Cities, Suburbs, Neighborhoods, and Schools: How We Abandon Our Children

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Center for Urban Research and Education

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Dimensions of Poverty

• First and foremost poverty is about money
  – Poverty Line compares family income to amount needed to buy necessities

• Families don’t exist in isolation
  – Connected to people who live near them and depend on resources, services, and opportunities in their communities
  – Likewise, they tend to be disconnected from people, resources, and opportunities far from them

• The “spatial context of poverty”
“I Dream’d in a dream I saw a city invincible” – Walt Whitman

Photos by Camilo José Vergara,
http://invinciblecities.camden.rutgers.edu/intro.html
History of Concentrated Poverty

• Wilson and other scholars call attention to harsh conditions in urban ghettos, “underclass areas,” etc., in major US areas.
• Concentration of poverty *doubled* between 1970 and 1990.
• In the 1990s, with strong economy and housing policy changes, there was “stunning progress.”
• But what has happened since then?

Legend
- Interstate HWY
- Central Cities
- Rivers/Lakes
- MSAs
- States

- No Data
- 0 - 12.9
- 12.9 - 33.9
- 33.9 - 53.9
- 53.9 - 73.9
- 73.9 - 103

The Bruton Center, The University of Texas at Dallas

Legend
- Interstate HWY
- Central Cities
- Rivers/Lakes
- MSAs
- States

No Data
- 0 - 12.9
- 20.0 - 32.9
- 50.0 - 59.9
- 60.0 - 72.9
- 80.0 - 99.9

1990

Legend
- Interstate HWY
- Central Cities
- Rivers/Lakes
- MSAs
- States

- No Data
- 0 - 12.9
- 12.9 - 29.9
- 30.0 - 49.9
- 50.0 - 74.9
- 75.0 - 100
- 100.0 - 125

2000
Detroit High-Poverty Neighborhoods

1990

2005-2009
Number of High-Poverty Census Tracts

- Remainder of State
- Micropolitan
- Metropolitan
## Population of High-Poverty Areas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Change since 2000</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Persons (%)</td>
<td>Persons (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Poor (%)</td>
<td>Poor (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>9,592,333</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4,802,686</td>
<td>15.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>7,198,892</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3,487,015</td>
<td>10.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005-2009</td>
<td>9,506,534</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4,687,383</td>
<td>11.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006-2010</td>
<td>10,309,844</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5,049,956</td>
<td>12.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007-2011</td>
<td>11,224,438</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5,484,665</td>
<td>12.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008-2012</td>
<td>12,409,009</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6,079,614</td>
<td>13.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Change since 2000 Population of High-Poverty Areas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Black</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Hispanic</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>7,198,892</td>
<td>1,439,889</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
<td>3,010,537</td>
<td>41.8%</td>
<td>2,236,604</td>
<td>31.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008-2012</td>
<td>12,409,009</td>
<td>3,191,497</td>
<td>25.7%</td>
<td>4,545,112</td>
<td>36.6%</td>
<td>3,899,857</td>
<td>31.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change</td>
<td>5,210,117</td>
<td>1,751,608</td>
<td></td>
<td>1,534,575</td>
<td></td>
<td>1,663,253</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Change</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>122%</td>
<td></td>
<td>51%</td>
<td></td>
<td>74%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Concentration of Poverty, 2000 to 2008-2012

Total | 2000 | 2008-2012
--- | --- | ---
White | 4.1 | 7.1
Black | 18.6 | 23.6
Hispanic | 13.8 | 16.4

Sources: 2000 Census, ACS 2008-2012 5-year release
# Metropolitan Areas with the Highest Concentration of Poverty Among Blacks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metropolitan Area</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Black* Poor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>All census tracts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Detroit-Livonia-Dearborn, MI</td>
<td>727,260</td>
<td>262,488</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milwaukee-Waukesha-West Allis, WI</td>
<td>251,557</td>
<td>94,843</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rochester, NY</td>
<td>116,570</td>
<td>40,344</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tallahassee, FL</td>
<td>111,243</td>
<td>37,048</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dayton, OH</td>
<td>120,049</td>
<td>37,637</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cleveland-Elyria-Mentor, OH</td>
<td>403,714</td>
<td>132,603</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gary, IN</td>
<td>128,769</td>
<td>43,084</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Louisville/Jefferson County, KY-IN</td>
<td>169,553</td>
<td>54,249</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buffalo-Niagara Falls, NY</td>
<td>131,685</td>
<td>47,491</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Memphis, TN-MS-AR</td>
<td>581,908</td>
<td>168,252</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Metropolitan areas with at least 100,000 blacks.

Source: 2008-2012 American Communities Survey.
# Metropolitan Areas with the Highest Concentration of Poverty Among Hispanics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metropolitan Area</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Hispanic Poor</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>All census tracts</td>
<td>High-poverty census tracts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philadelphia, PA</td>
<td>290,652</td>
<td>93,338</td>
<td>49,199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laredo, TX</td>
<td>236,080</td>
<td>73,844</td>
<td>38,554</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McAllen-Edinburg-Mission, TX</td>
<td>696,694</td>
<td>260,977</td>
<td>131,992</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brownsville-Harlingen, TX</td>
<td>353,240</td>
<td>133,144</td>
<td>66,461</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Springfield, MA</td>
<td>103,370</td>
<td>41,965</td>
<td>20,723</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fresno, CA</td>
<td>460,606</td>
<td>148,272</td>
<td>67,303</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milwaukee-Waukesha-West Allis, WI</td>
<td>144,697</td>
<td>38,216</td>
<td>15,025</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hartford-W. Hartford-E. Hartford, CT</td>
<td>146,028</td>
<td>42,653</td>
<td>16,704</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Las Cruces, NM</td>
<td>134,588</td>
<td>42,900</td>
<td>14,965</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visalia-Porterville, CA</td>
<td>264,202</td>
<td>83,236</td>
<td>28,475</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Metropolitan areas with at least 100,000 Hispanics.**

Source: 2008-2012 American Communities Survey.
Another Look at Concentration of Poverty in Metropolitan Areas by Size.

Metropolitans area above the diagonal experienced increases in concentration of poverty since 2000, those below experienced decreases.
Black Concentration of Poverty

Concentration of Poverty
Black, 2011
0 - 5% 2.3% 2.9%
5 - 10% 7.7% 0.8%
10 - 15% 19.1% 10.6%
15 - 20% 21.3% 28.9%
20 - 25% 41.8% 31.9%
> 25% 20.6% 12.8%

Concentration of Poverty Black, 2011

0 - 5%
5 - 10%
10 - 15%
15 - 20%
20 - 25%
> 25%
The Process Continues, 1990-2000
A large cause of concentration poverty historically has been rapid suburbanization, as the affluent moved out to exclusive suburbs and the poor were left behind in the central cities and older suburbs.
Population Change 1970-1990: Houston Metropolitan Area

Population Change
1970-1990
No Data
20% or more
10 to 19.9%
5 to 9.9%
0 to 4.9%
-5 to -0.1%
-10 to -5.1%
-20 to -10.1%
-20% or Less
Population Change 1970-1990: Baltimore Metropolitan Area (18)

Population Change
1970-1990
No Data
20% or more
10 to 19.9%
5 to 9.9%
0 to 4.9%
-5 to -0.1%
-10 to -5.1%
-20 to -10.1%
-20% or Less
Institutional Context of US Suburban Development

- In US, major metropolitan areas have extensive political fragmentation
- Central cities are surrounded by politically independent suburbs
- Federal and state government play only a secondary role in development decisions
- Central cities are relatively poor and have greater minority populations
- Suburbs are rich and mostly white
Political Fragmentation, Dallas Metropolitan Area

Dallas central city (center, in red) is surrounded by 154 suburbs, containing:

- 66% of total
- 79% of whites
- 42% of blacks
“Exurban” Development

The rate of rural land conversion is far more rapid than population growth.

Photo: Wisconsin Alliance of Cities
Economically Exclusive Developments Over Large, Peripheral Areas

Photo credits: Left: Sierra Club; Right: North Texas Council of Governments
The policy conversation has to change.

• The policy conversation today is either how to “fix” high-poverty neighborhoods or how to help residents leave.
  – Enterprise Zones, Promise Neighborhoods, and many others
  – MTO, Section 8 vouchers, scattered site housing (but mostly still within central cities)

• These programs have a role to play, especially in the short run.

• But they do not address the fundamental underlying issue.

• The conversation should be WHY are there so many high-poverty neighborhoods to begin with?
WHY there are so many high-poverty neighborhoods?

• Concentration of poverty is the direct result of policy choices:

  – *Political fragmentation* means that hundreds of suburbs develop without regard for the larger impact of their choices.

  – Suburbs grow much faster than is needed to accommodate metropolitan population growth.
    • Thus, suburban growth comes at the expense of central cities and older suburbs (Cannibalistic growth).
    • Infrastructure of new suburbs is subsidized, even as older infrastructure is underutilized.

  – Exclusionary zoning ensures economic and racial segregation.

• By policy and tradition, we create a *durable architecture of segregation* that ensures the concentration of poverty.
The policy question: will we continue to build ghettos and barrios?

- Without abandoning efforts to help those who currently live in high-poverty neighborhoods, *we must nonetheless work to change the development paradigm that builds high-poverty neighborhoods in the first place.*
  - State and federal governments must begin to control suburban development so that it is not cannibalistic: new housing construction must be in line with metropolitan population growth.
  - Every city and town in a metropolitan should build *new housing that reflects the income distribution of the metropolitan area as a whole.*
  - Over decades, this will result in less differentiation among places, more in-fill development, higher density, more efficient public transportation, and fewer failing schools.

- The fundamental question is not how to fix Camden, but how to fix the metropolitan development paradigm that creates Camdens and Detroits in the first place.