effect which occurs after. Of course, either outcome results in a worrisome pattern of disproportionate exposure, but the policy implications diverge—when toxics are placed in neighborhoods by race, attention should be paid to cleaning up the politics of the siting process; if minorities aggregate around toxics, perhaps because of lower land values, information campaigns should be used to make everyone aware of the risks that are silently (and perhaps incompletely) signaled via market prices.

Much remains to be done in the research of space and race. We need not wait for the analytical dust to settle completely before we move ahead with some immediate policy measures to address the geography of opportunity. Indeed, there are a variety of exciting experiments and initiatives that point in the right direction and should be continued.

A new policy approach might have three central elements: (1) reversing the federal and state incentives for sprawl with incentives for regional reconnection, (2) facilitating the connection of poorer (usually minority) individuals to the regional economy, and (3) encouraging the fair distribution of environmental hazards produced in the regional economy. These might be broadly called *regional collaboration*, *regional mobility*, and *regional environmentalism*.

On the collaboration side, one critical element will be increased incentives for regional approaches. The single most effective lever for regional collaboration in recent years has been provided by the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA), which was recently reworked as the Transportation Equity Act for the Twenty-first Century (TEA-21).<sup>14</sup> The framework ISTEA presented for multijurisdictional cooperation should be a model for other federal policies, including Section 8 administration and workforce development. A bonus pool of federal funding, regardless of the specific program, could be set aside for local jurisdictions that have demonstrated progress on intraregional collaboration and multisectoral participation. Help could be provided for auditing of the regional economy and its business clusters in order to get a sense of how best to train individuals for upward advancement. Clusters could be graded not only by their contribution to aggregate growth, but also by their accessibility to low-income residents and their mechanisms for upward wage progress.

Hopeful signs abound. HUD is moving to develop a regionalist agenda, Vice President Gore has become a strong proponent of "Smart Growth," and there is rising interest among foundations in how new regional approaches might address central-city poverty and urban development. One interesting experiment under way involves the creation of "location-efficient" mortgages, which reward borrowers who live near public transit (on the grounds that they will spend less money on auto transport and, hence, should qualify for more credit). This will help inner-city residents and constitutes one incentive that leans away from suburbanization. Overcoming the larger incentives, including the mortgage interest rate deduction, will be politically challenging. At the least,

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<sup>14</sup>For more on TEA-21 and how it might be conducive to placing low-income minority residents in new jobs, see Center for Community Change (1998).

this deduction could be restructured to be more distributionally progressive.

Federal incentives for mobility should come in three areas—housing, transportation, and employment. Allocating low-income housing across the region (via scattered-site approaches and inclusionary zoning) and generating individual housing mobility are necessary to decentralize poverty and allow poorer individuals to connect to acquire new residential networks.

Generating transportation mobility is necessary to allow poorer job-seekers ways to connect to suburbanized employment. HUD's Bridges to Work program, for example, facilitates reverse commuting and is a flexible response to the problems of fixed-rail lines and bus patterns.<sup>15</sup> More generally, the distributional impacts of transportation should be more explicitly taken into account, particularly because they may vary by region. In the Los Angeles area, for example, the continued development of light- and heavy-rail commuter systems (in which riders cover only 7 to 9 percent of service costs) has strained the ability to mount adequate bus service (even though riders here cover 30 to 35 percent of costs). As a result, the bus system, with a more than 80 percent minority ridership, is considered to be the most overcrowded in the United States, and the local metropolitan transit authority was sued by a series of community groups and the NAACP Legal Defense Fund when it attempted to raise bus fares to cover overruns on rail construction (Mann, 1996). Given the crucial role of public transportation for lower-income minority workers (Hodge, 1995), much more attention needs to be paid to equity in transport development and accessibility.

Generating employment mobility should involve more than first-time placement. Although much attention has been focused on the jobless, an equally severe problem is that of the working poor—and it is one that is likely to worsen as ex-welfare recipients flood low-wage labor markets. New directions could involve public provision of continued training as well as efforts to increase firm-sponsored training. These could help those in low-wage, currently dead-end jobs to move up a career ladder. Part of this will also involve CDC-based job training and placement programs, the best of which seem to be deeply connected to their regional labor market (Zdenek, 1998; Melendez, 1996).

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<sup>15</sup>Fernandez (1997) notes that if firms locate in suburbs to avoid minorities, transportation will not be much help. If such location is driven by land use availability and technological imperatives, then reverse commuting, improved networks, and other measures might help. Despite acknowledging that minority avoidance might be a factor, Fernandez still concurs that transportation strategies can work if these are coupled with information efforts—i.e., labor market intermediaries—and transport subsidies for minority workers.

Finally, one of the most exciting developments in the area of the environment and disproportionate exposure is the Environmental Protection Agency's various Brownfields Initiatives. Given the historic pattern of toxics, low-income minority communities are saddled with industrial sites from which developers, worried about legal entanglements and clean-up costs, may shy. Initiatives to clean up these sites tend to be "win-win" situations—the aggregate level of minority exposure will decline, economic development will result in the inner city, and the public, private, and community sectors will gain experience working together. There are numerous pilot projects under way; most involve a regional approach to the identification of sites and the building of coalitions for implementation. These efforts should be expanded as soon as the preliminary data are in and some lessons learned on how to proceed. The harder task will be determining new rules for future toxic facilities that explicitly take into account racial justice issues.

### CONCLUSION: PLACE, RACE, AND FACE

In explaining the continuing economic difficulties of minorities in the United States, three factors seem critical: place, race, and "face." Place has been the subject of much of the analysis here—racial disparities have been both driven by, and reflected in, geographic differences with regard to access to employment, schools, and opportunity. Race likewise remains an independent factor—careful research by Kirschenman and Neckerman (1991) and Kirschenman et al. (1996) indicates that employers still exhibit preferences to hire nonminorities, with special discrimination faced by Blacks. Finally, "face" refers to the networks or personal connections that can help people move out of poverty, but that are often lacking for those living in areas of concentrated poverty.

It has been difficult for U.S. policy makers and the American public to face up to the second of these barriers—the question of racism and its persistence. The end of *de jure* segregation led some to believe the civil rights battle had been won, and the new political sentiment against affirmative action reflects a sense that a helping hand is no longer needed. But racism continues, and differential outcomes with regard to the economy and the environment continue to be played out through the social structures and limits imposed by urban geography.

There is, however, hope. Suburbs are changing, creating the opportunity for new political alliances. The idea of regional collaboration across municipalities is gaining ground. Minority community residents and leaders are realizing that they need to "think and link" to the region.

Can this new regionalism framework offer a way out of this downward spiral of increasing geographic isolation, widening racial differen-

tials, and diminishing social capital? Maybe. Clearly, education levels, racial attitudes, and political power will all continue to matter. More research on the geography of opportunity is needed, and the emerging policy experiments must run their course. Still, the hopeful message from the new regionalists is that linking places and people, combining regional strategies, and community development, can be part of a strategy to ameliorate the gaps of race in America.

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