Investigation of the effects of suburban change on the educational opportunities of poor and minority students

Demographic research has suggested the importance of municipal boundaries in structuring metropolitan segregation

Considerably less focus on suburban schools or districts

Project supported by the Spencer Foundation

Changing nature of suburbia
Demographic analysis of the largest 25 metropolitan areas (MSAs)

Using NCES Common Core of Data since 1990-91

Suburb: defined here as anything within a metropolitan area that is not a principal or central city; metropolitan area definitions from 2003 Office of Management and Budget guidelines.

Data and definitions
• Unlike the central city, the “suburbs” may encompass many different jurisdictions at different distance from the central city, types of tax base and demand for social services, and histories of settlement (M. Orfield, 2002).
• The political fragmentation of suburbia has institutionalized differing characteristics of populations within these suburban jurisdictions (Oliver, 2001; Weiher, 1991; Frankenberg, 2009; Puentes & Warren, 2006).
• *Milliken* limited most cross-district student assignment efforts; rarely voluntarily implemented

Suburban districts: Dozens of little democracies
• Suburban enrollment in largest 25 MSAs has grown from 8.6 million in 1990-1 to nearly 12 million in 2006-7
• Today, these students account for 24.8% of all public school students
• Suburban enrollment larger than city in 20 of the MSAs
  • More likely in the Midwest, less suburban in the Sunbelt—though Sunbelt experiencing large growth

Suburban School Enrollment
Multiracial nature of students in largest metropolitan areas

Suburban Enrollment

Central City Enrollment
Racial enrollment change, 1999-2006

• An increase of more than 850,000 Latinos in suburban schools of our nation’s largest metros
  • Latino growth since 1999 accounts for 70% of the increase in suburban students.
  • In nine metropolitan areas, the Latino suburban enrollment has doubled in just seven years
• White suburban students *declined* by more than 170,000
  • Percentage of white suburban students has fallen in each MSA since 1999
  • Highest decline was in suburban Dallas (15%)
• Only suburbs of largest 25 metros to experience a decline in suburban population in first decade of 21st century (nearly 46,000 residents)
• 86% of population located in the suburbs; 90% white, 4% black.
• 87.8% of public school enrollment in suburbs is white, highest of all 25 metros (avg white % is 57%)
  • Has declined from 92.3% in 1990
Suburban sorting across boundary lines

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>District-level dissimilarity, 2006-07</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Below 30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White-Black</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White-Latino</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White-Asian</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black-Latino</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black-Asian</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latino-Asian</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor-nonpoor</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
• City-suburban poverty gap

• Growth in low-income students in suburbia
  • Declining enrollment districts have a much higher percentage of low-income students, on average

• Differences in poverty exposure across city-suburban boundary
  • But, differences also exist within suburbia for poor and non-poor students.

• Economic segregation highest in fragmented areas

Uneven spread of poverty in suburbia
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cluster</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Immigration meccas</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>Slower racial change, larger size, moderate percentages of Asian, Latino, &amp; low-income students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exclusive enclaves</td>
<td>703</td>
<td>High shares of white students, low poverty, minimal racial change.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Countywide districts</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Very large districts, racially diverse with moderate shares of black &amp; Latino students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exurbs</td>
<td>1,102</td>
<td>Very little racial change, few minority students, mixed socioeconomic status; distant from central city</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inner-ring transitioning</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>Extremely rapid racial change, small size, moderate percentages of minority students &amp; low-income students, few whites; located close to central city</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satellite cities</td>
<td>305</td>
<td>Moderate racial change, low-income students with high black &amp; Latino, larger size</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Characteristics of Schools, by Suburban Cluster

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Suburban Cluster</th>
<th>N of schools (2006-07)</th>
<th>School-level White change 1999-2006</th>
<th>Percentage of students in 90-100% minority schools</th>
<th>Percentage of students in 90-100% white schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1999-00</td>
<td>2006-07</td>
<td>1999-00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satellite cities</td>
<td>1,381</td>
<td>14.38</td>
<td>2.45%</td>
<td>13.66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exclusive enclaves</td>
<td>3,478</td>
<td>8.46</td>
<td>3.27%</td>
<td>6.69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Countywide</td>
<td>518</td>
<td>11.86</td>
<td>17.66%</td>
<td>23.66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exurbs</td>
<td>4,068</td>
<td>3.27</td>
<td>15.34%</td>
<td>18.41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing immigration meccas</td>
<td>2,480</td>
<td>12.79</td>
<td>5.52%</td>
<td>12.92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inner-ring transitioning</td>
<td>312</td>
<td>19.30</td>
<td>1.43%</td>
<td>6.11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>12,237</td>
<td>8.61</td>
<td>8.04%</td>
<td>13.27%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
• Historically, suburbs were places of opportunity and mobility.
  • These findings suggest this is not uniformly true.

• Racial and economic transition is diversifying suburbia, particular in certain geographic regions.

• Suburban fragmentation is associated with the highest levels of suburban segregation.

What is a suburban district?
## Demographics of cases

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Enrollment</th>
<th>White %</th>
<th>Black %</th>
<th>Latino %</th>
<th>Asian %</th>
<th>FRL %</th>
<th>White change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Waltham</td>
<td>4,763</td>
<td>53.6</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>28.3</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>31.8</td>
<td>11.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oak Park Elem</td>
<td>5,421</td>
<td>62.9</td>
<td>27.4</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>18.8</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oak Park-River Forest High</td>
<td>3,182</td>
<td>61.6</td>
<td>29.2</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>19.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Azalea*</td>
<td>25,000</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>&lt;5%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Osseo</td>
<td>20,903</td>
<td>55.0</td>
<td>22.8</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>14.5</td>
<td>35.3</td>
<td>23.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern*</td>
<td>65,000</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sewell County*</td>
<td>40,000</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>&lt;5</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beach County*</td>
<td>195,000</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>&lt;5</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Context: Shifting Zone of Racial Change

• San Antonio is the 7th largest city in the U.S.: 1.35 million
• Population increased by 18% since 2000 = largest growth among the 10 largest U.S. cities
• Southwest ISD is among the 100 largest districts in the U.S.
• Approximately 140 square miles
• Majority of the district in the City of San Antonio; also includes a number of other smaller communities
Zones of Racial Change in Southwest ISD

ZONE 1:
At Risk
Segregated Suburb

ZONE 2:
At Risk
Older Suburb

ZONE 3:
Developing/Affluent Suburbs

Central City

Zone of Racial Change
Ethnic and Racial Composition of Southwest ISD

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>African American</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>Hispanic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1998-1999</td>
<td>9.50%</td>
<td>51.70%</td>
<td>36.30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003-2004</td>
<td>9.50%</td>
<td>45.30%</td>
<td>41.90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008-2009</td>
<td>9.30%</td>
<td>37.90%</td>
<td>48.60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-2011</td>
<td>3.40%</td>
<td>32.10%</td>
<td>54.10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
• Stone’s theory of Systemic Power: Policy decisions are reflective of social stratification and the geographic distribution of power.

• “...inequalities in economic situation, social status, and organizational position carry great weight in building relationships for governing (Stone 2005a, 325 as cited in Orr and Johnson, 2008, p. 12).

• “Public officials experience strategic dependencies predisposing them to favor upper- over lower-strata interests. Thus some groups are in a position to receive official cooperation, while others encounter substantial resistance” (p.34).
• Political pressure from elite parents in Zone 2 (Zone of Racial Change”
• Most evident in school boundary decisions: McKinley (Zone 2) to Ford (Zone 3)
• “I think that if you had it to do all over, if you started a school district and all your schools were on the ground that are there today, you would never draw the lines the way they have been drawn. And so if you looked at a map of our school districts the lines are really catawampus, they’re crazy. But, but you can’t touch those boundaries you know not and survive politically. ....Those are hard fought battles and they pit neighborhood and have and have nots, whether it is really that way or not, that’s the way they perceive it and so those are pretty intense battles.
• -District administrator
• Interests of elites are reflected in both formal policies and informal decisions/internal decisions
  • Administrative appointments
  • School of choice policy
    • Open enrollment
    • Non-race based magnet schools to attract parents, highly segregated

Power, Politics and District Decisions
• Making “separate” more “equal”:
  • Single member district school board elections
  • Redistribution of resources
    • “Of all things [the lawsuit] was the best thing that ever happened to the district...because it made us focus on every area and so we were able then with seven single member districts to put in an equity plan, like let’s say for our Bond issues. We put in a billion dollars worth of bonds and over half of it is really focused on existing schools.” – Senior Administrator
  • Tax base used to fund supports for struggling schools, and meeting accountability benchmarks
• Decisions of district most influenced by parents most threatened by racial change (Zone of Racial Change)
• For districts undergoing racial change the politics of this zone must be recognized and addressed
• Uncertainty fueled their fears; addressing segregation and creating stability may be one strategy.
• Not only racial diversity, but regional
• Minorities moving into the county are middle- and upper-middle class
• Average educational level of African Americans exceeds that of whites
• Expectation of an increase in discipline problems in schools
• Absence of bilingual education
• Issues of poverty across all racial lines

Sewall County, GA: Race and Class
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Sewall County</th>
<th>City A (North)</th>
<th>County Seat (Center)</th>
<th>City B (Southwest)</th>
<th>City C (Southeast)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td></td>
<td>195,370</td>
<td>14,679</td>
<td>19,928</td>
<td>5,355</td>
<td>4,989</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td></td>
<td>119,341</td>
<td>9,853</td>
<td>8,493</td>
<td>3,857</td>
<td>2,322</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td></td>
<td>58,741</td>
<td>3,359</td>
<td>2,929</td>
<td>2,694</td>
<td>1,681</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

% change since 1990: 233% 337% 580% 99% 197%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

**Population**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Sewall County</th>
<th>City A (North)</th>
<th>County Seat (Center)</th>
<th>City B (Southwest)</th>
<th>City C (Southeast)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% White</td>
<td>62.7</td>
<td>35.8</td>
<td>37.8</td>
<td>71.3</td>
<td>65.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% change since 2000</td>
<td>-18.7</td>
<td>-35.8</td>
<td>-23.6</td>
<td>-12.9</td>
<td>-16.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% African American</td>
<td>30.5</td>
<td>51.7</td>
<td>54.8</td>
<td>20.3</td>
<td>30.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% change since 2000</td>
<td>15.8</td>
<td>31.2</td>
<td>20.5</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>15.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Asian</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% change since 2000</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>-0.4</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>-0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Hispanic</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% change since 2000</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: American Community Survey, U.S. Census Bureau
• Student achievement is main goal
• Zoning is based on population growth, not racial balance in schools
• Hiring diverse teaching staff is critical, but goal is “the most qualified”
• No plans for magnet or charter schools
How does issue get (re)framed?

• High quality education is the goal
• Respect for all cultures
• Emphasis on multiculturalism but not integration
• Little discussion about racism
• Need for continued community-wide dialogue
• Proactive community leadership as demographics changed
• High level of involvement from Chamber of Commerce
• One [Sewall] Initiative / Connect [Sewall]
• Trips to North Carolina and Alabama

Civic Capacity / Collaboration
Beach County Public Schools: Suburban Change and Conflict in a County-Wide district
Population growth (+23% since 2000) and Diversification (e.g. white population declined from 75% to 53%; Hispanic population increased from 18% to 25% since 2000).

8th largest district in US encompassing three incorporated cities, including Tampa, and unincorporated urban, rural and suburban communities.

≈254 schools, enrolling 192,000 pupils.

Operates under Choice after three decades of court supervised desegregation.
"This is kind of ironic, the interest rates went low, houses were easier to purchase, we saw from that aspect the diversity change within our own community and become more diverse. It still was a good community, I mean nothing wrong with the community, and it just became more diverse. We had more Hispanic populations moving into our area, African American, and just kind of diversified the community”

- Sites of employment and affordable housing
- Single family units purchased during a time in unprecedented large scale mortgage lending, increase in rental properties (apartment complexes), and federally subsidized housing.
**Diversity is Good for Public Education**

- Suburban areas /schools are “more balanced”
- Creates integrated schools without “artificial” remedies (i.e. bussing, magnets)
- However, valuing of diverse schools seldom is framed in terms of “academic excellence”

**Suburban Homeowners/Tax Payers**

- Suburban high status communities “have a fit” or “freak out”
- “Move those people”
- “Watering down,” lower test scores, drain on resources, decline property values, school grade, the “graying” of suburban areas, etc.
• Schools “comfort” was related to levels of school segregation (CHOICE)
• Divergent class-based and racialized discourses and strategies for making schools “comfortable”
• Academic Capital v. Social Capital (see Wells & Crain, 1997; Caldes, et., al., 2008) among divergent discursive policy/strategies

Comfort Zones
Policy?

No policy or policy talk on preventing racial segregation among schools in suburban areas. District committed to offering high quality educational choices.

- Utilizes magnets and other themed programs to facilitate urban-suburban school choice.
- Establish non-contiguous zones in urban areas to bus urban students into suburban schools to ease overcrowding (Florida Class Size Amendment).
- Magnets in predominately Latino/a in rural areas.

Changing School Climate

- Expressed need for faculty diversification.
- Opening up access to AP (College Readiness).
- Targeting resources for compensatory programs.

Disconnect between district and school level discourse

- Parental involvement, policies limiting bilingual education, RTI /PBS, faculty diversity, push for AP enrollment, etc.
• Overall, discomfort/negativity/deficit views characterize school-level educators conceptualization of growing diversity but also many educators actively resisting such conceptualization
  • Concerns about impact of home environment
• Most schools express a desire to diversify the teachers and staff but little actual change occurs in regards to the racial composition of the staff; instead, some schools make efforts to develop their predominantly white staff
• Many schools attempt to build an inclusive environment in both race-neutral and race-conscious ways, often piecemeal responses.
• Responses that directly seek to improve the academic achievement of students, in part because of accountability pressure
• In part, due to serving older students, the high schools in our study were focused on ways to provide access to low-income/students of color through programs and structural reforms. Yet, they also saw advanced programs (e.g., IB) as a way to attract more advantaged students.

School-level responses
• Different kinds of responses depending on jurisdiction of school district
  • Multi-municipal districts tried to prevent exit of elites to “competitors”
  • Single municipal districts were tightly coupled with housing
  • Countywide districts had least pressure to respond
• Important to recognize and address changes early, when more opportunities are available to educators & other leaders
  • Take advantage of technological advances to understand changes
  • There are roles for many: academics, media, cross-sector partners
  • Need civil rights groups in suburbia & help from federal/state govts.
• Comprehensive, regional response to change needed

Recommendations