



The Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare

Volume 31
Issue 1 March - Special Issue on Restorative
Justice and Responsive Regulation

Article 14

March 2004

Review of *Growth and Convergence in Metropolitan America*. Janet Rothenberg Pack. Reviewed by Joseph A. Deering.

Joseph A. Deering
House Research Division - Missouri House of Representatives

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/jssw>

 Part of the Social Work Commons

Recommended Citation

Deering, Joseph A. (2004) "Review of *Growth and Convergence in Metropolitan America*. Janet Rothenberg Pack. Reviewed by Joseph A. Deering.," *The Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare*: Vol. 31 : Iss. 1 , Article 14.

Available at: <https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/jssw/vol31/iss1/14>

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by the Social Work at ScholarWorks at WMU. For more information, please contact maira.bundza@wmich.edu.



thinking stresses the importance of social work involvement in the nuances of politics, public policy, program development, and administration.

The family health paradigm from a macro level approach provides solid reading for learning within the classroom, clinical environments, and policy planning arenas. This resourceful text includes information on methods and skill requirements, as well as government and public policy reforms and recommendations. We can assume that at some point of our lives, we will have to interface with the health care industry either as a provider, patient, or caregiver. A personal experience often ignites the political and professional spirit, and the family health social work prototype offers us new perspective and hopes to keep facing into the wind. Distinguished from other social work concentrations this rising field of practice provides a holistic understanding of family behavior and health in the social environment and gives momentum toward the possibility of greater acceptance of human differences, responsibility for unmet social needs and health care reform.

Marsha Blachman

University of California at Berkeley

Janet Rothenberg Pack, *Growth and Convergence in Metropolitan America*. Washington, D.C.:Brookings Institution Press, 2002. \$19.95 papercover.

Growth and Convergence in Metropolitan America by Janet Rothenberg Pack contributes to the literature in urban sociology by presenting a quantitative analysis of the 'Frost Belt-Sun Belt' thesis. Variables for the study were obtained from the U. S. Decennial Census of Population and Housing, the City and County Data Book and the State of the Cities Data System of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Census data was analyzed beginning with the 1960 Census and ending with the 1990 Census. The unit of analysis consisted of 277 metropolitan areas in the United States.

In this book, Pack examined the shift in economic activity and population that has occurred in the nation's cities and suburbs as well as the regional differences which have emerged. She

contends that the shift in economic activity and population from the cities to the suburbs, and from the regions of the Frost Belt to the Sun Belt, resulted in a convergence in per capita income, poverty, unemployment rates and educational attainment in over 200 metropolitan areas in the United States, revealing what she calls 'interregional differences in growth rates.' Pack also contends that these interregional differences have created certain concentration effects resulting in highly distressed metropolitan areas and in the South continuing to lag behind the rest of the country on various socio-economic indicators.

In order to counter the convergence and concentration effects resulting from this shift, Pack urges the development and implementation of federal, state and local policies which promote economic growth and improve the well-being of citizens within a regional growth strategy. She promotes this arrangement of policies with the knowledge that the regional approach has declined in importance since the 1970s and that urban issues have sunk below the serious threshold of national policy discussions.

While Pack is to be commended for her analysis, her work has some limitations. First, Pack offers a rather narrow economic analysis to predict and examine the degree of the shift in economic activity and population from the cities to the suburbs and from the Frost Belt to the Sun Belt. Although she does mention policy effects as contributing factors, her argument could have been strengthened by a more balanced discussion of the political factors that contributed to the shift. Furthermore, she did not adequately discuss the role of political entrepreneurs and pro-growth coalitions in these trends. These factors are concerned with identifying persons who assess political benefits and risks in order to build support among various stakeholders (or coalitions) which can result in proposing or developing a policy and program for economic development at the sub-national government level.

Second, while analyzing the shift, Pack presents a selective discussion of declining industries in the Northeast and Midwest and the problems associated with the growth in the cities and suburbs in the South and the West, such as housing prices and traffic congestion. In addition, Pack's inclusion of qualitative data was based on the use of secondary sources such as magazine articles, Chamber of Commerce materials and real estate periodicals

which can present an optimistic discussion of local economic conditions.

Third, Pack appears hesitant when she states that “no general regional development policy is called for, but if one is called for, it should be focused on the metropolitan statistical areas (MSAs) in the South” (p. 179). However, Pack could have discussed the background, successes, implications and failures for creating a regional development policy at the sub-national government level. Further, although Pack appears to support macroeconomic activity as a way of improving the well-being of citizens in depressed metropolitan areas, her argument could have been strengthened by providing more detailed discussions on the link between macroeconomic factors and their effects on growth rates. Although Pack does not appear to favor the introduction of a systematic local regional development policy, her recommendations to improve the well-being of persons in depressed metropolitan areas are clearly political in nature. Finally, noticeably absent is a substantive review of racial, social class and regional issues which are embedded in her policy recommendations. At least two of the recommendations (progressive income tax and business location/relocation decisions) have racial, social class and regional (urban, rural, suburban) dynamics embedded in arguments for or against developing and implementing them.

Nevertheless, Pack is to be commended for her quantitative analysis of the Frost Belt-Sun Belt thesis, and her concern to improve the well-being of persons located in depressed metropolitan areas. However, Pack’s analysis is limited by an inadequate discussions of the political, economic and social factors that are associated with urban development issues and which are widely cited in the literature. These have contributed substantially to the shift in economic activity and population which this text has examined.

Joseph A. Deering
House Research Division
Missouri House of Representatives

Jerry Floersch, *Meds, Money and Manners: The Case Management of Severe Mental Illness*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2002. \$22.50 papercover, \$49.50 hardcover.