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Using Typologies to Frame Poverty and Service Delivery in Suburban America

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November 2014

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SUMMARY

Poverty in the suburbs is growing, but there is great diversity in the rates of growth of poverty as well as causes and consequences of the growth across different kinds of suburbs. Suburban typologies, systems to group different types of suburbs, are a useful tool for understanding the variation among suburbs and highlighting potential strategies for addressing poverty. This paper discusses why typologies of suburban communities are important, what factors have been considered in the development and use of typologies, what typologies have been developed to date, and lastly, how typologies can be used to inform strategies for addressing suburban poverty.

Suburban typologies can assist in understanding the variation between suburbs in the overall level, duration, and causes of poverty as well as variation in resources, services, and opportunities available for addressing it (Allard & Roth, 2010; Kneebone & Berube, 2013). For example, suburbs experiencing a sharp increase in poverty coupled with large increases in population may have different social service needs than suburbs with sharp poverty increases and little or no growth in population. The typology research sheds light on those suburbs that are experiencing the most significant impacts from increases in poverty and can identify appropriate policy tools and strategies to help communities cope with poverty.

Yet, typologies vary with respect to how suburbs are defined, which suburbs are included, and what factors are considered in their development. Not one consistent definition of suburb is used across the typologies that have been developed. Instead, different researchers classify different geographic areas as suburbs, in part, based on the availability of data. Typologies also differ in the sample of suburbs that are being classified. Some researchers focus on all suburban areas, whereas others focus more narrowly on subsets of suburbs, such as inner-ring suburbs or economically distressed suburbs. Finally, researchers use a range of factors and methodologies to develop these typologies including a number of different economic, demographic, and historical factors (Hanlon, 2010; Hanlon, Vicino, & Short, 2006; Mikelbank, 2004; Orfield & Luce, 2012).

Their differences notwithstanding, taken together, the suburban typologies that have been developed reveal a number of common findings related to the economic vitality and vulnerability of suburbs. Increasingly larger populations of suburban residents live in communities that do not resemble traditional perceptions of prosperous suburbs. Instead, they live in a diverse set of communities including those characterized by poor economic health with low average income and home values, less housing stability, large populations, diverse family structures and racial composition, and varying levels and composition of employment). Although poverty is increasing in suburbs throughout the country, it is growing fastest in distressed suburbs, which tend to be highly racially segregated and fiscally constrained. Moreover, suburbs closest to central cities are increasingly poor and increasingly non-white. The combination of population growth and economic decline in these communities serve as barriers for addressing the increase in poverty.

Strategies for addressing suburban poverty are informed by these typologies as they highlight those suburbs where people are most in need of benefits, services, access to jobs, and other economic opportunities, as well as places that lack the capacity to provide these services and opportunities to their residents. The diversity among suburbs indicates that policy makers may need to consider a menu of policy approaches that can be tailored to the specific needs of individual suburbs and their capacity to address those needs. Policy options may include targeting service delivery to communities most in need, encouraging regional approaches to both service delivery and funding, creating economic and community development programs, addressing racial or income discrimination, and expanding typology research with more attention to service access.

INTRODUCTION

The number of people living in poverty in U.S. suburbs has never been higher. While poverty is increasing in all parts of the country, it is growing fastest in suburbs. From 2000 to 2010, the percentage of people living in poverty in suburban areas grew at a rate of 52.6 percent, double the rate of growth in principal cities (21.5%) or rural areas (23.1%).¹

The Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (ASPE) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) seeks to better understand this growth in suburban poverty and determine whether suburban social service delivery systems have been able to keep up with the growing demand. To that end, ASPE commissioned Westat, in collaboration with the Center for Community Planning and Development (CCPD) at Cleveland State University, to write a framing paper to review and synthesize existing research, analyze the characteristics and service needs of those living in poverty in the suburbs, and identify information and research needed to more fully understand and guide efforts to address suburban poverty (Rog, Hexter, Henderson, Hubble, Haight, Reed, & Boxler, 2014).

The framing paper, *Poverty and Service Delivery in Suburban America*, served as a springboard for a roundtable discussion, held on January 14, 2014, between researchers, policy experts, practitioners, and federal staff on emergent issues on poverty and service delivery in suburban America.

A main finding from the roundtable discussion was that the growth of suburban poverty varies considerably across different suburbs depending on the suburb's age, economic vitality, population density, or proximity to the cities they surround. This variation in suburbs creates challenges for research on poverty trends and can make it difficult to have a clear understanding of the issues suburbs

¹ Data are from the U.S. Census Bureau's Annual Social and Economic Supplement to the Current Population Survey (CPS). We use the U.S. Census Bureau's definition of poverty, which is based on a set of income thresholds that vary by family size and composition and are updated for inflation using the Consumer Price Index (CPI). Poverty is defined as living below 100 percent of the federal poverty level. Suburb is defined as the area outside of the principal cities of a given Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs), as defined by the U.S. Office of Management and Budget (OMB).

are confronting. Typologies are a useful tool to understand the variation among suburbs, elucidate the reasons for increasing poverty, and highlight potential strategies for addressing poverty.

This paper reviews typologies that have been used in the suburban poverty literature to date and discusses some of the proposed public policy responses based on those typologies. For the purposes of this paper, a suburban typology is a system to group suburbs together based on similarities that can include rate of population growth, proximity to central cities, and economic factors. This paper discusses why typologies of suburban communities are important, what factors have been considered in the development and use of typologies, what typologies have been developed to date, and lastly, how typologies can be used to inform strategies for addressing suburban poverty. The goal of this paper is not to determine which typologies work the best, but rather to provide several frameworks that can shape discussions around suburban poverty. The typology research sheds light on those suburbs that are experiencing the most significant impacts from the increase in suburban poverty. The research can be used to better target service delivery and identify appropriate policy tools and strategies to help suburban residents cope with poverty.

WHY ARE TYPOLOGIES OF SUBURBAN COMMUNITIES IMPORTANT?

Poverty rates vary considerably among suburbs across regions and even among suburbs within the same region. To assist in explaining and understanding this variation, a number of researchers have developed classification systems or typologies to make distinctions between suburbs. These typologies can elucidate the challenges suburbs face in providing services and the ways in which suburbs are differently positioned to address poverty, including how policies and programs can be tailored to meet varying levels of suburban distress (Hanlon, 2010; Hexter et al., 2011; Kneebone & Berube, 2013; Mikelbank, 2004; Orfield & Luce, 2012; Puentes & Orfield, 2002; Puentes & Warren, 2006).

Definitions of Suburb

One of the challenges related to the study of American suburbs is that there is no commonly recognized definition of a “suburb.” As Jargowsky (2014) points out, suburbs are a “synthetic geography”. The U.S. Census Bureau, in fact, does not use the term “suburb” in tabulating metropolitan level data, but rather considers suburbs to be the area outside of the principal cities of a given Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs), as defined by the U.S. Office of Management and Budget (OMB). OMB’s Standards for Defining Metropolitan and Micropolitan Statistical Areas provide nationally consistent definitions for collecting, tabulating, and publishing federal statistics for a set of geographic areas. These definitions are intended to inform the debate and development of public policies and to guide the implementation and administration of a variety of non-statistical federal programs. However, even OMB cautions that the standards do not equate to a strict urban-rural classification. This lack of a clear definition makes it difficult for researchers to distinguish suburbs as places (Hanlon, 2010). Moreover, these data do not include indicators at the neighborhood level that would allow for more refined distinctions between

places. Using the broad OMB definition of “suburban areas”, as many researchers do, can obscure the variation within and across suburbs and can lead to an incorrect perception of suburban uniformity. Hanlon, Jargowsky, and others suggest the need for a more nuanced vocabulary to use when describing suburban places (Hanlon, 2010; Jargowsky, 2014; Kneebone & Berube, 2013; Mikelbank, 2004). Typologies are one way to address and explain diversity between suburban areas.

Variation between Suburbs

There is a great deal of variation between suburbs.² For example, traditionally, suburbs have been perceived as housing predominantly white, highly educated, white-collar workers in single-family homes. However, closer examination indicates that only about half of U.S. suburbs fit this stereotype (Mikelbank, 2004; 2013). The remaining half has high concentrations of immigrants and other minority groups. Many suburbs have had high poverty rates for decades whereas other, less distressed suburbs are experiencing more recent increases in poverty rates (Hexter et al., 2011).

Typologies can assist in understanding the variation between suburbs in the overall level, duration, and causes of poverty as well as variation in resources, services, and opportunities (Allard & Roth, 2010; Kneebone & Berube, 2013). For example, suburbs experiencing a sharp increase in poverty coupled with large increases in population may have different social service needs than suburbs with sharp poverty increases with little or no growth in population. In the latter, there is a shrinking tax base to fund social services, schools, and transportation. Similarly, suburbs with slower job growth face different challenges than communities with more economic opportunities. As Kneebone and Berube (2013) argue, the social service infrastructures available for addressing poverty in suburbs vary greatly by community. For example, suburban communities with robust social service infrastructures can leverage existing organizations to provide resources to its poor residents in a way that communities with weak social services infrastructures cannot (Allard & Roth, 2010).

Typologies can give us a more realistic picture of the suburbs in which poverty is growing fastest and where it is most likely to have lasting impact. The ability to sort the many different types of suburbs into groupings is valuable in targeting programs and policies to improve the quality of life of the poor and near poor, their access to economic opportunity, and their access to services.

² It is also important to understand the dynamics within suburbs, but typologies do not directly address within suburb variation. Very often, there are neighborhoods within suburbs where poverty is concentrated, similar to patterns found in central cities. Areas of concentrated poverty are growing at faster rates in suburbs than in urban areas (Jargowsky, 2013; Kneebone & Berube, 2013.)

TYPLOGIES OF SUBURBS

Typologies vary with respect to how suburbs are defined, which suburbs are included, and what factors are considered in the development of the typology. Table 1 provides an overview of the typologies presented in this paper, including the methodology used and key findings.

Typology Development

Within the research on suburban typologies there is not one consistent definition of suburb. Differences in definitions are in part due to differences in how the data are used. Some researchers define suburbs using the U.S. Census Bureau's classification of all areas inside an MSA that are not *principal* cities (i.e., those that are the largest incorporated place with a population of at least 10,000 as well as additional places that meet various population and labor market participation criteria) (Hanlon, 2010), whereas others, including Kneebone and Berube (2013), expand the definition of suburbs to include the areas in MSAs outside of *primary* cities (i.e., those that appear first in the official MSA name and any other cities in the official name that have populations of at least 100,000) which may include some of the smaller principal cities classified as urban places by the Census Bureau. Other researchers use census data aggregated to municipal boundaries (Hexter et al., 2011; Mikelbank, 2004; Orfield & Luce, 2012), employing a minimum population size as a way of eliminating townships and other small geographic areas. For example, Hexter et al. (2011) include all cities and villages in the U.S. with populations of at least 2,500, excluding cities with more than 9.6 percent of the total MSA population and cities that appeared first in the MSA name.

Typologies also differ in the sample of suburbs that are being classified. Most of the typologies examined in this paper were developed to add explanatory value within larger research studies on suburban poverty and are based on the sample of suburbs being examined. That is, some studies consider all suburban places, whereas others focus only on a sub-set of suburbs. For example, Mikelbank (2004) developed a typology of all suburban places while Hexter et al. (2011)'s typology only categorized suburban areas that were labeled as "distressed." Additionally, Kneebone and Berube (2013) examine only suburban places within large metropolitan areas that experienced a significant increase in poverty between 2000 and 2008-2010, Hanlon (2010) focuses solely on inner-ring suburbs (those adjacent to a central city) and Puentes and Warren (2006) focus on "first suburbs" (suburbs with a median age of housing pre-1968).

Finally, researchers use a range of factors and methodologies to develop these typologies, including a number of different economic, demographic, and historical factors (Hanlon, 2010; Hanlon, Vicino, & Short, 2006; Mikelbank, 2004; Orfield & Luce, 2012). Some focus on geographic location and historical development patterns, including a suburb's location in relation to a central city, age of the suburb, age of housing stock, and government characteristics, such as amount of expenditures and tax revenue (Hanlon, 2010; Mikelbank, 2004; Orfield & Puentes, 2006). Still others overlay regional population and economic trends to place their work in a larger context (Hexter et al., 2011; Kneebone & Berube, 2013).

These variations in the data sources, samples of suburbs, and methodologies used to create typologies of suburban areas shape both the types of typologies that have emerged and the conclusions that are drawn from them. Therefore, comparing findings across typologies can highlight which communities are experiencing the most significant impacts from the increase in suburban poverty.

Table 1. Summary of Studies on Suburban Typologies

Author(s) and Year	Census Geography	Suburban Focus	Methodology	Findings
Mikelbank (2004)	2000; census tract aggregated to suburban incorporated places	Non-central city, metropolitan, incorporated places having 2,500 or more	Used cluster analysis to create a typology of suburban places	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 types of suburbs, five that fit a stereotypical view of suburban prosperity and five exhibiting a range of signs of distress. • 68% of the suburban population lives in the five types exhibiting some level of distress. • The distressed suburbs are categorized as either “Working Diversity” or “Manufacturing” suburbs.
Hanlon, Vicino, and Short (2006)	2000; census designated places (CDP), consolidated cities, and incorporated places	Suburban census places in 13 different metro areas (n=1,639)	Analysis of the following variables across metro areas, within metro areas, and over time: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - income - employment - race - immigration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They identified four types of suburbs separate from the traditional image of suburbia. • The non-traditional suburbs include: Poor suburbs, Manufacturing suburbs, Black suburbs, and Immigrant suburbs. • Nearly 40% of suburbs do not fit the traditional image of suburbia.
Puentes and Warren (2006)	2000; census tract aggregated to county	“First suburbs” (places just outside of central cities that were part of metropolitan U.S. before 1950)	Historical analysis dating back to 1950	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 75% of first suburbs saw an increase in the percentage of their census tracts with at least a 20% poverty rates from 1970 to 2000. • First suburbs have more foreign-born residents (9 million) than their primary cities (8.6 million). • First suburbs in the NE and MW are almost exclusively slow- or no-growth places; those in the Sun Belt and Western states have been growing in recent decades.
Hanlon (2010)	2000; census designated places (CDP) and municipalities	Inner rings suburbs (places adjacent to central cities) within the 100 largest metropolitan areas	Two-step process of principal component analysis and cluster analysis to create a typology of inner-ring suburbs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Four types of inner ring suburbs (Elite, Middle Class, Vulnerable, and Ethnic) • 47% considered Vulnerable; median household income 22% below the suburban median for their metropolitan area; characterized by loss of manufacturing jobs. • Ethnic Suburbs (7%) were typically poorer, with a median income at 75% of the neighboring suburbs (suburbs in the same metropolitan area).

Table 1. Summary of Studies on Suburban Typologies (continued)

Author(s) and Year	Census Geography	Suburban Focus	Methodology	Findings
Hexter, Hill, Mikelbank, Clark, & Post (2011)	2000; census tract aggregated to suburban incorporated places	Cities and villages with a population of 2,500 or more, excluding central cities (n=4,066)	Applied “distress index” based on <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - poverty rate - unemployment rate - foreclosure rate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 168 “Severely Distressed” suburbs that are at least 1.5 times the suburban median based on the index of distress. • These suburbs are home to 4.1 million people, or 6% of the total suburban population. • 45% of these suburbs are in four states in the South and West, in metro regions with higher than median population growth but below median growth in GDP (California, Texas, Arizona, Florida); all are growing due to immigration.
Orfield and Luce (2012)	2000 and 2010; census municipalities	Suburbs in the 50 largest metro areas	Level of diversity based on race	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Four types based on the racial diversity of the community: Diverse Suburbs, Predominantly Non-white Suburbs, Predominately White Suburbs, and Exurbs. • Racially integrated suburbs offer the best hope for economic and educational equity because they offer equal access to good schools and a path to living-wage employment. • Predominately Non-white Suburbs are characterized by high levels of economic distress.
Kneebone and Berube (2013)	2000 and 2008-2010; census incorporated places and counties	Incorporated places and counties with a population over 20,000 in the nation’s 100 largest metro areas with a significant increase in poverty between 2000 and 2008-10 (n=988)	Analysis of change in the following factors between 2000 and 2010: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - local population change - regional job change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Four groups: Rapid Growth Suburbs, Strained Suburbs, At-risk Suburbs, and Distressed Suburbs • Distressed Suburbs experienced the largest poverty rate increase between 2000 and 2008-10. • Suburbs with an increasing population and/or with a strong economy need different strategies for addressing poverty than suburbs with a decreasing population and/or with a weak economy.

Typologies Based on Variations in Economic Vitality

Much of the suburban typology development has focused on explaining and understanding the differences among suburbs in terms of their economic vitality and vulnerability, with attention to the size and nature of the population.

Using hierarchical cluster and discriminant analyses, Mikelbank (2004) identified four general categories of suburban communities based on a number of factors, including population characteristics (e.g., population size and density, racial composition, household composition), geographic characteristics (e.g., median rent, highway proximity), economic characteristics (e.g., employment rate) and government characteristics (e.g., direct expenditures, taxes). These categories of suburbs are:

- White Bedroom – those with a predominantly white population, low employment rates, and a small population size;
- Manufacturing – those with a large proportion of manufacturing employment, low percentage of population with a bachelor’s degree, and above-average rate of housing vacancy;
- Suburban Success – those with an older population and higher incomes, higher proportion of bachelor’s degrees, higher rents and house values; and
- Working Diversity– those with a higher proportion of foreign-born and higher percentage of other race or multiracial, larger than average household size, and very low proportion of married families with no children.

Looking across these categories of suburbs, Mikelbank (2004) finds that more than two-thirds of suburban residents reside in suburbs that do not match the traditional perception of suburban America (i.e., White Bedroom communities). Instead, they live in a diverse set of suburban communities including those characterized by poor economic health with low average income and home values, less housing stability, large populations, diverse family structures and racial composition, and varying levels and composition of employment. Many of these suburbs face challenges and opportunities that are multidimensional and cannot be characterized as simply economic (lack of jobs) or demographic (immigration).

Using Mikelbank’s research as a springboard, Hexter and colleagues (2011) created a typology that focused only on distressed suburbs, which were defined as communities with poverty, foreclosure, and unemployment rates at 1.5 times the median of all suburban communities. These suburbs were then classified into six groups using measures of economic change from 1980 to 2009 (i.e., change in per capita gross domestic product [GDP]) and population change between 1980 and 2000. These six groups provided insight into the different regional economic (slow growth vs. fast growth) and demographic (population loss vs. slow growth vs. fast growth) contexts in which the distressed suburbs were situated. The researchers found that almost one third (32%) of the 168 distressed suburbs are located in fast growing economic regions primarily in the Northeast and Midwest, but the vast majority of those suburbs (75%) lost population between 1980 and 2000. Almost half of the 168 distressed suburbs are experiencing population growth, largely as a result of immigration, but have below median growth in

regional GDP. These suburbs are located in the South and West (i.e., California, Texas, Arizona, and Florida). The researchers conducted additional analysis on a subset of the “most distressed” suburbs (65 or 39% of total number of distressed suburbs) that had lost population between 1980 and 2000, had majority nonwhite populations (Black or Latino) and older housing stock (median year housing built 1968 or earlier). They found that many of these suburbs had been poor for decades and that regional context made little difference in the ability of suburbs to address the problems associated with being home to large shares of poor people. These most distressed suburbs lack the fiscal capacity, as well as the governance and social service delivery systems needed to effectively connect their poor residents to opportunities (Hexter et al., 2011).

Kneebone and Berube’s (2013) recent research focused on suburbs experiencing increased poverty. The researchers developed a typology to distinguish among different types of suburbs experiencing rising poverty on the basis of two key factors: local population change and regional job change. In an examination of the 988 suburban communities in the nation’s 100 largest metropolitan areas that experienced an increase in poverty (whether in the poverty rate or number of poor residents) between 2000 and 2008-10³, Kneebone and Berube determined these communities fit into four groups:

- Rapid Growth Suburbs – those that experienced faster than average population growth, especially among Latinos, and were in regions with better than average job gains over the decade;
- Strained Suburbs – those that experienced faster than average population growth but were in regions that lost jobs faster than average;
- At-Risk Suburbs – those with slow-growing or declining populations but were located in regions experiencing better than average job growth over the decade; and
- Distressed Suburbs – those with slow-growing or decreasing population and were located in regions with weaker-than-average economic performance.

While the poverty rate rose in each of these four types of suburbs during the decade, Distressed Suburbs experienced the largest poverty rate increase, from 8 percent (across the suburbs) in 2000 to 12 percent in 2008–10. The researchers argue that understanding the differences between suburbs is critical to developing effective policy responses for addressing poverty. Changes in population and regional labor markets determine the resources available to suburbs to address the challenges associated with rising poverty. For example, communities experiencing population decline must contend with a shrinking tax base to fund social services, schools, and transportation, while communities experiencing rapid population growth face increased demand for limited services. Similarly, suburbs with slower job growth faced different challenges than communities with more economic opportunities.

³ Poverty estimates for 2000 were calculated using data from the 2000 decennial census long-form survey. Beginning in 2005, monthly administration of the American Community Survey replaced the decennial long-form survey. Monthly ACS results are combined and adjusted for inflation to create single-year estimates between 2008 and 2010.

Typologies Based on Variations in Population Characteristics and Composition

Hanlon, Vicino, and Short (2006) also developed an empirically based typology to present an alternative to the traditional image of suburbs. Based on a descriptive analysis of 1,639 suburban census places in 13 different metropolitan areas, the researchers identified four types of suburbs distinct from the traditional model of suburbia as wealthy, non-industrial, mostly white, and native-born. The researchers classified these non-traditional suburbs into four (overlapping) groups: Poor Suburbs, Manufacturing Suburbs, Black Suburbs, and Immigrant Suburbs. In their analysis, they found substantial variation among the groups in income levels, and, in each of the metropolitan regions in their study, the poorest suburban places had a lower median family income than the central city. Despite commonly-held perceptions of suburbs as non-industrial, in 748 of the 1,639 suburban places analyzed, at least 25 percent of suburban residents were employed in the manufacturing sector in 1980. Even though the traditional image of the suburbs is majority white, they found that in approximately 75 percent of suburban places the percentage of Black people increased between 1980 to 2000. The perception of suburbs as being primarily composed of native-born residents largely held true until 2000; however, there were exceptions to this, especially in the suburban places near the West Coast, including San Francisco and San Jose in which more than 25 percent of the population was foreign born in 2000, an increase from 1980. Overall, in the 13 selected metropolitan areas, nearly 40 percent of the suburban places do not fit the traditional model of what it means to be a suburb.

Hanlon's (2010) research focused on 1,761 inner-ring suburbs, places located contiguous with or adjacent to a central city and where more than half of the housing was built before 1969, surrounding the 100 most populated urban areas in the United States. Using cluster analysis, she identified four types of inner-ring suburbs: Elite (wealthy, white, in many cases very old housing), Middle Class (middle-class, somewhat diverse, economically stable), Vulnerable (working-class, some formerly industrial, economically declining) and Ethnic (mostly poor, Hispanic, immigrant). She found that nearly half of inner-ring suburbs can be classified as Vulnerable (i.e., experiencing socioeconomic decline). Vulnerable suburbs had median household incomes that were below the suburban median household income for their metropolitan areas, and at least 10 percent of their residents lived in poverty. Hanlon notes that while poverty has increased in inner-ring suburbs in all regions of the country, the Midwest and the South had the highest proportion of inner-ring suburbs experiencing economic decline. Many of these suburbs were once home to manufacturing workers. Moreover, the biggest increases in poverty were in suburbs with high concentrations of minorities and where the racial composition of the population had changed between 1980 and 2000.

Orfield and Luce (2012) focused on racial composition and degree of segregation in suburban America in the 50 largest metropolitan areas in 2000 and 2010. They classified suburbs into four types based on the racial diversity of the community:

- Diverse Suburbs –where non-white residents represented between 20 and 60 percent of the population in 2010;
- Predominantly Non-white Suburbs –where more than 60 percent of the population was non-white;
- Predominantly White Suburbs – where more than 80 percent of the residents are white; and
- Exurbs –where less than 10 percent of the land area was categorized as urban in 2000 (regardless of racial makeup).

Orfield and Luce argued that Diverse Suburbs offer the most equal access to good schools and a clear path to living-wage employment for all residents. While the number of Diverse Suburbs increased from 1,006 to 1,376 between 2000 and 2010 and the population living in these diverse suburbs increased from 40 million to 53 million people, the fastest growing type of suburb between 2000 and 2010 were Predominantly Non-white Suburbs, characterized by high levels of economic distress (i.e., high levels of poverty, worsening home values, limited educational and employment opportunities), including declining tax-bases associated with recent and ongoing social and economic change. Between 2000 and 2010, the number of Predominantly Non-white Suburbs grew 53 percent (from 312 to 478 suburbs) and the number of residents grew by 73 percent (to more than 20 million people).

To examine the concentration of poverty and racial segregation in central cities and different kinds of suburban communities, Jargowsky (2014) developed a typology based on the era of housing construction (i.e., pre-war [pre-1945], early [1945-69], boom [1970-1989] and new [post 1990]) as well as the percentage of residences that were single family detached homes. He determined that outside of central cities there were four types of suburbs, including 1) Other Urban (not central cities), 2) Mixed/Transitional (suburbs with between 50 and 75 percent of residences that were detached single family homes, regardless of era of construction), 3) Older Suburbs, and 4) New Suburbs. Jargowsky then examined poverty rates in each of these localities, revealing that there is less concentration of poverty in the suburbs than in central cities and that the suburbs with the highest concentration of poverty tended to be located closest to central cities. Analysis of the racial composition of these communities revealed that segregation along racial lines was mostly between suburbs rather than within suburbs, creating distinct Black suburbs and White suburbs. Both self-selection and discriminatory practices and regulations resulted in racially segregated communities, which in turn created inequities that are problematic. Majority-minority neighborhoods, for example, tend to do worse on a host of factors (e.g., crime and schools).

Taken together these typologies reveal a number of common findings. There is a great deal of diversity in suburbs and increasingly larger populations of residents live in communities that do not resemble traditional perceptions of prosperous suburbs. Additionally, while poverty is increasing in suburbs throughout the country, it is growing fastest in distressed suburbs, which tend to be highly racially segregated and fiscally constrained. Moreover, suburbs closest to central cities are increasingly poor and increasingly non-white. The combination of population growth and economic decline in these communities serve as barriers for addressing the increase in poverty.

How can typologies inform policies to address suburban poverty?

The typology research highlights those suburbs that are experiencing the most significant impacts from the increase in suburban poverty. The research can be used to identify places where people are most in need of benefits, services, access to jobs, and other economic opportunities, as well as places that lack the capacity to provide these services and opportunities to their residents. This research suggests that policy makers may need to consider a menu of policy approaches that can be tailored to the specific needs of individual suburbs and their capacity to address those needs. The range of options may include targeting service delivery to communities most in need, encouraging regional approaches to both service delivery and funding, creating economic and community development programs, addressing racial or income discrimination, and expanding typology research with more attention to service access. Each of these options is described below.

Target Service Delivery to Communities Most in Need

Recent research has shown that suburban social service infrastructure is insufficient to meet growing demand. High poverty suburbs have fewer service providers than both urban areas and low-poverty suburbs (Allard, 2009; Reckhow & Weir, 2011) and those providers that serve these communities are often stretched over large geographic areas (Allard, 2011). Lack of transit and reliable personal transportation pose barriers to service access (Murphy, 2012). Traditionally, both federal government and philanthropic funding has been geared to urban rather than suburban areas (Hanlon, 2010).

This disparate access to social service assistance and other resources suggests that an investment is needed in developing the suburban service delivery infrastructure, but this infrastructure is not needed in all suburbs. Suburban typologies, such as the one offered by Kneebone and Berube (2013), can highlight suburbs where additional services and service providers are needed. For example, in suburbs experiencing increasing rates of poor residents, capacity of social services can be increased through additional government and philanthropic investments. Additionally, access to needed services may be increased by improving transit access for people without cars to get to existing service providers, including health centers and job centers, as well as by developing satellite offices in libraries, post offices, community centers, and other accessible community venues. Typologies also can highlight

suburbs that are experiencing high rates of immigration that may require culturally appropriate strategies for outreach and social service delivery.

Encourage Regional Approaches

Typologies that emphasize the variation in the distribution of poverty across suburbs, such as those offered by Hexter et al. (2011) and Kneebone and Berube (2013), underscore the need for a more regional approach to resource allocation. Orfield (2002) argues that individual suburbs with a declining tax base have limited ability to fund needed services or to make the investments needed to attract new residents and jobs. He suggests that policy interventions such as regional tax base sharing may be a strategy for reducing disparities because they increase the resources available in poor communities. For example, high poverty rates in individual suburbs can be obscured when looking at county-wide data. If program funds (such as block grants) are allocated on a county-wide basis, residents of smaller distressed suburbs in growing economic regions may not get adequate resources because of the relative wealth of surrounding communities. For counties that wish to use federal funds to address regional differences and provide more even distribution and coordination of services across multiple communities, greater flexibility in federal funding might support those efforts. Federal and state policies could encourage or incentivize collaboration across different levels of government, including the flexibility to blend or “braid” funding to better meet local needs, coupled with stronger performance measures (Hexter et al., 2011). Further, as Kneebone and Berube (2013) recommend, the federal government can acknowledge inter-jurisdictional collaboratives as qualified entities to apply for relevant programs and remove administrative and regulatory barriers to such collaboration.

Incentivize Economic Development

Poverty is not growing at the same rate across all suburbs (Kneebone & Berube, 2013; Rog et al., 2013) and the causes for the growth in poverty vary in different types of suburbs. Increases in suburban poverty in Midwestern and Northeastern suburbs were primarily caused by a decline in manufacturing jobs (Puentes & Orfield, 2002), while increases in immigration and shifts in the location of affordable and subsidized housing were more common in the South and West (Covington, Freeman, & Stoll, 2011; Frey, 2011; Kneebone & Berube, 2013). Typologies focused on the vitality of the local economy may provide guidance on the types of communities that would most benefit from policy approaches that incentivize economic development, such as tax credits for job development and wage growth. As Hexter et al. (2011) point out, some suburbs with growing regional economies may be well-positioned to recover on their own, while others that are characterized by high rates of job loss and weaker than average economic performance may require additional intervention.

Address Race and Income Segregation

Typologies that focus on racial and economic disparities in suburban communities, such as those offered by Jargowsky (2014) and Orfield and Luce (2012) highlight the need for policies that make communities more inclusive, such as inclusionary zoning laws, integrative home financing policies, and enforcement of the Fair Housing Act to ensure that poor residents, minorities, and the increasing foreign-born populations are not concentrated in low-resource communities. Orfield and Luce (2012) argue that racially integrated suburbs provide a foundation and the best hope for achieving economic and educational equality, a strong argument for a development and enforcement of regional fair housing laws, fair lending practices, and inclusionary zoning.

Expand Typology Research with More Attention to Service Access

Typologies can be useful in identifying areas that are undergoing rapid changes in poverty and in targeting place-based service delivery and assistance programs to areas of greatest need. Yet further research along these lines is needed to better understand the ways in which poor people in different types of suburbs access services. Further typology development could benefit from including other factors not yet considered in existing typologies that are available from administrative data sets. For example, including administrative data on receipt of the National School Lunch Program, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), or Housing Choice vouchers in the development of typologies would enable policy makers to better identify specific suburban places where poverty is increasing rapidly or is highly concentrated, but residents have low rates of receipt of needed benefits, services, and/or housing. This could help identify suburban places to target service delivery enhancements.

CONCLUSION

Despite differences in definitions of suburbs and methodologies used by researchers in creating typologies of suburban places, several findings are consistent across these research studies.

Poverty is growing fastest in distressed suburbs, even those that are located in economically strong regions (Hexter et al., 2011; Kneebone & Berube, 2013). Distressed suburbs tend to be highly racially segregated and fiscally constrained. Some have been poor for decades and others that had been stable (e.g., inner-ring, working class, blue-collar suburbs) are experiencing more pronounced socio-economic and fiscal challenges, exacerbated by the recession and the housing crisis.

Typology research suggests that racial composition and segregation, and transitions in these over time, are important factors to consider when examining suburbs. In particular, research has found that suburbs with increasing minority populations as well as rapid rates of racial transition and segregation are facing increases in poverty and lack of opportunities for their population (Hanlon, 2010; Orfield &

Luce, 2012). Highly segregated places may not have the ability to raise taxes or the necessary social service and transportation infrastructure to support a growing poor population on their own.

The typologies examined in this paper offer a more nuanced look at suburban poverty than is possible from looking at national or regional level data. Typologies help us define, explain, and understand the challenges and opportunities in different types of suburban communities. They allow for greater consistency in discussions of suburban poverty and enable us to draw some general conclusions, such as those discussed above. They can be used by policy makers and program administrators to target places where new types of programs may be needed or where regionally tailored service delivery mechanisms could be tested and studied. Further typology research could continue to monitor trends to determine which types of suburbs are better able to stem the increasing rates of poverty and to respond to changing needs and which types of suburbs need additional assistance.

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