Springboard or Trap? Race, Governance, and the Challenge of Suburban Poverty

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In this article, we ask whether suburban residence offers the poor a springboard to the middle class or whether it represents a new kind of poverty trap. To answer this question we examine the type of challenge that suburban poverty presents and the responses to it. Drawing on a comparison of the Denver and Chicago regions, we show that the interaction of race and governance influences both the nature of the challenge that suburban poverty represents and the ability of local and regional actors to respond. We emphasize two features of governance: the size of local jurisdictions and the regional footprint. Larger jurisdictions, we argue, are more likely to possess greater administrative capacity from which the poor can benefit. They are also less susceptible to racial tipping than are small jurisdictions. Regions with fewer larger jurisdictions will also find it easier to engage in regional action that benefits the poor.

In the late 2000s, news that the numbers of poor people in suburbs had surpassed those in cities captured headlines as a startling reversal of a longstanding pattern,[1] leading pundits and scholars alike to ask whether suburban residence supplies the benefits once associated with it. In the postwar decades, a home in the suburbs corresponded with the upward mobility of a generation of new homeowners, many of them the children of turn-of-the-century immigrants. The rising numbers of suburban poor today sits uneasily with this image. Can contemporary suburbs still offer a springboard into the middle class? Or are they destined to be traps for the poor?

In this article, we address this uncertainty by exploring answers to two couplets of questions that make suburban poverty growth an especially relevant topic in a special issue on metropolitan resilience. The first couplet concerns the *nature of the challenge.* How do race and ethnicity of suburban residents, especially the diversity of non-whites, affect the severity and prospective duration of poverty growth? Does the challenge in suburbs where poverty rates grow because nonpoor residents are leaving or becoming poor differ from the challenge in suburbs with burgeoning populations of both poor and nonpoor residents? The second couplet concerns the *ability of local and regional actors to respond* to the challenge. As the crisis has grown, how have elected and appointed officials of suburbs with growing poverty, advocates for low-income people, and public-sector employees in these places organized themselves to respond? And at a more structural level, have these responses been complemented by efforts to

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[1] See, for example, "Poverty Rates Surge in American Suburbs," PBS Newshour 1/11/2014, available: http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/nation-jan-june14-povertysuburb_01-11/; "Broke in the 'burbs," The Economist, July 20, 2013, available: http://www.economist.com/news/united-states/21582019-poverty-has-moved-suburbs-broke-burbs.

prevent suburban poverty traps in the longer term via changes to state laws and local practices on land-development regulation, annexation, incorporation, and fair housing?

The article begins with a brief review of recent coverage and scholarship on the rise of suburban poverty through the lens of resilience, framing suburban poverty as both a shock and a strain. We then introduce our case study regions, Chicago and Denver, two metropolitan areas that experienced significant increases in poverty outside the main central city (thereby meeting our definition of "suburban poverty growth") during the past decade.[2] We contend that suburban poverty may prove more tractable on average in metro Denver than in Chicago. Denver's growth rate is faster than Chicago's. Moreover, its non-white diversity is mainly Hispanic and immigrant and its political jurisdictions are larger, making it less vulnerable to dynamics of exit that isolate the suburban poor. Denver's capacity to respond, too, exceeds Chicago's. Its poor suburbs are larger on average than Chicago's, and Denver's regional constraints to peripheral development have reduced the exit options for nonpoor households as Chicagoland continues to sprawl. Denver has also developed more successful regional collaborations than Chicago has, owing not only to the clustering of several large cities at the region's core but also to civic leadership that has lain a strong foundation for addressing problems that cross municipal boundaries. In closing, we discuss implications for government, service providers, and philanthropy about how regions can become more resilient in the face of the growing suburban diversity that will likely cause poverty to reemerge as a problem each time the economy slips into recession.

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[2] The census identifies multiple principal cities for each metropolitan area and identifies the rest of the area as suburbs. We count as "suburban" all areas outside the historical central city. The historic central city is likely to have longer experience with poverty, more nonprofit organizations, and public capabilities. Our interest is in understanding the nature of the challenge and response to growing poverty in places where poverty is newer or where a small city now finds itself engulfed in a larger metropolitan area.

Resilience and suburban poverty: Shock and strain

Resilience has been used as a metaphor in two main senses: bouncing back to normal after a crisis, and building or reforming institutions in response to long-term strains (Pendall, Foster, and Cowell, 2010). Recent scholarship and policy development on suburban poverty growth has seen it in both ways—as a shock, and as a strain. Discussion of policy responses has varied accordingly, with concerns about the capacity of established suburban institutions to respond to the shock but also with insight about how the structural forces that create suburban poverty as a long-standing strain might also be reformed to strengthen local institutions and even change laws and incentive systems in ways that reduce the likelihood of creating suburban poverty traps.

Suburban poverty as a shock

The 2000 Census confirmed that for the first time, rates of poverty grew faster in suburbs in the previous decade than in central cities; the suburban share of high-poverty tracts grew by four percentage points (Berube and Frey, 2002; Kingsley and Pettit, 2003). Fueled by a steady increase in the national poverty rate from 11.3 percent to 15.1 percent between 2000 and 2010, suburban poverty continued to increase in the early 2000s, growing five times faster than poverty in principal cities (Berube and Kneebone, 2006, 2011; Kneebone and Garr, 2010). By 2008, the suburban population in poverty outnumbered the corresponding central-city population by 1.5 million (Kneebone and Garr, 2010). Between 2000 and 2010, the suburbs of the 100 largest metropolitan areas experienced a 53 percent increase in their poor population, compared to a 23 percent increase in cities (Berube and Kneebone, 2011).

An array of recent typologies underscores the diversity of suburbs and their capacity to address a rapid rise in poverty. Orfield (2002), for example, identified six types of suburban communities:

three types of "at-risk" suburbs (segregated, older, and low-density), with low fiscal capacity and high levels of distress, and three low-stress or affluent suburb types (bedroom developing, affluent job center, and very affluent job center). In a different typology, Mikelbank (2004) identifies over 1000 incorporated "manufacturing" suburbs that have been vulnerable to distress. Kneebone and Berube (2013) highlight two key factors: population growth or decline and relative job gain, whose intersection produces four types of suburbs: rapid growth, strained, at-risk and distressed. Murphy (2010), in a qualitative study of eight poor suburbs in Philadelphia and Pittsburgh, divided those places into inner suburban townships with obvious distress ("symbiotic suburbs"), older industrial cities—often fairly far from the central city—whose main manufacturing plants have closed down ("skeletal suburbs"), and single neighborhoods as small as a census block group within middle- or upper-middle-class suburbs ("overshadowed suburbs").

As poverty has grown in the suburbs, many observers have raised concerns about the paucity of services in the suburbs compared with cities. Even relatively well-off suburbs may lack the resources to address the needs of the new poor. Cities have much stronger networks of social service providers and philanthropic foundations than suburbs (Reckhow and Weir, 2011; Allard and Roth, 2010). Likewise, the dearth of efficient public transit in suburbs can effectively isolate low-income families who may not have access to cars (Dreier, Mollenkopf, and Swanstrom, 2001). Besides making work commutes difficult or impossible, suburban transportation poses a barrier to reaching a range of services and amenities, including healthcare, child care, schools, and shopping (Felland, Lauer, and Cunningham, 2009).

Regions also have differing civic sectors that can mobilize to address a rapid rise in poverty. Places where poverty is new or growing may have few local organizations to advocate

on behalf of the poor. Where immigrants form a disproportionate share of the new poor, political representation of their needs may be minimal and local officials have little incentive to assist them. Moreover, in places where the numbers of low-income immigrants are growing, local officials often actively seek to drive them away (Carpio et al., 2011). But in regions with a strong civic sectors, shocks can provide the impetus to try new strategies to address poverty.

In summary, recent studies on responses to suburbanizing poverty show that local government capacity is weak but that there is much variation among suburbs (Kneebone and Berube, 2013; Hexter et al., 2011). Even without serious institutional reform, some suburbs have exhibited more resilience than others in responding to the crisis, mainly because they already had government capacity and on-the-ground organizations in place. Other suburbs, however, have very limited capacity to respond to a shock of rapidly increased poverty.

Suburban poverty as a strain

Poverty is not just a short-term shock but a way of life in some distressed suburbs. Small manufacturing enclaves, "inner suburbs," and rural minority communities engulfed by suburban development have all been known for decades to have higher poverty rates than other places outside central cities (Taylor, 1915; Schnore, 1956; Jackson, 1985). Global and national economic and demographic trends are responsible for much of this distress, but some places and metropolitan areas seem even more prone to entrenched suburban poverty than their economic or demographic conditions would lead one to predict. In these places, institutional arrangements, often set by state governments, create a predisposition toward entrenched suburban poverty. Municipal fragmentation and fiscal competition, racial segregation and discrimination, and suburban sprawl have all shaped the demand for land and location in ways that disadvantage older suburbs (Puentes, 2002; Pendall, 2003; Bier, 2001; Hanlon, 2010). A complete analysis of

regional resilience suggests that each of these subjects constitutes a potential area for regional, state, and federal stakeholders to seek reforms that would prevent suburbs from becoming a trap for the poor.

Local government structure and fiscal capacity

Laws on annexation, incorporation, and special-district creation guide the region's internal political architecture and shape the fiscal calculus for land-use and budget decisions (Foster, 1999; Carr and Feiock, 2001; Rice, Waldner, and Smith, 2013). The internal political architecture helps determine the size and number of jurisdictions within the region and in so doing creates places that are more or less likely to build the administrative capacities needed to assist poor residents. The internal political organization of metros varies considerably across the United States. Cities in the Northeast and Midwest typically feature politically fragmented metropolitan areas with many small suburban municipalities (Rusk, 1993; Hendrick and Shi, 2014). By contrast, most metros in the South and West feature larger cities and suburban jurisdictions, which grew through annexation.

Jurisdictional size matters in several different ways. In metros with many smaller jurisdictions, poorer suburbs are more vulnerable to exit because better off residents can move to jurisdictions that offer better amenities or lower taxes, much as the Tiebout model suggests (Tiebout, 1954). Metros with large jurisdictions are not immune to these dynamics but they are more attenuated since larger jurisdictions have more diverse populations on average than small ones. Larger governments are also more likely to have the capacity to implement policies aimed at assisting low income residents, because they can harvest economies of scale (Blom-Hansen, Houlberg, and Serritzlew, 2014) and because their resource base allows room for redistribution from net tax providers to net service consumers. They are also better equipped to compete for

state and federal funds. Cities with populations over 50,000 have "entitlement status" to receive formula funds from HUD's Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program, the HOME Investment Partnership Program (HOME), homelessness-related Emergency Solutions Grants (ESG), and emergency CDBG allocations like the Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP) (Rohe and Galster, 2014). They more often have personnel that can apply for federal and state competitive funds. "Urban counties" also receive entitlement funds, providing resources that allow small cities and suburbs in them to receive investment and support from county-wide housing and community development offices. Smaller jurisdictions and their residents receive less benefit, and less certainty of investment, from urban-county CDBG funds than entitlement cities do.

Entitlement status provides much more than budget support; it also builds government capacity to conduct community development in a professional way, with foresight and some degree of transparency and accountability (Hexter et al., 2011). Entitlement communities have broad latitude about just how to use these block grants (especially CDBG), but there are some rules. They must prepare plans in which participation is mandatory (though imperfect in practice); they typically must hire staff to administer them and monitor their use.

By itself, administrative capacity provides no guarantee that assistance to low-income residents will be forthcoming. Public officials may well use their federal funds to promote development aimed at attracting the middle class rather than assisting the poor. Even so, the poor may be better off in large and administratively capable jurisdictions than in weak ones. The retention and attraction of nonpoor residents shores up the tax base needed to provide public services and the demand needed to attract private-sector investment. Even if these local governments redistribute little, their citizens are likely to have access to better public services

and amenities than those of jurisdictions that nonpoor residents are actively abandoning. If larger jurisdictions can afford a more professionalized public-sector staff, this may also translate to better service for low-income residents because state mandates, professional norms, and the logic of street-level bureaucracy all encourage it (Maynard-Moody and Musheno, 2003). In a study of immigrants in suburban Washington D.C. Michael Jones-Correa found that professionals, including teachers and librarians, viewed service to all parts of the population as part of their mission and found funding for programs to respond as immigrant populations, even undocumented ones, grew (Jones-Correa, 2008). Lacking systematic evidence that larger jurisdictions have welcoming professionals or that these compensate for hostile ones, we establish this as a hypothesis rather than a firm conclusion from the literature.

Race and ethnicity

Race contributes importantly to the character and trajectory of suburbs: Black and Hispanic residents make up a disproportionate share of the population of distressed suburbs (Howell and Timberlake, 2014). Neighborhoods can become stigmatized because they have high concentrations of blacks and Hispanics (Wacquant, 1996; Sampson and Raudenbush, 2004). Since jurisdictional boundaries serve as signaling mechanisms that sort residents by race and income (Weiher, 1991), entire cities can be stigmatized, especially small, inner-ring cities, but even some large jurisdictions. [3] As they become stigmatized, suburbs may struggle to retain established and attract new nonpoor residents (regardless of race), becoming more fiscally stressed and losing private-sector investment as the number of families with higher incomes

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[3] We speculate that white families may search for housing based on the racial composition of not only individual schools but also of the school district, which in many parts of the United States are coextensive with city boundaries. They may decide not to search for housing in cities whose school districts have predominantly black student bodies. See Farley et al. 1994, Krysan 2008, Crowder and South 2002 for more on race and residential mobility.

declines. Ultimately, some suburbs may become durably poor, reinforcing a condition sometimes

referred to as *place stratification* (Alba and Logan, 1993).

Race plays a central role in place stratification: when they move, the majority of whites,

Hispanics, and Asians avoid neighborhoods and cities with large proportions of African-

Americans (Logan, Alba, and Leung, 1996). Hispanic neighborhoods (and by extension, suburbs

containing significant numbers of Hispanics) appear to occupy a middle ground: more acceptable

for white residents than black neighborhoods or suburbs, but not as desirable for whites as

mostly white neighborhoods (Emerson, Chai, and Yancey, 2001).[4] This implicit hierarchy of

neighbors reflects a broader "tri-racial" stratification of "white, honorary white, and the

collective black" posited by Bonilla-Silva (2004). Immigration is clearly reshaping suburbs in

critical ways, helping construct this hierarchy with the introduction of much greater diversity in

traditional "gateway" metropolitan areas and new destinations (Singer, Hardwick, and Brettell,

2008).

Place stratification has been theorized as a counterpoint to residential assimilation, a

process in which families either move to better cities and neighborhoods or upgrade their

housing in place as they become more economically secure. Accrued home equity is a vital part

of this ascent of the socioeconomic ladder (Howell and Timberlake, 2014). To the extent that

place stratification dominates, however, homeowners in distressed suburbs (which, again, tend to

have high concentrations of African Americans and Hispanics) may not get much or any boost

up the socioeconomic ladder and may in fact become locked in by mortgages that exceed their

house values (Baxter and Lauria, 2008). Renters in these locations, while not locked in by

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[4] Asians' racial residential preferences are less well studied than those of whites, blacks, and Hispanics. Asians' neighborhood attainment, however, more closely resembles that of whites on average than that of either blacks or Hispanics (see Logan 2011 for example). Studies on tolerances of/preferences for Asian neighbors are also scarce.

mortgages, may be there in the first place because they have low incomes and therefore lack the resources to move at all (not to mention move to a less distressed suburb). While some suburbs may therefore be launch pads, then, others may be traps (Coulton, Theodos, and Turner, 2012). As their neighborhoods and communities look more and more like traps, families with the means and motivation to live elsewhere will logically choose to move, exacerbating the cycle.

Suburban sprawl

Beyond municipal fragmentation and racial/ethnic dynamics, suburban sprawl also may accelerate suburban decline. State laws, regional plans, and regional infrastructure provision help set regional "footprints" that range from highly compact to very sprawling (Pendall, Puentes, and Martin, 2006). Metropolitan areas with sprawl-limiting policies had more central-city revitalization in the 1990s than those lacking such policies (Dawkins, Nelson, and Sanchez, 2012). This suggests that efforts to rein in sprawl, including urban growth boundaries and infrastructure restrictions, coupled with other mechanisms to promote redevelopment of older suburbs and central-city neighborhoods—especially improvements to transit and other infrastructure and cleanup of brownfields, could both reinforce demand for "older places" and reduce "exit options" to new housing at the same time. If all these efforts combine to bring housing supply and demand more closely into alignment, older suburban housing would retain its value (Bier, 2001). Where housing construction outpaces demand, however, as is common in weak-market regions, older housing loses its value rapidly since new houses are so affordable (Pendall 2003, Bier and Post, 2006; Schmidt, 2011).

Research questions, data, and methods

Our review of the literature shows that the suburban poverty challenge varies among and within metropolitan areas, and that both race/ethnicity, internal political architecture, and suburban growth rates contribute to the severity of the challenge. Based on these insights, we aim to derive lessons about metropolitan resilience by exploring suburbanizing poverty through two couplets of questions. The first concerns the *nature of the challenge.* How do the race and ethnicity of suburban residents, especially the diversity of non-whites, affect the severity and prospective duration of poverty growth in different types of metros? Does the nature of the challenge in suburbs where poverty rates grow because nonpoor residents are leaving or becoming poor and getting "stuck in place" differ from the challenge in those with burgeoning populations of both poor and nonpoor residents? The second couplet concerns the *ability of local and regional actors to respond* to the challenge. How do state laws and local practices on land-development regulation, annexation, and incorporation support or undermine the retention of nonpoor residents in older suburbs? And how do elected and appointed officials of older suburbs, advocates for low-income people, and public-sector employees who work in these places and with these people organize themselves to support families in and near poverty?

We chose Chicago and Denver for in-depth case studies because they have significant parallels but also some important differences. First, both metro areas had poverty increases of around 4.2 percentage points between 1999 and 2011. Both have also been noted for very significant changes in the poor populations of their central cities. The city of Chicago underwent a very large change in its urban fabric with the demolition of over 100,000 assisted housing units under the Plan for Transformation of the Chicago Housing Authority. It also became more attractive for young and affluent households as new amenities were completed in the Loop.

Denver, for its part, has been renovating its public housing projects and its downtown, adding large amounts of new housing near an expanding rail transit system (Pendall et al., 2012). At the same time, both cities (but especially Chicago) have garnered national attention for their growth in suburban poverty (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Office of Policy Development and Research 2012, Wilson, 2012; Moser, 2012).

Both metro areas are also recognized for civic efforts to promote regional collaboration on a variety of issues including transportation, housing, and open space. Chicago and Denver both have voluntary metropolitan mayors' caucuses and both metro areas have strong regional action by business organizations (Chamber of Commerce in Denver, Metropolis Strategies in Chicago).[i] The two metro areas differ, however, in the capacity and size of local governments (higher in Denver) and in control on peripheral housing development (also higher in Denver).

We collected quantitative and qualitative data from Chicago and Denver from a broad range of sources. Statistical sources included the 2006 and 2011 reports from the U.S. Census of Governments; the 2000 Census of Population and Housing; and the American Community Survey. Archival resources included budgets, plans, and meeting agendas from local governments and regional agencies. We also rely on notes and verbatim transcripts from about 30 in-person interviews conducted by the authors and research assistants between 2009 and 2012. Interviewees included a wide range of state and local government elected and appointed officials; staff at local nonprofits, regional advocacy and development organizations, and transit providers; business leaders; and academics. The interview formats ranged from directed and specific about challenges of population and poverty growth to broad and open-ended conversations about how leaders in these areas are responding to and preparing for current and future challenges.

Findings: The challenge and the response

A region's ability to support its residents, protect its environment, and sustain its economy will depend on the nature and depth of the challenges it faces and on its ability to organize and respond to those challenges. These two facets of resilience have aligned thus far to make Denver more resilient than Chicago in the face of suburbanizing poverty. Denver faces a less severe poverty challenge than Chicago does, and its stakeholders have organized in ways that not only respond effectively to suburban poverty but also may prevent it from becoming more severe.

The challenge: The pace, race, and place of growth

Two dimensions of difference between Chicago and Denver contribute to Chicago's more serious suburban poverty challenge. First, Chicago's overall growth rate, but especially growth in the number of nonpoor people in the region, is much slower than Denver's. Second, Chicago's poor suburbs, include many more small African American enclaves, which— especially in the face of slow growth—have confronted some of the largest challenges of any cities in America with suburban poverty. Denver's poor suburbs are larger and include some African Americans, but proportionally higher shares of Latinos, especially immigrants and their children. Denver also has a higher share of non-Hispanic whites in its central city and suburbs.

Table 1 about here

Both the Chicago and the Denver metropolitan area grew in the 2000s, but Denver's rate of growth—about 18 percent—far exceeded Chicago's 4 percent growth. Both metropolitan areas had poverty increases of about 4.2 percent. Below the surface of population growth and poverty growth, however, the two metro areas had complex flows of people by race, ethnic

origin, and nativity that underscore the seriousness of the suburban poverty challenge in Chicago. Chicago's white non-Hispanic and black populations declined over the decade; the number of whites and blacks above poverty in the region fell while that below poverty increased (Table 1). Metro Chicago's above-poverty population grew overall, however, because its Hispanic population above poverty grew by over twice as many residents as its below-poverty Hispanic population. By contrast, metro Denver's net growth in above-poverty residents was double its net growth in below-poverty residents. The above-poverty population increased among whites, blacks and Hispanics in the 2000s, but the number of blacks below poverty grew by over 20,000 while the number above poverty grew by only about 8000. The central cities of both metro areas have higher poverty rates than their metro areas, irrespective of race or nativity, underscoring that poverty growth is not just a suburban but a regional issue. Furthermore, central-city poverty rates also rose in both Chicago and Denver between 2000 and 2010.

Table 2 about here

Table 3 about here

In both metro areas, suburban poverty rates remain substantially lower overall and by race and nativity than central-city poverty, but suburban poverty indeed grew between 2000 and 2010. Denver's suburban poverty rate rose faster, ending with an overall suburban poverty rate of 10 percent, higher than Chicago's 9.8 percent rate (Table 2). White, black, Hispanic, and foreign-born suburban residents in Denver have higher poverty rates than Chicago's suburbanites of the same race/ethnicity. The number of poor people increased in both the Chicago and the Denver suburbs, by 273,000 in Chicago and 101,000 in Denver (Table 3). But at the same time, suburban areas overall also gained nonpoor residents: over 295,000 in Chicago and about

244,000 in Denver. Suburban Chicago's large, predominantly white older generations are retiring, moving away, and passing away faster than young whites are moving into or staying in the Chicago suburbs, resulting in net declines of nonpoor white non-Hispanics that were more than compensated between 2000 and 2010 by rising numbers of nonpoor black, Hispanic, and Asian suburbanites.

Suburbanizing poverty takes shape differently between the two regions because of their differing levels of municipal fragmentation. In Colorado, as in much of the Sunbelt, metropolitan areas contain multiple large local governments and relatively few small jurisdictions, thanks to state laws that have historically made annexation easy for large jurisdictions and incorporation somewhat difficult for small residential areas.[5] In metropolitan Chicago, by contrast, state laws have long incentivized the creation of many small incorporated jurisdictions and have discouraged annexation. As poverty regionalized between 2000 and 2010, Chicago municipalities felt the strain more acutely than those in metro Denver. The 270 or so smallest cities in metropolitan Chicago accounted for over 100,000 of the metropolitan area's 273,000 net increase in people below poverty (37 percent of the total). In metro Denver, the net increase in poverty in the smallest cities amounted to only 13,000, 13 percent of the total, and the central city accounted for about a third of the regional growth in below-poverty residents. Denver's large suburbs accounted for even more of the poverty growth than the central city; together, they accommodated almost 45,000 new poor residents in the 2000s. Aurora (CO), a city of over 300,000 residents, was an especially important location of suburban poverty growth.

Figure 1 about here

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[5] In contrast to some Sunbelt cities with strong annexation powers, Denver's ability to annex was curbed by a state constitutional amendment in 1974 that required the consent of the areas to be annexed.

Race strongly correlates with poverty change in both regions (Figure 1). The nonpoor population

declined in cities where blacks accounted for 30 percent of residents or more in 2000. Denver

had no such cities in 2000; in Chicago, the central city and 37 suburbs were at least 30 percent

black in 2000. The impact of exit and avoidance is especially evident in Chicago's south

suburbs (in both Indiana and Illinois), thirty small jurisdictions that have experienced substantial

racial change over the past two decades. Whites departed the 30 jurisdictions on the Illinois side

of the border in large numbers after 1990: the white population declined from 62.6% in 1990 to

37.6% in 2000 to 21.8 % in 2010. Evidence from fair housing organizations shows that racial

steering and discrimination on the part of the real estate industry has played a role in creating

these patterns (Petruszak, 2008). The result has been more racial segregation and jurisdictions

that house a disproportionate number of very poor residents.

Poverty is by no means new to Chicago's suburbs, though many of them have grown

poorer recently. East Chicago Heights, now called Ford Heights, had a population of about 2,800

in 2010 and a poverty rate approaching 50 percent. But already in 1980, its poverty rate exceeded

25 percent (compared with about 11 percent in Chicago) (Culver, 1982). Its population declined

from over 5,300 since then, making it a prime example of impoverishment by subtraction.[6]

Local and regional responses to suburbanizing poverty

Our questions about the capacity of suburbs to serve low-income residents hinge in part

on local governments' internal capacity and resources to support their poor residents, and in part

on collective action by stakeholders from local governments, philanthropy, nonprofits, business,

and other sectors across local government boundaries to respond to growing poverty. Ultimately,

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[6] In 1980, about 1380 people in East Chicago Heights lived in poverty. In 2008-12, about 1315 did. Meanwhile the number of nonpoor people living in the village fell from 3970 to 1500.

these local actors may even be able to prevent the emergence of suburban poverty traps by building opportunity into their regional infrastructure with affordable housing and transportation policies.

Local governments size and the response to rising poverty

In Denver, most of the suburban poverty growth has occurred in entitlement cities or urban counties: Adams County, Arapahoe County, Arvada, Aurora, Boulder, Lakewood, Longmont, Thornton, and Westminster all receive CDBG funds. Most of these suburbs also have their own housing authorities, as does Commerce City, whose housing authority anticipated the city's population growth by adopting a strategic plan in 2011 whose second goal is to provide new affordable housing in all areas of the city, especially in compact, mixed-use and multi-family configurations (Commerce City Housing Authority 2011, page 20). Even some non-entitlement cities in Denver, then, appear to have capacity to prepare for the needs of current and future low-income residents.

In Chicago, poverty has grown in both larger and smaller suburban cities. The satellite cities of Aurora, Elgin, Waukegan, and Joliet (with populations ranging from 199,932 in Aurora –the second largest city in the state—to 88,826 in Waukegan) have some capacity to address the needs of low-income residents due to their size. These racially diverse cities experienced substantial foreign immigration after 1990 and along with it, growth in the number of low-income Latino residents. In contrast to Denver's fast growing suburbs, these suburbs have grown more slowly or have lost population in recent decades. Even so, all are CDBG entitlement cities and have their own housing authorities.

Few of Chicago's small high poverty suburbs receive funds directly from the federal government. For example, of the thirty south suburban municipalities in Illinois, only Chicago Heights (2010 population about 30,000) has CDBG entitlement status. (Its 2014 CDBG allocation was about $550,000, according to HUD.[7]) The rest rely on Cook County for access to economic development and affordable housing funds. Long linked to Chicago's system of political patronage, until recently the County paid little attention to the needs of the south suburbs.[8] Harvey, population about 25,300 in 2010 (down from 30,000 just ten years earlier), has received special notice for its level of crime and neglect and has also suffered from alleged corruption and mismanagement (Ryan, Mahr, and Walberg, 2014). But Harvey is unexceptional among Chicago's suburbs, including its affluent ones, according to at least one recent report (Sterrett et al., 2012).[9]

Greater administrative capacity can also translate into more services that benefit low-income residents. As Jones-Correa suggests, professionals employed in public bureaucracies can work to ensure that public services benefit low-income families. A comparison of public libraries in different types of suburbs reveals differences between small suburbs with high poverty and larger suburbs where poverty has grown. For example, professional librarians in the relatively large suburban city Waukegan, Illinois watched the Latino population grow and realized that they would "not stay relevant if we did not reach this community" (Library Journal, 2014). Many in the high poverty Latino community were not English speakers, many were illiterate, and few saw libraries as a resource. To serve the needs of the Latino community, the library hired a

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[7] https://www.onecpd.info/grantees/cpd-allocations-awards/?filter_year=&filter_program=&filter_state=IL&filter_coc=262, accessed July 19, 2014.

[8] Long run as an arm of the Chicago political machine, Cook County's approach to governance is being reformed by new leadership elected in 2010.

[9] The authors of this report contend that Illinois's public corruption level is second in per capita terms only to Louisiana's, based on corruption convictions per capita between 1976 and 2010 (Simpson et al. 2012). Colorado isn't one of the 10 most corrupt states.

Latino outreach coordinator who launched ESL classes, computer literacy classes, health programming and one-on-one counseling. The public library in Aurora, Colorado, likewise offers a broad range of activities. They include a variety of reading programs for different age levels, science projects and recreational activities for children as well as programming particularly relevant to lower-income residents such as Spanish and English discussion groups, a variety of computer literacy programs, and GED classes (Aurora, Colorado Public Library Website, 2014).

By contrast, Chicago's south suburbs have much spottier access to libraries. Some of the poorest towns have no access to free public libraries at all because their tax base cannot support a library (Grim, 2013). The library in the largest city in the south suburbs, Chicago Heights, sponsors programs for adults and teens but they largely come in the form of reference resources posted on the library website and incentives to encourage teens to read on their own (Chicago Heights Library Website, 2014). Although 27 percent of Chicago Heights' residents speak a language other than English in the home, there is no programming targeted at English learners (2010 Census).

By itself, jurisdiction size does not guarantee that low-income residents will find services that create a springboard to a better future. However, access to federal funds and larger budgets allow these cities to hire professional staff who often take a comprehensive view of community needs and seek to implement programs to serve low-income residents. Professional staff are also likely to be acquainted with possibilities for enhancing revenue through applications for additional public and philanthropic funds. In smaller poorer jurisdictions with limited resources staff must scramble just to keep basic services afloat; they have very limited capacities to seek outside funding.

Regional development and low-income communities

Denver and Chicago both have created regional organizations working on land use, transportation, and environmental protection. However, Denver's polycentric municipal arrangements have made it easier for the concerns of low-income residents to be considered in regional initiatives than has Chicago's fragmented municipal geography.

Denver's regional organizations have deeper roots than Chicago's but exercised little influence until the past two decades. Created in 1955 as one of the nation's first voluntary regional organizations, the Denver Regional Council of Governments (DRCOG) has been working on regional transportation and land use plans for decades. Like many COGs, the agency is sometimes viewed as weak or ineffective (Lewis, 1996). One commentator who asked that this remark be made on background called DRCOG "where you went to pay the penalty for being the newest member of city council." Even so, important conversations have occurred there that have gradually provided the impetus for collaborative regional planning for compact, transit-oriented development.

DRCOG has not historically addressed concerns of low-income communities and people of color in the region. Until recently, for example, "fair share" affordable housing concerns have been absent from the MPO's agenda. Even so, affordable housing has been on the agenda of other regional organizations in Denver, in particular the Metro Mayors Caucus, since the mid-1990s. In the early 1990s, Denver's then-Mayor Federico Peña "created a dialogue amongst the mayors of the 10 largest cities in the region … to find … areas of common purpose and areas of agreement and things the region could speak with a single voice about." By the end of 1993, 27 mayors had joined, with membership in 2013 standing at 41. The mayors' best-known accomplishment, achieved in coalition with the Denver Regional Chamber of Commerce, was

the passage in 2004 of the FasTracks initiative, a major expansion of the regional light-rail system paid for by a voter-approved 0.4-cent increase in regional sales tax (Pendall et al., 2012; Jonas et al., 2013). DRCOG produced many of the planning studies that helped lay the foundation for ongoing transit-oriented development around new stations (Locantore, 2012).

Denver has taken steps to reduce urban-fringe land development, thereby helping keep housing supply and demand in balance. DRCOG adopted a regional land use plan in 1992 that foreshadowed the more significant Mile High Compact, an agreement among the region's cities and counties to adopt land-use plans that incorporated a regional urban growth boundary (Locantore, 2012; Taylor, 2012). Additionally, many fringe areas in Colorado have recently been uneconomical for residential development because they lack sufficient water supply infrastructure and highway capacity to accommodate new suburban growth. Partly because of these constraints, jurisdictions in the Denver metro area permitted about 180,000 new dwellings for net household growth of 161,000 over the decade—a relatively low ratio of housing growth to housing construction compared with Chicago, as we discuss below.[10]

Together, FasTracks and the Mile High Compact not only exemplify municipal cooperation; they also create new opportunities for addressing suburban poverty. While some light rail projects have been criticized for serving only upper-income and white riders, the expansion of Denver's system connects many of the metro area's highest-poverty neighborhoods with one another and with expanding job opportunities at Denver International Airport, the

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[10] Authors' computation from 2000 and 2010 Census of Population and Census Building Permit surveys, available from http://www.census.gov/construction/bps/msaannual.html (20,000-place series, 2004-09) and http://www.census.gov/construction/bps/historical_data/index.html (18,000-place series, 2000-03). Housing starts at present are about 2.5 percent less than permitted, and housing completions about 4 percent less than starts. Building permits therefore do not translate exactly to new construction but are normally not much more than 10-15% greater than new construction. However, it remains difficult to gauge the impact of the housing crisis on completion of permitted units.

Federal Center in Lakewood, and the Fitzsimons medical campus, a growing regional job hub at the east edge of Original Aurora. Furthermore, the region's unwillingness to extend infrastructure beyond current limits makes the station areas some of the Denver region's most attractive sites for new development.

While these station areas are prime locations for gentrification, past collaboration may lead to both preservation and development of affordable housing as part of new transit-oriented development. Because poverty was spread across Denver and its suburban cities, a number of mayors had a stake in affordable housing. The Mayors Caucus's affordable housing programs aimed at first mainly at planning and then shifted to programs for affordable homeownership. In 2003 the Caucus worked with the Colorado Housing Finance Agency (CHFA) to develop a pioneering program to steer tax-exempt bond financing to multifamily housing projects near light-rail stations. The cities of Arvada, Centennial, Denver, Lakewood, Littleton, Northglenn and Westminster have pooled their Private Activity Bonding (PAB) authority to provide an incentive to include affordable rental housing within transit-oriented development projects. CHFA also provides commitment of its own PAB authority, potentially providing substantial additional funding (Alexander, 2009; Kenney and Marinelli, 2009; Metro Mayors Caucus, 2013). Part of Colorado's share of the major federal mortgage settlement program is also being used to support low-cost housing near transit (Whaley, 2012).

Affordable housing is also coming onto DRCOG's agenda, thanks in large part to the agency's eagerness to secure a high-profile Sustainable Communities Regional Planning Grant from HUD. DRCOG applied unsuccessfully for a regional planning grant in 2010 and after reflecting on that year's application put together a winning one in 2011, with federal funding of $4.5 million and a local match in cash or in kind of as much as $9.4 million. In order to win,

DRCOG needed to include concrete measures to plan and lay the groundwork for developing affordable housing in a more regionally equitable fashion. The Cities of Lakewood and Denver and their two public housing agencies have created a precedent for affordable-housing planning by building it into a plan for the entire east extension of FasTracks. On all three of the corridors involved in the Denver SCRPG, housing, retail, and jobs will all be under consideration at numerous station areas (Locantore, 2012; Cox-Blair, 2012; Westlund, 2012).

HUD also demanded a robust treatment of civic engagement (especially engagement of low-income and underrepresented communities), leading DRCOG to solicit participation by the labor-sponsored Front Range Economic Strategies Council (FRESC) with funding in the hundreds of thousands of dollars (Westlund, 2012). While FRESC had supported the 2004 FasTracks initiative, its roots are in community organizing rather than in coalition-building with more mainstream government organizations. This broader participation has been institutionalized in a coalition, Mile High Connects, a collaboration that provides grants for projects that promote equitable transportation and housing choices.

Many of the ideas about regional equity that have made their way into Denver's plans have also influenced Chicago's regional organizations including its Metropolitan Planning Organization, the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) and the Metropolitan Mayor's Caucus. A broad array of nonprofit organizations have also embraced regional equity goals. (Weir, Rongerude, and Ansell, 2009; Lindstrom, 2010). Despite these strengths, regional organizations have not had much success in creating more affordable housing in affluent suburbs

despite initiatives promoting employer assisted housing, campaigns encouraging local inclusionary zoning laws, and a new state law that requires inclusionary zoning (BPI, 2014).[11]

Similar problems dog efforts to build a more equitable transportation system in the Chicago region and to connect affordable housing with transit. The city of Chicago created some of the earliest transit-oriented development projects in low-income neighborhoods, spearheaded by a community-based coalition (Benfield, Terris and Vorsanger, 2001, 46-49). However, efforts to build affordable housing near transit in the suburbs have to confront the fragmented structure of transportation planning. The state transit funding formula and organizational arrangements established in 1983 favored well-off suburbs in terms of funding and established an unwieldy 47-person regional board to oversee the region's transit system, effectively leaving power in the hands of four competing transit agencies representing different parts of the region (Northeastern Illinois Pubic Transit Task Force, 2014; Lindstrom, 2010). Funding formulas are geared toward returning revenues to the regions that generate them rather than taking a broader perspective on transit needs. This fragmented regionalism leaves the needs of poor suburbs on the sidelines. The effort to extend a subway line through the low-income African American neighborhoods of Chicago's southside and into the south suburbs has been put on the back burner for forty years despite repeated promises to build it (Farmer, 2011).

Nor have Chicago's regional organizations been able to curb the suburban growth and surplus housing construction, which make it easier for nonpoor Chicagoans to avoid cities and suburbs with substantial black populations. Since the 1970s, the quest to restrict growth in

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[11] The new law requires these jurisdictions to accommodate affordable housing, but it applies only to the increment of new growth—and most of these places are "built out" and will experience little new housing construction in the future.

Chicago's suburbs has failed to win support in the Illinois legislature (Weir, 2000). From 2000 to 2009 inclusive, jurisdictions in the Chicago metropolitan area permitted an estimated 390,000 new dwelling units, even though net household growth between the 2000 and 2010 Censuses was only about 195,000. Even as the white population has dropped in racially-mixed suburbs, it has grown in outlying counties that are home to new exurban development.

Unable to build equity into regional development, Chicago's strong third sector has focused its energies on improving the capacities of the suburban localities that disproportionately house the poor and the nonprofit organizations that work there. Promoting formal and informal collaboration has been the central strategy pursued by these groups. For nearly a decade, several foundations have sponsored efforts to promote collaboration in Chicago's south and southwest suburbs (Reckhow and Weir, 2012). These initiatives struggled to make headway confronted with the parochial politics of the region. However, the economic collapse and the availability of new federal funds after 2009 prompted new collaborations that offer a glimpse of how the capacities of these places could be improved.

In 2009, 28 small jurisdictions in Chicago's southern suburbs, part of a larger South Suburban Mayors and Managers Association (SSMMA), formed a collaborative to receive funds from the Neighborhood Stabilization Program, the federal grant program designed to help localities address the problem of foreclosures (Longworth, 2012). Built on the base of the earlier foundation-supported efforts at fostering cooperation, the new collaborative relied on regional organizations such as CMAP, the Metropolitan Mayors' Caucus, and the Metropolitan Planning Council as it formulated its plans. Philanthropic organizations played a key role in keeping the collaboration going throughout the granting process (Newberger, 2011). The same set of civic and philanthropic organizations has fostered interjurisdictional collaboration in the west suburbs

of Cook County and in five northwest suburbs. In each case, the collaboration allowed localities to benefit from expertise that they would not have had access to in the past and made them more attractive to federal, state and private funders (CMAP, MMC, MPC, 2012).

Other levels of government are beginning to work through the clusters. For example, Cook County, under new reform leadership, has emphasized the need to work through councils of government and sub-regional housing collaboratives (Cook County CAPER, 2011, 19-20) and the county gave priority to interjurisdictional collaborations in its 2012 CDBG funding application. A more proactive Cook County is an essential piece of developing better governance capabilities to address suburban poverty. Other regional and state programs have begun to promote applications from collaboratives and some federal programs, notably the Sustainable Communities Initiative, has supported such clusters.

These new collaborations represent no small triumph given the history of jealously guarded localism in the Chicago region. Yet, they constitute only a small first step in constructing new ways of doing business in the Chicago suburbs. So far, the amounts of money drawn through the collaboratives have been modest. It will take ongoing reinforcement from higher levels of government and from the nonprofit sector to allow these initiatives to take root.

Conclusion

Because suburbs have for so long been associated with middle class life, the growth of suburban poverty raises a host of new puzzles. Most compelling are questions about whether suburbs can provide a springboard to the middle class or whether they are becoming poverty traps. In this article, we tackle this question from two perspectives, assessing first the nature of the challenge that suburban poverty poses, and second, analyzing the types of responses that

emerge to address poverty growth in the suburbs. Our analysis highlights the role that policy and politics play, both in shaping the challenge itself and setting the menu of local responses.

The challenge that suburban poverty poses cannot be characterized in simple terms, given the wide variety of suburbs in which poverty has grown. Our analysis emphasizes the interaction between racial diversity and size of jurisdiction as critical in determining the trajectory of the poverty in particular suburbs. Suburban poverty presents a very different challenge in small jurisdictions where the nonpoor are exiting than it does in larger jurisdictions where both the poor and the nonpoor populations are increasing. Small suburbs with African American populations, such as those in Chicago's South Suburbs are especially vulnerable to becoming poverty traps as middle class whites and blacks depart, creating places with high poverty levels and very limited resources for addressing them. Larger more diverse suburbs, such as those in Denver, are much less vulnerable to exit dynamics. Although such jurisdictions may not devote special attention to the poor, their status as entitlement jurisdictions for federal housing and economic development funds and their larger tax base means that they have administrative capabilities and resources to offer much that can benefit low-income residents. The variation in these challenges stems directly from state laws and local practices: The rules governing land development, annexation and incorporation facilitate the creation of suburban poverty traps in the Chicago region and make them less likely to emerge in Denver.

These state rules create an internal political architecture that likewise shapes the responses to suburban poverty growth. Although the Chicago and Denver regions have both established a variety of regional organizations, the combination of larger and fewer jurisdictions in metro Denver has made it easier for Denver to implement regional initiatives that build equity considerations into the emerging infrastructure. By contrast, Chicago's regional initiatives more

frequently confront obstacles created by resistance from some jurisdictions, lack of local capacity, or disagreements within regional institutions, all of which are exacerbated by the region's extreme political fragmentation. Chicago's regional organizations have had more success with smaller initiatives, such as those that aim to build local capacity through subregional collaboratives.

Finally, our analysis highlights the importance of federal resources and prodding in addressing suburban poverty. In both of our cases, increased federal resources were critical in facilitating efforts to address suburban poverty. Conditions attached to the Sustainable Communities regional planning grant in Denver and the promise of new federal funds in Chicago helped local advocates overcome political obstacles. Given the resistance altering established policy arrangements and policy paths, federal carrots and sticks may well be required to overcome the challenges that efforts to address suburban poverty face.

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Table 1. Changes in population below and above poverty, 2000-2010, Chicago and Denver metropolitan areas

	Chicago		Denver	
	Below	Above	Below	Above
Total	304,451	80,894	135,129	257,543
		-		
White non-Hispanic	96,823	277,306	46,702	106,566
Black	43,142	-79,815	20,775	8,500
Hispanic	141,572	318,977	62,377	108,516
Native-born	244,496	-58,204	111,759	208,603
Foreign-born	59,955	139,098	23,370	48,940

Notes: Change in poverty subtracts the number of residents below or above poverty in each group based on 1999 income from the average number of people living in the metro area between 2008 and 2012 whose previous-year income was below or above poverty. In both cases, county-level estimates are summed to 2008 CBSA boundaries. Results are based on surveys whose estimated values are subject to sampling and respondent error.

Sources: 2000 Census Summary File 3, 2008-2012 American Community Survey, extracted from: Minnesota Population Center. National Historical Geographic Information System: Version 2.0. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota 2011.

Table 2. Poverty rates, 2000 and 2010, Chicago and Denver suburbs

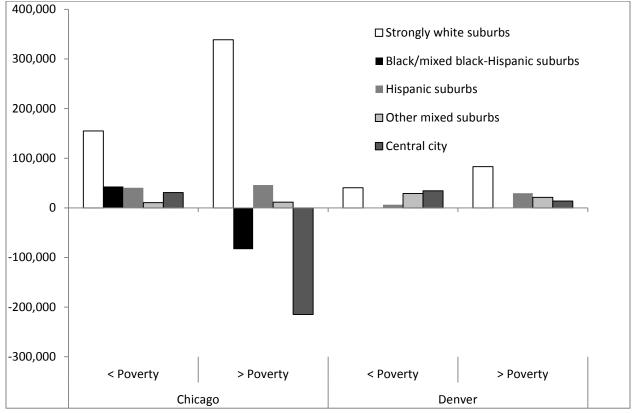| | Chicago | | Denver | |
	2000	2010	2000	2010
Total	6.2%	9.8%	5.9%	10.0%
White non-Hispanic	3.8%	5.8%	4.0%	6.2%
Black	16.6%	22.1%	12.6%	24.8%
Hispanic	12.4%	17.2%	13.8%	20.7%
Native-born	5.8%	9.4%	5.1%	8.9%
Foreign-born	8.9%	11.8%	14.3%	19.1%

Notes: 2000 poverty rate is the percent of residents below poverty based on 1999 income. 2010 poverty rate is estimated from five-year averages of the previous-year income of residents living in parts of the metro areas outside each central city between 2008 and 2012. In both cases, county-level estimates are summed to 2008 CBSA boundaries and central city totals are subtracted to yield a suburban remainder. Results are based on surveys whose estimated values are subject to sampling and respondent error.

Sources: 2000 Census Summary File 3, 2008-2012 American Community Survey, extracted from: Minnesota Population Center. National Historical Geographic Information System: Version 2.0. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota 2011.

Table 3. Changes in population below and above poverty, 2000-2010, Chicago and Denver suburbs

	Chicago		Denver	
	Below	Above	Below	Above
Total	273,435	295,516	100,759	243,627
		-		
White non-Hispanic	79,471	218,099	35,567	90,236
Black	60,242	64,787	13,321	15,117
Hispanic	112,534	333,600	47,284	108,405
Native-born	218,698	93,724	80,529	191,790
Foreign-born	54,737	201,792	20,230	51,837

Notes: Change in poverty subtracts the number of residents below or above poverty in each group based on 1999 income from the average number of people living outside the central city of the metro area between 2008 and 2012 whose previous-year income was below or above poverty. In both cases, county-level estimates are summed to 2008 CBSA boundaries and central-city populations are subtracted from these estimates. Results are based on surveys whose estimated values are subject to sampling and respondent error.

Sources: 2000 Census Summary File 3, 2008-2012 American Community Survey, extracted from: Minnesota Population Center. National Historical Geographic Information System: Version 2.0. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota 2011.

Figure 1. Net change in above- and below-poverty residents in unincorporated areas and cities by racial composition in 2000, Chicago and Denver, 2000-2010

Notes: Strongly white: At least 60% white non-Hispanic (does not include 4 cities where Hispanic or black exceeds 30 percent). Black or mixed black-Hispanic: At least 30% of residents black, or black and Hispanic together account for >60% of population. Hispanic: At least 30% Hispanic, generally less than 10% black and never more than 15%.

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[i] Metropolis Strategies operated for 15 years, first as Metropolis 2020. It closed ceased operation in 2014.