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Beyond Poverty: Race and Concentrated-Poverty Neighborhoods in Metro Boston

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**Beyond Poverty:
Race and Concentrated-Poverty
Neighborhoods in Metro Boston**

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December, 2003

Foreword

Metropolitan Boston needs a serious discussion about racial equity. The region is in the midst of a period of rapid racial change but there is a widespread perception that either nothing needs to be done explicitly about race, or nothing can be done because of failures in the city of Boston in the past. Many people think that issues of discrimination have been solved and that everyone now has an equal chance.

With the support of several local foundations and the assistance of experts and community leaders, the Metro Boston Equity Initiative is sponsoring eight studies of current trends of racial and ethnic opportunity in the Greater Boston area. This second report examines whether economic differences, not race and ethnicity, explain where people live in the metro region. The results demonstrate a level of severe segregation of minorities in concentrated poverty communities that cannot be explained by income differences alone.

It matters a great deal where you live in the Greater Boston area. Within this huge area are some of the nation's richest communities and some with large concentrations of poverty. Even in the midst of a very prosperous metropolitan community we have housing stock in severe decay, communities where jobs are disappearing and crime expanding, and communities with inadequate and failing schools. Far more blacks and Latinos and members of some Asian groups live in these impoverished areas where their families experience many more problems and fewer opportunities.

Although the metro region is one of the whitest, large metropolitan areas in the United States, it now has a substantial non-white population, growing much faster than the region's white population, and a strong in-migration of Latinos and Asians producing continuing racial change. In the past, the issue of race was treated as though it was primarily a problem of the city. Today it is also a metropolitan challenge. And, the issue of race is, increasingly, becoming a suburban issue as well. Already a small majority of young blacks and a very substantial majority of young Latinos in the region live outside the inner boundaries of Boston proper. Plus more and more suburban communities will continue experiencing racial change within their borders.

Before there can be any real understanding of the meaning of segregation in the metro region, there must be some understanding of how serious the problem is, what it is related to, and why it happened. In our first report by Professor John Logan of the State University of New York at Albany, the Boston Metro Equity Initiative showed a very high level of housing segregation in the region. Earlier studies by The Civil Rights Project authored by Nancy McArdle and Guy Stuart showed severe housing segregation and related school segregation. Research by the Boston Federal Reserve Bank and others over the years have documented serious inequality of treatment by minority homeseekers in the region's mortgage market.

This report shows the severity of housing segregation by race and poverty, and how these two forms of inequality in opportunity interact very differently for whites and minority families. It demonstrates that residential segregation is high not simply because minority families do not have sufficient income. Although there are serious average income differences by race, there is a large overlap in income distributions and a substantial income range among residents in many metro communities. Segregation in concentrated poverty communities for nonwhites is far higher than income differences can explain. The claim that what appears to be segregation by race really is just segregation by income is false.

White families often consider it their right to buy homes in a more selective community which provides better services, safety and schools as well as greater increases in property values, the primary source of family wealth. They assume that families of other backgrounds have the same sets of choices. This data suggests that this presumption is wrong.

Minority families are far more likely to live in high poverty areas than whites with the same incomes. There are many poor whites but they do not reside where poor blacks and Latinos live. There are also many relatively affluent blacks and Latinos who locate in significant numbers in only a very small subset of suburban towns. Worst of all, Nancy McArdle's analysis provides evidence that middle class blacks are far more likely than middle class whites to be living in high poverty communities. High poverty neighborhoods often offer opportunities that are weaker in many respects, and middle class blacks are actually more likely than poor whites to have such experiences. This suggests that in the Boston metropolitan community minority families who work hard and succeed are not receiving the same benefits of success that whites receive. Given the rapidly growing importance of minority young people in our metropolitan society, this is a very serious challenge.

In our future reports we will be exploring the severe educational and other consequences of segregation and inequality and exploring the causes of the inequality and possible solutions. These patterns are neither healthy nor inevitable but it is obvious that they are deeply rooted and self-perpetuating. The existing pattern is the product of a history of discrimination that is unlikely to change without serious local leadership. We know the impact of spreading segregation by race and poverty in older sections of the metro region and it would be foolish to simply replicate that sorry history when there are better alternatives. In this report we began to set out issues that we believe merit serious discussion across the Greater Boston area.

Gary Orfield
December, 2003

Beyond Poverty: Race and Concentrated Poverty Neighborhoods in Metro Boston

Introduction

Facing some of the highest housing costs in the country,¹ poor residents of Metro Boston² encounter enormous hurdles. Yet even *within* the poverty population, blacks, Hispanics, and some Asian sub-groups experience the added challenge of residing in neighborhoods of concentrated poverty. Poor blacks and Latinos are over twice as likely to live in high-poverty neighborhoods than are poor whites. Indeed, a substantial share of poor whites reside in largely middle-class, suburban neighborhoods, while most poor blacks and Latinos dwell in much higher-poverty, urban, racially-segregated neighborhoods. Incredibly, even black and Latino households with incomes over \$50,000 per year are twice as likely to live in high-poverty neighborhoods than are white households with incomes less than \$20,000.

The socio-economic composition of one's neighborhood has substantial and well-documented impacts on economic, educational, and social opportunities.³ Residents of Metro Boston's poverty neighborhoods are three times more likely to be unemployed, to have dropped out of school and to be in a single-parent household than are those in non-poverty neighborhoods. Not only do poor blacks and Latinos more commonly reside in areas of concentrated poverty, but they are three times more likely than poor whites to live in what can be described as "severely distressed" neighborhoods--those with much higher than average shares of single-female-headed households, high-school drop outs, people in poverty, and males detached from the labor force (Exhibit 1)⁴. That poor people of color reside in these distressed communities to such a greater degree than do their poor white counterparts raises serious questions about equity and opportunity in Metro Boston.

This paper briefly examines poverty⁵ among racial and ethnic subgroups within the Boston metro area--both poverty of individuals and poverty of neighborhoods of residence. Using the 1990 and 2000 Censuses, it analyzes the degree to which people of color are concentrated in high-poverty areas, the location of these neighborhoods, and their socio-economic characteristics.

¹ According to the National Association of Realtors, existing home prices in Metro Boston were the 3rd highest among all metro areas in 2003. The 2000 Census ranked Metro Boston in the top 20 areas in terms of median gross rent.

² Unless specified otherwise, the Boston Metro Area is defined in this report as the Massachusetts portion of the Boston-Worcester-Lawrence-Lowell-Brockton, MA-NH New England County Metropolitan Area (NECMA,) including the counties of Bristol, Essex, Middlesex, Norfolk, Plymouth, Suffolk, and Worcester. See the Technical Appendix for more detail.

³ See, for example, Ingrid Ellen and Margery Austin-Turner, "Does Neighborhood Matter? Assessing Recent Evidence." Housing Policy Debate 8(4)833-66. 1997.

⁴ This analysis is modeled on that by William O'Hare and Mark Mather in "The Growing Number of Kids in Severely Distressed Neighborhoods: Evidence for the 2000 Census." 2003.

⁵ Following the Office of Management and Budget's (OMB's) Directive 14, the Census Bureau uses a set of money income thresholds that vary by family size and composition to detect who is poor.

Exhibit 1

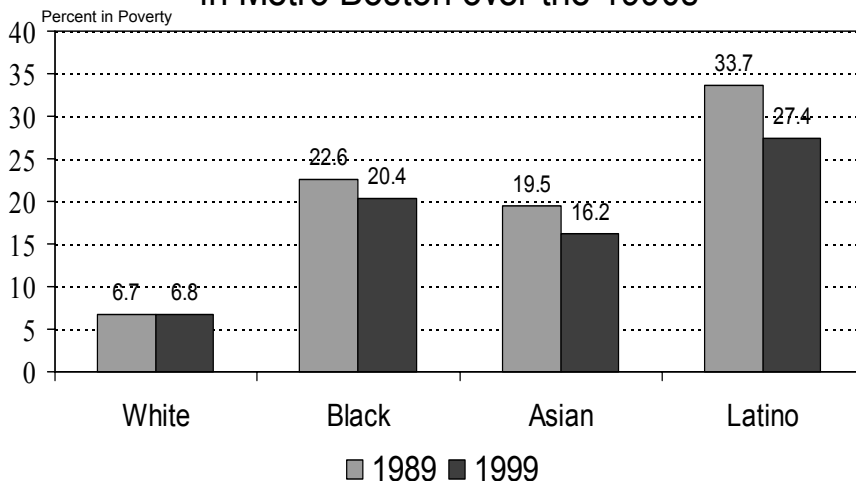
Poor Blacks and Hispanics Are Much More Likely to Live in Severely Distressed Neighborhoods than Poor Whites: 1999

Share Living in Tracts With:	White	Black	Asian	Hispanic
High Share of Female-Headed Families w/Children (Over 23.4%)	19.5%	63.9%	28.4%	61.0%
High Share High School Dropouts (Over 15.9%)	22.1%	22.5%	20.9%	40.3%
High Share People in Poverty (Over 20.9%)	24.7%	55.5%	46.1%	61.1%
High Share Males Detached From Labor Force (Over 33%)	21.8%	59.8%	43.5%	59.7%
At Least 3 of 4 Characteristics (Severely Distressed)	15.9%	47.7%	22.2%	51.7%

Note: Cutoffs for each category were set at one standard deviation above the average value of all tracts. For more detail on definition of "severely distressed" neighborhoods, see the Technical Appendix. Source: 2000 Decennial Censuses, Summary File 3. Analysis modeled on work of O'Hare and Mather, 2003.

Exhibit 2

Poverty Rates Declined for People of Color in Metro Boston over the 1990s



Note: Latinos may be of any race. Excludes people indicating more than one race in 1999. See Appendix 1. Source: 1990 and 2000 Decennial Censuses, Summary File 3.

For the purposes of this analysis, neighborhoods are defined as census tracts⁶ and are classified into four groups, depending on the share of residents in poverty. “Very-high-poverty” tracts are those with poverty rates of 40% or more.⁷ “High-poverty” tracts are those with poverty rates of 30% or more. “Poverty” tracts are those with poverty rates of 20% or more⁸. “Non-poverty” tracts have poverty rates less than 20%. Keep in mind that poverty rates are set nationally and are constant across the nation. In 1999, the poverty threshold for a family with one adult and three children was approximately \$17,000. In a high-cost area like Boston, incomes below the poverty level are even less sufficient to meet a household’s needs than in most other metro areas.

Recent Poverty Trends

Despite a decade of income gains and poverty decline, blacks and Latinos in Metro Boston continue to lag whites economically by dramatic margins. Over the 1990s, poverty rates fell for all minority groups in Metro Boston, particularly Latinos (Exhibit 2). By 1999, over a third of black and 29% of Latino households had incomes above \$50,000 (roughly the metro area median).⁹ Asian incomes were just shy of whites’ (Exhibit 3). In total, minorities accounted for a minimum of \$15 billion dollars in annual income¹⁰. This economic progress is to be applauded but should not be taken for granted. While new local income data by race have not been available since the release of the 2000 Census, *national* figures show a decided slippage in minority incomes more recently. Between 2001 and 2002 (the last year for which annual income data is available,) real median household incomes for Asians¹¹ fell by 3.4%; blacks fell by 3%; and Latinos fell by 2.9%. Meanwhile, real median incomes for whites fell a statistically insignificant .3%¹². Historically, economic downturns have led to “last hired, first fired” policies which disproportionately hurt minorities. Between 2000 (when unemployment hit its last trough) and 2002, national black unemployment rates increased by 2.6 percentage points; Asians’ by 2.3 points; Latinos’ by 1.8 points; and whites’ by 1.6 points¹³. The economic gains of people of color during the 1990s and their continued movement into the middle class are encouraging and will hopefully continue, yet poverty rates for blacks and Latinos in Metro Boston remain three to four times those of whites, and the neighborhoods where they reside are even more economically impoverished.

⁶ A census tract is a small, relatively permanent statistical subdivision of a county averaging about 4,000 inhabitants. They are designed to be relatively homogeneous units with respect to population characteristics, economic status, and living conditions at the time of establishment.

⁷ The 40% poverty cut-off follows the work of University of Texas social scientist Paul Jargowsky. See “Stunning Progress, Hidden Problems: The Dramatic Decline of Concentrated Poverty in the 1990s”. 2003.

⁸ The 20% poverty cutoff corresponds to that used by the Census Bureau (see “Poverty Rate of Census Tract in 1989-Poverty Status of People in 2001.”) and also that used by urbanist David Rusk in his book: Inside Game/Outside Game: Winning Strategies for Saving Urban America. 1999.

⁹ The 2000 Census measures incomes as of 1999; the 1990 Census as of 1989. The 1999 median household income for the entire Boston-Worcester-Lawrence-Lowell-Brockton, MA-NH, including a small portion of New Hampshire, was \$52,306.

¹⁰ This aggregate income estimate includes only income reported to the Census Bureau, almost surely an underestimate of true income.

¹¹ The 2003 Current Population Survey, from which 2002 income data is drawn, was the first to allow respondents to indicate more than one race. These 2001-2002 comparisons use the 2002 data for those respondents specifying the indicated race “alone.”

¹² U.S. Census Bureau. *Income in the United States: 2002*. Table 1.

¹³ Department of Labor Statistics, Labor Force Statistics from the Current Population Survey.

Exhibit 3

Median Household Incomes and Households Over \$50,000: New Boston, 1999

	Median Household Income	Share with Incomes over \$50,000
Non-Hispanic White	\$55,331	55.2%
White	\$54,186	54.7%
Black	\$35,018	34.1%
Asian	\$54,816	52.7%
Latino	\$29,804	28.6%
Total	\$52,306	52.6%

Notes: Latinos may be of any race. Metro Boston refers to the entire Boston NECMA, including a small portion of New Hampshire.

Source: 2000 Census, Summary File 3.

Exhibit 4

Despite Falling Poverty Rates, the Number of Poor Latinos Has Increased Markedly, Especially in Satellite Cities (Change in Poverty Population, 1989-1999)

	White	Black	Latino	Asian
City of Boston	-3,378	-2,293	5,605	4,103
Satellite Cities	-2,499	2,427	10,128	2,415
Suburbs	5,932	1,469	3,181	4,083
Total	55	1,603	18,914	10,601

Note: Latinos may be of any race. Excludes people indicating more than one race in 1999. For definition of "satellite cities" and "suburbs" see the Technical Appendix.

Source: 1990 and 2000 Decennial Censuses, Summary File 3.

Even as poverty **rates** for people of color fell over the 1990s, the sheer growth in the size of overall minority populations in Metro Boston, fueled by foreign immigration, meant that the absolute **number** of impoverished minorities increased (Exhibit 4). The largest increases occurred in the urbanized, satellite cities. These cities, defined by the Office of Management and Budget as “central cities” or those having very high population densities¹⁴--places such as Lawrence, Lowell, Brockton, Lynn, New Bedford, and Worcester--receive much less media attention than does the City of Boston. However, they contain significant and growing minority and immigrant communities. Several of them are also the hubs of smaller metro areas that are very racially segregated. For instance, according to analysis performed by the Lewis Mumford Center at SUNY, Albany, the Lawrence Primary Metropolitan Statistical Area (a sub-area of the metro analyzed in this report) is the most segregated for Latinos among over 300 metro areas in the nation. Similarly, the Lowell Primary Metropolitan Statistical Area is the 7th most segregated for Asians and the 14th most segregated for Latinos compared to all metros.¹⁵ Any meaningful strategies to reduce concentrations of poverty among people of color must include these municipalities as well. The number of poor Latinos in satellite cities grew by over 10,000 during the 1990s, and the largest black increases occurred there also, as poor whites left. The poor Asian population increased substantially, split between the suburbs and the City of Boston. Boston lost both poor whites and poor blacks, while the presence of both groups climbed in the suburbs.

Concentrated Poverty Across Race, Ethnicity, and Nativity

African Americans and Latinos are five to six times more likely to live in poverty neighborhoods than are whites¹⁶, and Asians are three times more likely. Eight percent of whites live in such areas, compared to 44% of blacks, 51% of Latinos, and 24% of Asians (Exhibit 5). This over-representation of minorities relative to whites is also reflected in high- and very-high poverty areas, though the share population living in such neighborhoods declines as the poverty threshold increases.

Because immigrants are two to three times more likely than natives to live in concentrated poverty, and because immigrants make up a larger share of the non-white than the white population in Metro Boston, one might suspect that nativity is the underlying determinant of concentrated poverty for racial minorities. If immigrants cluster together to provide social support in an unfamiliar environment, and, if these immigrants are of low-income, this social clustering would lead to poverty concentration. However, the effect of nativity differs across ethnic groups. White immigrants are more likely than white natives to live in higher poverty areas, and nativity has little effect on Asians or Latinos. Among Latinos, this result is partially due to the high share of Puerto Ricans living in poverty areas. Puerto Ricans, though often

¹⁴ For definitions of satellite cities and suburbs, see the Technical Appendix.

¹⁵ See web site of the Lewis Mumford Center, SUNY, Albany, including sortable lists of segregation at:

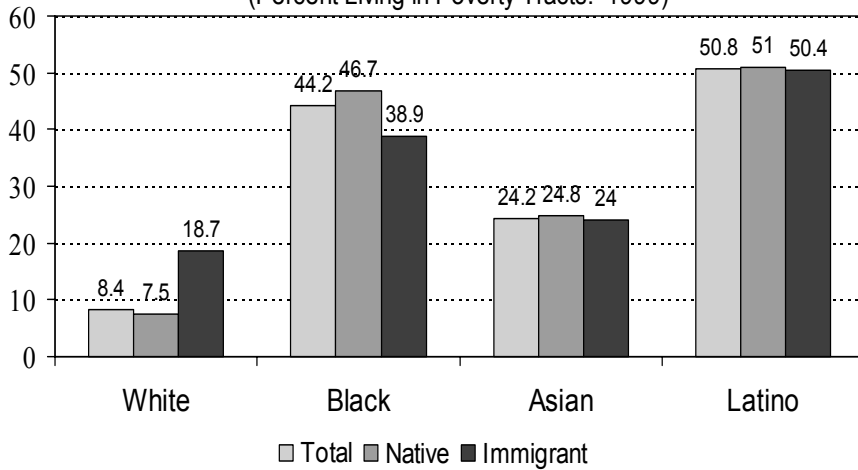
http://mumford1.dyndns.org/cen2000/WholePop/WPsort/sort_d2.html

http://mumford1.dyndns.org/cen2000/WholePop/WPsort/sort_d3.html

¹⁶ Unless otherwise noted, racial groups in 2000 refer only to respondents who reported being a member of the specified racial group “alone.” Multi-racial respondents are excluded. See the Technical Appendix for more details.

Exhibit 5

Latinos and Blacks are Much More Likely to Live in Poverty Neighborhoods, Regardless of Nativity
(Percent Living in Poverty Tracts: 1999)

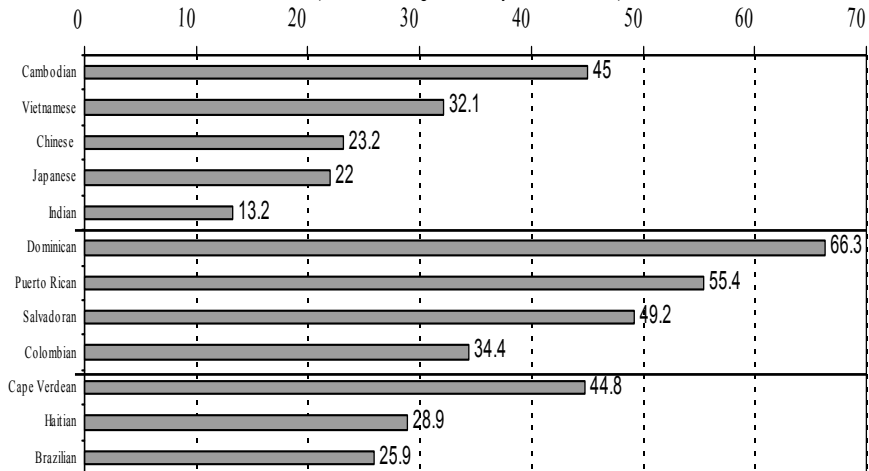


Note: Poverty Tracts, as defined by the Census Bureau, are those in which 20% or more of the population is in poverty.
Source: 1990 and 2000 Decennial Censuses, Summary File 3.

Exhibit 6

Likelihood of Residing in Poverty Tracts Varies Widely Across Ethnic Groups

(Percent Living in Poverty Tracts: 1999)



Note: Poverty Tracts are those in which 20% or more of the population is in poverty. See Appendix 4
Source: 1990 and 2000 Decennial Censuses, Summary File 3.

having an “immigrant-like” experience after moving to the continental U.S., are classified as native-born. In contrast, native-born blacks more commonly live in poor communities than do their foreign-born counterparts.

Further examination of those ethnic subgroups with a substantial presence in the Boston area reveals great variation in poverty concentration (Exhibit 6). Among Asians, Indians rarely live in poverty areas. On the other hand, almost half of Cambodians and a third of Vietnamese, live in areas where at least 20% of the residents are in poverty, markedly higher than other Asian ethnic groups. However, the disparity across subgroups lessens in high and very-high poverty areas.

Among Latinos, over half of Puerto Ricans and two-thirds of Dominicans reside in poverty areas, and their shares living in high and very-high poverty neighborhoods outstrip other Latino groups as well. A quarter of these ethnic groups live in neighborhoods with poverty rates of 30% or more, over twice the share of other major Latino subgroups.

The Census does not provide “racial” classifications for several other groups with significant presence in Metro Boston: Brazilians, Haitians, and Cape Verdeans. However, it is possible to identify these residents on the basis of country of origin and primary ancestry. Relatively high shares of Cape Verdeans live in concentrated poverty neighborhoods, though not to the extent of Dominicans and Puerto Ricans.

Variation in Concentrated Poverty Residence Among the Poor

Due to spatial variation in housing costs, one might expect to find lower-income populations living in areas with more concentrated poverty. This pattern is certainly true, but the variation in residence **within the poverty population** is striking. Among the poor, only one quarter of whites live in poverty areas, compared to half of Asians and two-thirds of blacks and Latinos. Similar relationships between racial groups remain when examining areas of higher poverty concentration (Exhibit 7). Over one in ten (11.1%) poor Latinos live in the 25 most impoverished tracts in which 40% or more residents are below the poverty level, compared to just 3.6% of poor whites. Even upper-income blacks and Latinos more commonly reside in poverty areas than do lower-income whites. Thirty-one percent of African-Americans and 34% of Hispanics with incomes **over \$50,000** annually live in poverty tracts, compared to 16% of whites with incomes **less than \$20,000**.

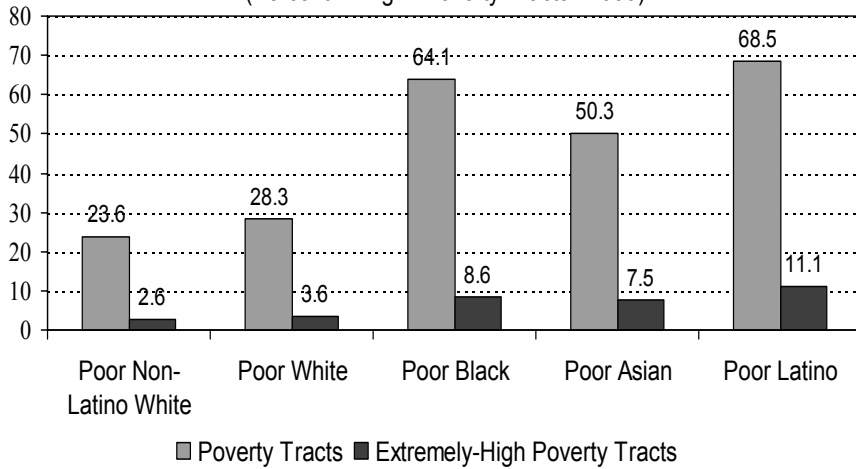
This phenomenon is largely due to the fact that increased income for blacks and Latinos does not necessarily translate into higher rates of suburban residence, where concentrated poverty is far less prevalent. Almost half of poor whites and over half of poor non-Latino whites live in the suburbs, compared to just 24% of poor Asians, 15% of poor Latinos, and 10% of poor blacks (Exhibit 8). Higher incomes have especially weak impacts on black suburban residence. Even among households making \$100,000 a year or more, only half of blacks live in the suburbs¹⁷, compared to 90% of Asians and whites and almost three quarters of Latinos.

Furthermore, higher incomes do little to reduce segregation between black and Hispanic households and their white counterparts of similar income. Metro-wide, 70% of black

¹⁷ For a definition of the suburbs, see the Technical Appendix.

Exhibit 7

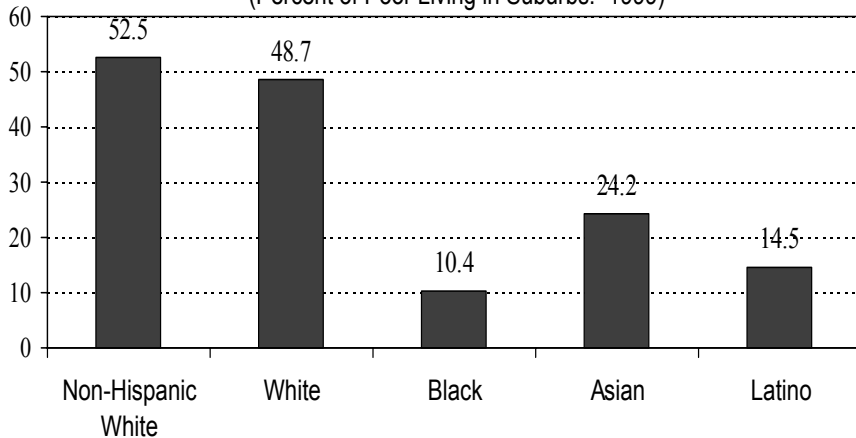
Even Among the Poor, People of Color Are Much More Likely to Live in Poor Neighborhoods than Whites
(Percent Living in Poverty Tracts: 1999)



Note: Poverty Tracts are those in which 20% or more of the population is in poverty. Extremely-High Poverty Tracts are those in which 40% or more of the population is in poverty. See Appendix 5.
Source: 1990 and 2000 Decennial Censuses, Summary File 3.

Exhibit 8

Despite Low Income, Half of Poor Whites Live in Suburbs, Unlike Poor People of Color
(Percent of Poor Living in Suburbs: 1999)



Note: For definition of the suburbs, see the Technical Appendix.
Source: 2000 Decennial Censuses, Summary File 3.

households with incomes over \$100,000 would have to move to another census tract in order to achieve full integration¹⁸ with similar-income whites—a level which can be described as “hyper-segregation”. Sixty percent of high-income Latinos would have to move to achieve full integration with high-income whites. For both blacks and Hispanics, high-income households are as segregated from their white counterparts as low-income black and Hispanics households are from their low-income white counterparts.

The Geography of Concentrated Poverty

Most poverty neighborhoods are located within the City of Boston, where very few poor whites live (14%), and very few poverty tracts are located in the suburbs, where the majority of poor whites live. In contrast 37% of poor minorities reside in the City of Boston, but only 17% reside in the suburbs. Almost half (47%) of poor minorities live in urbanized satellite cities¹⁹, compared with just a third of poor whites.

The City of Boston contains a quarter of the metro area’s poor residents (unchanged over the past decade), but it contains 40% of all poverty tracts and close to half of all high-poverty and very-high poverty tracts (Exhibit 9). Interestingly, although the overall poverty rate in Boston **increased** slightly over the 1990s (18.7 to 19.5%), the number of poverty tracts there **decreased** from 81 to 72; the number of high-poverty tracts increased from 34 to 37; and the number of very-high-poverty tracts decreased from 14 to 13. This pattern suggests some easing of poverty concentration overall, especially in the lower poverty areas. It is also consistent with an overall decline in the share of poor blacks living in poverty areas over the 1990s. The share of blacks living in poverty tracts declined from 67% to 60%, while the share in very-high-poverty tracts declined from 12% to 7%. (Exhibit 10) The share of poor Asians and Hispanics in poverty tracts and poor Hispanics in very-high-poverty tracts declined as well. Poor whites experienced little change. These patterns may have several causes. First, over the 1990s, the number of blacks declined notably in parts of the South End, Roxbury, and even Mattapan as the number of whites increased and housing prices soared. This gentrification no doubt served to dilute poverty concentration in these areas. Secondly, minority incomes did rise during the 1990’s economic boom, reducing poverty rates in general and also the share of tracts that might be classified as having high poverty. Thirdly, concrete steps to reduce the concentrations of poverty in subsidized housing and create more mixed income housing may also have reduced poverty concentrations in neighborhoods where a great many Boston minorities reside. The exact nature of these changes warrants further study, but this pattern of declining poverty concentrations was experienced by a great many inner cities over the 1990s.²⁰

Like Boston, Lawrence and Lowell also saw declines in the number of poverty and very-high-poverty tracts, but these cities experienced decreasing poverty rates. In contrast, New Bedford

¹⁸ In a “fully-integrated” metro area, the racial composition of each Census tract would exactly mirror the racial composition of the metro area as a whole.

¹⁹ For a definition of the urbanized satellite cities, see the Technical Appendix.

²⁰ See Paul A. Jargowsky, “Stunning Progress, Hidden Problems: The Dramatic Decline of Concentrated Poverty in the 1990s. 2003.

Exhibit 9

Vast Majority of Poverty Tracts Are in Boston

	Number in 1989	Number in 1999
Boston	81	72
Lawrence	16	15
New Bedford	12	16
Worcester	13	13
Lowell	11	10
Lynn	9	11
Fall River	7	9
Brockton	7	7
Chelsea	4	5

Note: Poverty Tracts are those in which 20% or more of the population is in poverty
Source: 2000 Decennial Censuses, Summary File 3.

Exhibit 10

Share of POOR Population Living in Concentrated Poverty By Race/Ethnicity, Nativity, and Degree of Poverty Concentration: 1989 and 1999 (Percent)

1999

Share of Race Group

<u>Residing in Tracts that are:</u>	<u>White</u>	<u>Black</u>	<u>Asian</u>	<u>Hispanic</u>
Less than 20% Poor	71.7	35.9	49.7	31.5
20% or Greater Poor	28.3	64.1	50.3	68.5
30% or Greater Poor	11.5	30.8	25.8	32.7
40% or Greater Poor	3.6	8.6	7.5	11.1

1989

Less than 20% Poor	75.0	33.1	43.2	31.4
20% or Greater Poor	25.0	66.9	56.8	68.6
30% or Greater Poor	10.5	33.3	26.1	38.8
40% or Greater Poor	3.5	12.2	11.3	17.2

1999

Number of People in Race Group

<u>Residing in Tracts that are:</u>	<u>White</u>	<u>Black</u>	<u>Asian</u>	<u>Hispanic</u>
Less than 20% Poor	209,081	20,259	17,471	28,872
20% or Greater Poor	82,685	36,123	17,344	62,691
30% or Greater Poor	33,408	17,342	8,905	29,982
40% or Greater Poor	10,407	4,849	2,571	10,126

1989

Less than 20% Poor	218,804	18,158	10,312	22,776
20% or Greater Poor	72,907	36,621	13,578	49,873
30% or Greater Poor	30,684	18,239	6,234	29,032
40% or Greater Poor	10,136	6,659	2,690	12,489

Notes: In 2000, race groups include only those people who identified themselves as the specified race group "alone".

Latino is defined by the Census Bureau as an "ethnicity" and can include people of any race.

Metro Boston refers to MA portion of the Boston New England County Metro Area (NECMA,)

Source: 1990 and 2000 Decennial Censuses, Summary File 3.

especially, but also Fall River, Worcester, and Cambridge all experienced increases in poverty rates, along with increases in the number of poverty tracts²¹.

Socio-Economic Characteristics of High-Poverty Areas

The costs of living in neighborhoods of concentrated poverty have been well documented. “Empirical evidence has demonstrated that residence in disadvantaged neighborhoods increases the risk of dropping out of high school, teen childbearing, and adolescent delinquency, among other negative outcomes²²” Many residents of such neighborhoods are also disconnected from formal employment networks, making it more difficult to find jobs. Furthermore, employers may view applicants from certain neighborhoods unfavorably when making hiring choices. In Metro Boston, the likelihood of being unemployed, heading a single-parent household, and lacking a high-school diploma is almost three times as high for those people living in poverty neighborhoods than for those in non-poverty neighborhoods. Areas with greater poverty concentrations face even higher levels of socio-economic disadvantage (Exhibit 11).

As illustrated previously in Exhibit 1, poor blacks and Latinos are much more likely than poor whites to reside in neighborhoods that could be termed “severely distressed.” This analysis is modeled on that by William O’Hare and Mark Mather in their work “The Growing Number of Kids in Severely Distressed Neighborhoods: Evidence for the 2000 Census.” Severely distressed neighborhoods are those which have three of the four following characteristics: high shares of female headed families with children and no spouse present, high shares of high school dropouts, high shares of people in poverty and high shares of males detached from the labor force. The cutoff for each category is defined as one standard deviation above the average value of all census tracts, a common statistical method for determining a significant difference from the average. Further information of the index can be found in the Technical Appendix. Poor Latinos are dramatically more likely than poor whites to live in areas with all four characteristics, while poor blacks have higher shares in all categories except high school dropouts. Poor Asians live in intermediate neighborhoods, not as disadvantaged as poor blacks and Latinos but worse off than poor whites. In sum, 16% of poor whites live in area that could be termed “severely distressed” (having 3 of the 4 characteristics,) compared to 48% of poor blacks, 22% of poor Asians, and 52% of poor Hispanics.

When place of residence determines school assignment, children who live in high-poverty neighborhoods will attend high-poverty schools as well. Schools with high levels of concentrated poverty have associated problems (higher teacher turnover, lower parental involvement, lower achievement)-- problems that even “equal funding” often cannot overcome.

²¹ The number of poverty tracts in Worcester maintained constant, but the number of high and very-high poverty tracts increased.

²² See Emily Rosenbaum and Laura E. Harris “Residential Mobility and Opportunities: Early Impacts of the Moving to Opportunity Demonstration Program in Chicago.” *Housing Policy Debate* 12(2) p.321. 2001.

Exhibit 11

Socioeconomic Characteristics of Tracts by Poverty Concentration: 2000

(Percent)

	<u>Share of Households Headed by Single Parents</u>	<u>Share of Population Over Age 25 Without Diploma</u>	<u>Unemployment Rate (%)</u>
Less than 20% Poor	6.4	12.8	3.8
20% or Greater Poor	17.0	34.7	9.6
30% or Greater Poor	18.3	38.9	11.8
40% or Greater Poor	21.7	42.1	15.0

Note: Poverty status as of 1999, characteristics as of 2000.

Source: 2000 Decennial Census, Summary File 3.

Next Steps

The reasons why people of color, even those with higher incomes, dwell in more concentrated-poverty neighborhoods than do their white counterparts are numerous and complex. Historical housing segregation as a matter of governmental policy and practice, migration of blacks to urbanized areas in search of jobs at the same time that many whites were suburbanizing, continued discrimination in housing markets, and reluctance of minorities to pioneer integration in almost all-white suburbs are just a few factors. Without a doubt, however, these unequal residence patterns exact real costs on people of color. While being mindful to respect peoples' choices about residential location, it is also necessary to encourage policies and practices that reduce concentrated poverty. Certainly, poverty-reduction policies can play an important role, including education and job training and expansion of income supports such as the Earned Income Tax Credit. The strong economy of the 1990s reduced poverty rates among people of color, undoubtedly bringing some easing of poverty concentration. But strategies to reduce poverty will likely not be enough to break to tight grip that holds many people of color in concentrated poverty neighborhoods. Additional efforts are needed, including:

- Rigorous enforcement of Fair Housing laws: The recent legal decision in favor of a black MIT professor who was discriminated against by a Belmont landlord,²³ the housing bias decision against the managers of the 500-unit subsidized housing complex in Somerville²⁴, as well as studies by the Fair Housing Center of Greater Boston which show unequal treatment faced by people of color looking to rent housing²⁵, document the fact that overt discrimination in housing markets still occurs. Rigorous Fair Housing enforcement sends a signal to minorities that all communities are (at least legally) open to them and to those who would block minority access that such illegal action will not be tolerated.
- Avoid siting new subsidized housing in high poverty neighborhoods unless explicit "community development and housing mobility programs are built into the program design." According to legal experts, "Currently, HUD site selection standards, designed to further fair housing, are disregarded in non-HUD housing development programs (such as the Low Income Housing Tax Credit Program) and have often been set aside in HUD-funded developments when an "overriding need" is used to justify an exception to build housing in high-poverty areas"²⁶
- Utilize housing vouchers to open up the suburbs to lower-income renters. Provide specific information, counseling and even marketing about cities and towns not usually considered by people of color.

²³ See "Bias in Belmont." The Boston Globe. August 26, 2003.

²⁴ See "Housing Bias Lawsuit is Settled." The Boston Globe. December 5, 2003.

²⁵ See <http://www.bostonfairhousing.com/publications.htm>

²⁶ Philip Tegeler, Legal Director, Connecticut Civil Liberties Union. "The Persistence of Segregation Incentives in Federal Housing and Community Development Programs." 2003. Unpublished draft, cited with permission.

- Using both carrot and stick incentives, provide strong motivation for all cities and towns to provide their fair share of affordable housing. The new plan developed by the Commonwealth Housing Task Force that encourages the state to provide incentives for cities that establish “Smart Growth Overlay Zoning Districts” is one such step. Strengthen Chapter 40B incentives and encourage minority access to these new homes. Currently data is unavailable to evaluate whether 40B has had any effect on promoting fair housing.
- City planners, administrators, and CDCs must work together more proactively to identify areas beginning to undergo gentrification and to develop plans to allow at least some lower-income people to remain. With housing prices still rising and property taxes skyrocketing, more homeowners at the edges of gentrifying neighborhoods are at risk of losing their homes.
- In areas of concentrated residential poverty, fund and support programs to insure that children do not attend schools that are segregated by economic status (and commonly by race as well). Increased funding for METCO, more magnet schools (including regional magnets) and clearly conceived desegregation plans are all necessary to break the link between residential and school concentrated poverty.

Appendix 1

Poverty by Race/Ethnicity in Metro Boston: 1989 and 1999

Poverty Rate (Percent)

	1999			
	<u>1989 (1)</u>	<u>Race alone(2)</u>	<u>Race in combination</u>	<u>Change(3)</u>
White	6.7	6.8	7.0	0.1
Black	22.6	20.4	20.3	-2.2
Asian	19.5	16.2	16.3	-3.3
	<u>1989</u>		<u>1999</u>	<u>Change</u>
Latino(4)	33.7		27.4	-6.3
Total (5)	8.6		9.0	0.4

Number of Persons in Poverty

	1999			
	<u>1989 (1)</u>	<u>Race alone(2)</u>	<u>Race in combination</u>	<u>Change(3)</u>
White	291,711	291,766	308,675	55
Black (7)	54,779	56,382	65,660	1,603
Asian	23,890	34,491	38,017	10,601
	<u>1989</u>		<u>1999</u>	<u>Change</u>
Latino(4)	72,649		91,563	18,914
Total (8)	415,230		460,158	44,928

Notes:

- (1) Poverty rates from the Decennial Censuses refer to the previous year.
- (2) The 2000 Census allows respondents to indicate more than one race, making comparisons with 1990 data inexact. This table shows 1999 poverty rates for those people indicating the specified race "alone" and also those indicating the specified race "in combination with other races," i.e. "multi-ethnic". The differences in poverty rates are small.
- (3) Change column based on 1999 "race alone" data.
- (4) Latino is defined by the Census Bureau as an "ethnicity" and can include people of any race.
- (5) "Total" rate is for the entire population for which poverty was determined and includes racial groups not presented separately.
- (6) Note that the total poverty rate rose over the period even though rates for most individual race groups declined. This result is largely due to the much faster population growth of higher-poverty minority groups, relative to lower-poverty whites. By 2000, these minority groups made up a larger share of the total population, elevating the total poverty rate.
- (7) The substantial difference between the number of blacks "alone" and blacks "in combination" is largely due to the blacks who also specify "other" as their race. This is a common racial category for Latinos. Thus, much of the difference between the two black categories is likely due to the increasing number of Latino blacks. Increases in poverty for this group will also be included in the "Latino" category.
- (8) The "Total" change in the poverty population will differ from the sum of the individual group changes because (A) racial groups include Hispanic members who are also included in the "Hispanic" category; B) because the total includes other, smaller racial groups not listed separately, and C) because the 1999 "Total" poor population includes multi-racial people which are excluded from the individual racial categories.

Metro Boston refers to MA portion of the Boston New England County Metro Area (NECMA)

Source: 1990 Census, Summary File 3 and 2000 Census, Summary File 4.

Appendix 2
Share of Population Living in Concentrated Poverty
By Race/Ethnicity and Degree of Poverty Concentration: 1999
 (Percent)

Share of Race Group Residing in Tracts that are:	<u>Total</u>	<u>White</u>	<u>Black</u>	<u>Latino</u>	<u>Asian</u>
Less than 20% Poor	87.1	91.6	55.8	49.2	75.8
20% or Greater Poor	12.9	8.4	44.2	50.8	24.2
30% or Greater Poor	4.3	2.6	17.5	20.0	9.9
40% or Greater Poor	1.1	0.7	3.6	5.5	2.7

Notes: Latino is defined by the Census Bureau as an "ethnicity" and can include people of any race.

"Total" rates include racial groups not presented separately.

Metro Boston refers to MA portion of the Boston New England County Metro Area (NECMA,)

Source: 2000 Census, Summary File 3.

Appendix 3
Share of Population Living in Concentrated Poverty
By Nativity, Race/Ethnicity and Degree of Poverty Concentration: 1999
(Percent)

Share of Race Group Residing in Tracts that are:	Total		White		Black		Latino		Asian	
	<u>Native</u>	<u>Immigrant</u>	<u>Native</u>	<u>Immigrant</u>	<u>Native</u>	<u>Immigrant</u>	<u>Native</u>	<u>Immigrant</u>	<u>Native</u>	<u>Immigrant</u>
Less than 20% Poor	88.9	72.6	92.5	81.3	53.9	61.1	49.0	49.6	75.2	76.0
20% or Greater Poor	11.1	27.4	7.5	18.7	46.1	38.9	51.0	50.4	24.8	24.0
30% or Greater Poor	3.9	9.1	2.4	5.3	19.1	12.9	21.4	17.4	9.0	10.2
40% or Greater Poor	1.1	2.0	0.7	1.3	4.1	2.3	6.5	3.8	3.0	2.5

Notes: Latino is defined by the Census Bureau as an "ethnicity" and can include people of any race.

"Total" rates include racial groups not presented separately.

Metro Boston refers to MA portion of the Boston New England County Metro Area (NECMA,)

Source: 2000 Census, Summary File 3.

Appendix 4

Share of Population Living in Concentrated Poverty By Ethnic Subgroup and Degree of Poverty Concentration: 1999

(Percent)

Share of Race Group Residing in Tracts that are:	Total Asian	Asian Indian	Cambodian	Chinese	Japanese	Korean	Taiwanese	Vietnamese
Less than 20% Poor	75.9	86.8	55.0	76.8	78.0	81.2	79.4	67.9
20% or Greater Poor	24.1	13.2	45.0	23.2	22.0	18.8	20.6	32.1
30% or Greater Poor	10.0	5.4	12.2	12.8	9.4	8.1	8.4	10.6
40% or Greater Poor	2.6	1.6	2.0	3.6	1.9	1.8	1.8	3.1

Share of Race Group Residing in Tracts that are:	Total Latino	Mexican	Puerto Rican	Dominican	Salvadoran	Colombian
Less than 20% Poor	49.5	69.2	44.6	33.7	50.8	65.6
20% or Greater Poor	50.5	30.8	55.4	66.3	49.2	34.4
30% or Greater Poor	19.9	8.8	25.1	26.3	11.3	12.0
40% or Greater Poor	5.5	2.4	7.8	5.4	3.0	2.9

Share of Race Group Residing in Tracts that are:	Brazilian	Cape Verdean	Haitian
Less than 20% Poor	74.1	55.2	71.1
20% or Greater Poor	25.9	44.8	28.9
30% or Greater Poor	7.7	11.3	7.6
40% or Greater Poor	1.3	2.0	1.1

Notes: Includes only respondents who identified themselves as being of one race.

Data for Brazilians, Cape Verdeans, and Haitians refers to respondents who identified this category as their primary ancestry.

Metro Boston refers to MA portion of the Boston New England County Metro Area (NECMA,)

Source: 2000 Census, Summary File 3 and Summary File 1..

Appendix 5

Share of POOR Population Living in Concentrated Poverty

By Race/Ethnicity, Nativity, and Degree of Poverty Concentration: 1999

(Percent)

Share of Race Group Residing in Tracts that are:	Total Poor	Poor White	Poor Non-Latino White	Poor Black	Poor Latino	Poor Asian	Poor Native-Born	Poor Foreign-Born
Less than 20% Poor	59.8	71.7	76.4	35.9	31.5	49.7	62.5	50.3
20% or Greater Poor	40.2	28.3	23.6	64.1	68.5	50.3	37.5	49.7
30% or Greater Poor	17.6	11.5	9.2	30.8	32.7	25.8	16.8	20.7
40% or Greater Poor	5.4	3.6	2.6	8.6	11.1	7.5	5.3	5.7

Notes: Latino is defined by the Census Bureau as an "ethnicity" and can include people of any race.

"Total poor" rates include racial groups not presented separately.

Metro Boston refers to MA portion of the Boston New England County Metro Area (NECMA.)

Source: 2000 Census, Summary File 3.

Appendix 6

Change in Poverty Rate and Poverty Population for Central Cities: 1989 and 1999 Boston Metro Area

	1999			1989			Change in:		
	Total Population	Poverty Population	Poverty Rate	Total Population	Poverty Population	Poverty Rate	Poverty Rate	Poverty Population (Number)	Poverty Population (Percent)
Attleboro	41,275	2,539	6.2	37,717	2,425	6.4	-0.3	114	4.7
Boston	558,707	109,128	19.5	545,764	102,092	18.7	0.8	7,036	6.9
Brockton	92,423	13,390	14.5	90,855	12,396	13.6	0.8	994	8.0
Cambridge	87,313	11,295	12.9	82,208	8,794	10.7	2.2	2,501	28.4
Chelsea	33,991	7,921	23.3	27,919	6,715	24.1	-0.7	1,206	18.0
Everett	37,712	4,456	11.8	35,401	3,399	9.6	2.2	1,057	31.1
Fall River	90,118	15,421	17.1	91,158	13,017	14.3	2.8	2,404	18.5
Fitchburg	37,460	5,627	15.0	39,007	5,461	14.0	1.0	166	3.0
Gloucester	29,872	2,630	8.8	28,476	2,143	7.5	1.3	487	22.7
Lawrence	70,743	17,217	24.3	68,881	18,946	27.5	-3.2	-1,729	-9.1
Leominster	40,915	3,889	9.5	37,783	2,713	7.2	2.3	1,176	43.3
Lowell	101,689	17,066	16.8	99,493	17,900	18.0	-1.2	-834	-4.7
Lynn	87,937	14,525	16.5	80,181	12,756	15.9	0.6	1,769	13.9
Malden	55,839	5,118	9.2	53,384	4,029	7.5	1.6	1,089	27.0
New Bedford	91,844	18,553	20.2	97,908	16,430	16.8	3.4	2,123	12.9
Somerville	75,199	9,395	12.5	74,061	8,492	11.5	1.0	903	10.6
Waltham	53,580	3,752	7.0	50,524	3,288	6.5	0.5	464	14.1
Worcester	162,475	29,115	17.9	158,306	24,228	15.3	2.6	4,887	20.2

Note: Cities are those designated as "central cities" by the Census Bureau and those with population densities over 10,000 people per square mile. Metro Boston refers to MA portion of the Boston New England County Metro Area (NECMA.)

Technical Appendix

Geographic Definitions

Metro Area

Unless specified otherwise, the terms “Boston metropolitan area” or “Metro Boston” used in this paper to Massachusetts portion of the Boston-Worcester-Lawrence-Lowell-Brockton, MA-NH New England County Metropolitan Area (NECMA) defined by the Office of Management and Budget as of June 30, 1999 and consisting of the following counties: Bristol, Essex, Middlesex, Norfolk, Suffolk, Plymouth, and Worcester.

Satellite Cities

Satellite cities include all cities in the Metro Boston (defined above) which are classified as “central cities” by the Office of Management and Budget as of June 30, 1999, plus additional cities with population densities over 10,000 people per square mile. Satellite cities include:

Attleboro	Fitchburg	Malden
Brockton	Gloucester	New Bedford
Cambridge	Lawrence	Somerville
Chelsea	Leominster	Waltham
Everett	Lowell	Worcester
Fall River	Lynn	

Suburbs

Suburbs are defined as all cities and towns in Metro Boston excluding the City of Boston and the Satellite Cities defined above.

Race and Ethnicity

2000 was the first Census year in which people were able to specify more than one race, making direct comparisons with 1990 Census data inexact. In Metro Boston, 125,517 or 2.4% of the population chose more than one race in 2000. For the purposes of this paper, unless specified otherwise, 2000 racial groups refer to people who identified themselves as “one race” alone. Multi-racial people are excluded. Exhibit 1 illustrates that the differences in poverty rates in 2000 between those specifying a specific race “alone” and those specifying that race “in combination with other races” is very small.

“Hispanic/Latino” is defined by the Census Bureau as an “ethnicity, not a “race.” Thus, each person may specify at least one racial group as well as an “Hispanic” or “non-Hispanic” ethnicity. However, data on poverty at the tract level is not readily available from the 1990 Census by both race and ethnicity. Therefore, many of the charts in this paper, unless otherwise noted, do not break out Hispanic and non-Hispanic members of racial groups separately. Hispanics who specify “white,” “black” or “Asian” as their race would be counted under both the “Hispanic” and the specified race category. In 2000, there were 141,207 white Hispanics (3.2%

of all whites;) 21,692 black Hispanics (7.4% of all blacks;) and 3,131 Asian Hispanics (0.5% of all Asians.)

Severely Distressed Neighborhoods

The analysis of poor people living in severely distressed neighborhoods was closely modeled on that developed by William O'Hare and Mark Mather in "The Growing Number of Kids in Severely Distressed Neighborhoods: Evidence from the 2000 Census," October, 2003.

Cutoffs for each neighborhood component of distress were set at one standard deviation above the mean value of all tracts, a common statistical measure for determining a significant difference from the average value. See the next page for average values and cutoff values.

Female-headed families with children are those without a spouse present and with at least one related child under age 18.

High school drop-outs are people aged 16-19 not enrolled in school and with no high school diploma.

Males detached from the labor force are those aged 16 –64 who are civilians, not institutionalized, unemployed, or not in the labor force.

Components of "Severely Distressed" Neighborhoods Index Boston Metro Area: 2000

	<u>Mean</u>	<u>Standard Deviation</u>	<u>Cutoff</u>
Percentage of families with related children headed by females	12.5	10.9	23.4
Percentage of high school dropouts (ages 16-19)	7.3	8.6	15.9
Poverty Rate	10.4	10.5	20.9
Percentage of males 16-64 detached from the labor force	22.0	11.0	33.0

Note: Poverty Rates as of 1999.

Metro Boston refers to MA portion of the Boston New England County Metro Area (NECMA)

This analysis closely modeled on that presented by William O'Hare and Mark Mather in "The Growing Number of Kids in Severely Distressed Neighborhoods: Evidence from the 2000 Census." 2003.

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