

Diversity Management in the Regional Metropolis

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Boundary is defined as something that indicates a border or limit. A key and increasingly dynamic feature of the regional metropolis is the extent to which its cultural and socioeconomic *diversity* creates daily boundaries between and among its populations. These boundaries may be as essential as the jurisdictional boundaries separating individual cities from cities, cities from counties, or counties from counties in a single metropolis. Three interrelated objectives drive this article.

First, I introduce, examine, and attempt to define several key concepts and terms associated with the exploration of cultural and socioeconomic diversity in metropolitan areas.

Second, using the African American urban population as both case and metaphor, I explore several key socioeconomic and policy issues raised by the realities of cultural and socioeconomic boundaries in the metropolis.

Third, I provide several examples of economic, social, and political developments ostensibly designed to address these boundary dynamics.

Terms of Conflict or Terms of Endearment

Any discussion of regional issues should begin with clarity about key terms and concepts. If boundaries define borders or limits, then to suggest that there are cultural

and socioeconomic borders or limits in metropolitan regions may seem to some elementary. If culture represents the behavior patterns, values, institutions, and other artifacts of particular groups of people and socioeconomic characteristics reflect income, occupational, educational, housing, geographic, and other variations in the population, then boundaries may refer to the distribution of opportunities and limitations societies impose on particular groups defined by particular kinds of cultural and socioeconomic characteristics. And, since I introduced the term regional metropolis to refer to urban areas with one or more central cities and adjoining suburban or rural communities, I focus on cultural and socioeconomic variation in this particular kind of human settlement.

Specifically, when academic codes and language are removed, I explore race, ethnicity, and poverty as particular kinds of cultural and socioeconomic phenomena creating particular kinds of borders or limits in the regional metropolis. The problem is how the regional metropolis accommodates and manages conflicts and cooperative impulses associated with these kinds of borders in addition to, and coincident with, those created by jurisdictional boundaries. What are the terms of conflict and the terms of endearment when both jurisdictional and cultural/socioeconomic boundaries influence social, economic, and policy behavior?

As I wrestle with this question in this article, I seek to redefine both the concept of boundary and to offer examples of how boundary, as a artifact of human diversity, is managed in the metropolis.

African Americans as Example and Metaphor

The human diversity of the regional metropolis is clearly exemplified in the increasingly large African American, Hispanic, and Asian American urban settlement pattern. More and more of these populations are located not only in traditional central city neighborhoods and historic small towns outside of central cities, but also in historically newer suburban areas. Using the African American urban population as

example and metaphor, our aim is not to ignore other culturally distinct populations, but to explore the twin concepts of boundary and diversity in the metropolitan setting.

Ten key trends characterize urban African American socioeconomic life.

1. Economic disparity between urban America and urban black America is becoming more pronounced whether in central cities, suburbs or edge cities. African American employment prospects have declined substantially in central cities, increased slightly in the suburbs, and increased substantially for the few African Americans living in what Joel Garreau defines as edge cities.¹ Tables 1 and 2 describe the distribution of African Americans in most and least diverse edge cities.

Table 1. Ten of the Most Diverse Edge Cities: Percentage of Black Population (With Select Downtowns for Comparisons)

(Atlanta DTN)	86.4%
1. Southfield-Northland Mall area, Michigan	72.7%
2. Lanham/Landover Area, Maryland	71.5%
(Detroit DTN)	67.8%
3. Memphis Airport Area, Tennessee	67.4%
4. The Research Triangle Park Area, N. Carolina	59.1%
5. Security Boulevard, Maryland	49.8%
(Oakland DTN)	42.1%
6. Eisenhower Valley, Virginia	38.8%
7. Crown Center, Kansas	36.1%
(Washington, D.C., DTN)	36.0%
8. Greenspring/I-45, Texas	33.5%
9. Silver Spring, Maryland	29.6%
10. Texas Medical Center-Rice University, Texas	28.6%

DTN means *downtown*

Note: *Attained by dividing the black population in the area by the total population in the area.*

Source: *The Edge City News*, 1992

Table 2. Ten Least Diverse Edge Cities: Percentage of White Population

1. Rockside Road/Interstate 77, Ohio	98.4%
2. Attleboro/Mansfield/Foxboro, Massachusetts	97.9%
3. Peabody/Danvers, Massachusetts	97.8%
4. Brookfield-Blue Mound Road, Wisconsin	97.3%
5. The Penn-Lincoln Parkway-Airport Area, Pennsylvania	97.2%
6. Minnetonka/Western Interstate 494, Minnesota	97.0%
7. Dearborn-Fairlane Village Area, Michigan	96.6%
8. Scottsdale, Arizona	96.4%
9. The Poplar Corridor—East Memphis, Tennessee	96.4%
10. Hauppauge, New York	96.3%

William Julius Wilson cites the decline in stable, higher paying, blue-collar employment in formerly industrial cities throughout America.² Others identify the changing structure of metropolitan employment opportunity characterized by more rapid professional and white-collar employment growth in suburbs and edge cities and declining employment in central cities. In his books, *Cities Without Suburbs* and *Baltimore Unbound*, David Rusk argues that there is a distinction between the growth patterns of what he describes as elastic and inelastic cities. Elastic cities grow from within and are sufficiently flexible to transcend official boundaries. Inelastic cities experience declining demographic, economic, employment, and tax growth. Suburbs gain what the central cities lose. Jurisdictional, cultural, and socioeconomic boundaries combine to work to the advantage of suburbs and the disadvantage of central cities.

These trends are manifested in the stark disparities in income, wealth, and poverty between African Americans and other Americans and among urban African Americans. The rise of young, African American, female-headed households, the burgeoning

employment in edge cities, and the lower incomes of African Americans who obtain college educations and professional training contribute collectively to economic trends in urban status among African Americans. Beyond differences in the incomes of urban African Americans, William O'Hare has also identified critical differences, particularly in urban areas between African American and overall American net worth.³

As Table 3 suggests, African American net worth, the ratio of household assets to liabilities, is nearly 10 times less than for most Americans.

2. Residential segregation and poorer housing continue to define the spatial and locational choices and restricted opportunities of most urban African Americans. Given:

- the historic role of cities as points of entry for American nonwhites;
- the historical patterns of racial segregation of these nonwhites, particularly in industrial cities;
- discriminatory real estate practices, current patterns of inner-city disinvestment and discriminatory public policies at all levels of government often leaving

Table 3. Black and White Households by Net Worth, 1988

Net Worth (in dollars)	Blacks (percent of total)	Whites (percent of total)
Zero or negative	29.1	8.7
1 to 4,999	22.8	13.9
5,000 to 9,999	8.1	5.9
10,000 to 24,999	11.6	11.5
25,000 to 49,999	12.9	13.1
50,000 to 99,999	10.3	17.7
100,000 to 249,999	4.4	19.3
250,000 to 499,999	0.7	6.7
500,000 or more	0.1	3.2
Median net worth	\$4,169	\$43,279
Total Households (in thousands)	10,278	79,169

Source: Bureau of the Census, *Current Population Reports*, p. 70, No. 22
(Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1990)

central cities financially and administratively overwhelmed and inept; and

- the role of increasingly intense inner-city poverty in impeding the financial capacity of central-city residents to rent or buy in suburbs,

sociologists Massey and Denton⁴ combine these structural explanations for both the rise in central city poverty and racial segregation with the racial and class boundaries contributed by a series of federal and local housing policies. They argue that, since low-income housing projects use poverty as a criterion for entry, such projects build concentrated poverty structurally into any neighborhood that contains them. However, beyond public housing, patterns of residential segregation are evident in owner-occupied and rental housing in both inner-city and suburban African American households. The boundary of race and/or poverty

has persisted and transcended purely jurisdictional boundaries.

3. The urban African American political dynamic is increasingly characterized by both continuing increases in the number and distribution of African American elected officials at all levels of urban government and the tyranny of jurisdictional boundary between city and suburb. According to the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, there are currently more than 8,000 African American elected officials in the United States. More than 90 percent of these elected officials serve in city government. Although there is an increasing number of African American elected officials serving both cities with nonblack majorities like Seattle, Washington; Minneapolis, Minnesota; and Dallas, Texas; and suburban enclaves like Howard County, Maryland; Shelby County,

Tennessee; and Broward County, Florida, most urban African American elected officials serve large and small cities with impoverished African American populations.⁵

Three interrelated challenges face these elected officials.

a. The continued erosion of African American political representation in central cities is a problem as the population of these cities declines. Combined with the increasing representation of suburban areas in Congress and in state legislatures, central-city black elected officials face severe challenges in their advocacy of the central city and in their efforts to negotiate through simultaneous racial, class, and jurisdictional boundaries. Following the reappointment of congressional and state legislative districts in Maryland, the two African American members of Congress—Representatives Kweisi Mfume (D-MD) and Albert R. Wynn (D-MD)—faced a split city-county congressional district and a suburban congressional district with a large and diverse African American population, respectively. When Kweisi Mfume became president of the NAACP, state delegate Elijah Cummings succeeded him in this bijkjurisdictional congressional seat.

b. The impact of poverty on the political behavior and opinions of African Americans represents a severe impediment to effective African American political mobilization among the young and, particularly, among the “underclass.”

c. African American elected officials indicate that they must balance central city, suburban, and edge city visions in their political advocacy and legislative proposals. The scale and scope of socioeconomic and racial boundaries have for them become more complex and diverse. Business, industry, new housing development, and public and private infrastructural investment are

proceeding on a more metro-regional basis. Consequently, African American political, business, and professional leaders deeply feel these complex boundary issues as they attempt to engineer self development on a macro, metro, and micro (community-neighborhood) basis. As Neal Peirce indicates in his book *Citistates*, cities and suburbs must make a deal for their mutual survival. Neither can survive alone.⁶

4. The African American urban population is a young population. The median age of blacks was 27.7 years in 1989, nearly five years younger than the median age for all Americans. Within the central city, the median age for blacks is 24.9 years; for other city dwellers, 34.6 years. The younger age structure of the black population creates a momentum for future growth because a larger proportion of blacks than whites is in their childbearing ages. African Americans, particularly in central cities, will continue to grow at a faster rate than whites well into the 21st century, even if fertility, mortality, and migration rates become equal for both groups.

5. Fertility rates, particularly in lower-income, central city, and suburban African American neighborhoods, will continue to be higher than for most Americans, particularly for female teenagers and young adults. The total fertility rate was 32 percent higher for blacks than for whites in 1988—2.4 children per black woman compared with 1.8 children per white woman. In 1988, 64 percent of black babies were born out of wedlock, compared with 18 percent of white babies. In the same year, unmarried white teenagers ages 15 to 17 bore 17 births per 1,000 girls, while unmarried black teenagers bore 74 births per 1,000.⁷

Thus, the micro level of urban black households experiences severe strain. The traditional nuclear family is an endangered

species. Younger parents with less life experience, education, or employment are raising larger proportions of urban African American children. At the micro, or neighborhood level, the church, fraternal organizations, schools, health care organizations, commercial infrastructure, cultural organizations, and other essential institutions erode and stumble as a result of these significant changes in the socioeconomic status of these young people. Age becomes another boundary to reinforce race, class, and jurisdiction.

6. Mortality and health continue to challenge urban African Americans. Not only is the life expectancy of an African American six to eight years less than for other Americans (69.2 years versus 77.9 years), but also African Americans, particularly African American males, are more likely to die from acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS) or, between the ages of 15 and 29, to be victims of homicides. Crime continues to be a pervasive reality in urban African American communities and fear of crime inside and beyond these communities reifies racial, class, and jurisdictional boundaries in the regional metropolis.⁸

7. African American families in cities continue to experience restructuring and stress. O'Hare argues that:

"While the vast majority of the 10 million African American households are family households (that is, the household members are related by birth, marriage, or adoptions), only about half the families were headed by a married couple in 1990, down from 68 percent in 1970 and 56 percent in 1980." These trends profoundly affect all members of the urban African American community: men, women, youth, and the elderly and, most dramatically, children. The proportion of African American children living with two parents declined from 58% in 1970 to 38% in 1990. By the year 2000, the proportion

of African American children living with both parents will decline to 24%.

8. Urban public schools continue to experience the double trauma of declining academic performance, particularly among African American children, and declining financial, professional, and moral support. Declining academic performance among African American children is particularly evident in many of the nation's largest school districts where they are the vast majority of the students: roughly 90 percent in Atlanta, Detroit, Washington, D.C., and other public school systems. These challenges have reached the inner-ring suburbs, those suburbs adjacent to central cities, and threaten to pervade the metropolis. The continuing struggle over public school financing, the advocacy of charter and private schools, proposals for voucher systems and, in some instances, the takeover of large central city public schools by state government or courts reflect the conflicts over race, class, and jurisdictional boundaries.⁹

9. Environmental degradation is an increasingly alarming artifact of urban life for African Americans. Although environmental issues are most often associated with endangered species of flora and fauna, many African Americans experience the combination of:

- exposure to increasing levels of lead poisoning, asbestos, and radon; exposure to the disproportionate siting of noxious facilities such as sewer treatment plants, garbage dumps, landfills, incinerators, hazardous waste disposal sites, lead smelters, and other risky technologies;
- the location of large African American communities in areas designated as "non-attainment areas" for air pollution by the 1992 Clean Air Act amendments; and
- the exposure of African Americans to the severe health consequences of water pol-

lution collectively create a deadly environment of risk in urban black America far in excess of risks experienced by most animal species.

In his book, *Dumping in Dixie*, Robert Bullard categorized these problems with environmental justice into procedural, geographical, and social inequities.¹⁰

10. Urban black America has a profound and perennial stake in a viable and vibrant national urban policy. Recent attempts by President Clinton to promote "empowerment zones," economic stimulus, and greater investment in infrastructure, particularly in the nation's metropolitan areas, have met with both congressional opposition and intense lobbying by interest groups not as interested in central city development. The basic impact of these proposed policies is not only economic but also human: they represent an investment in the human infrastructure of central cities or a kind of human boundary reformulation through racial, socioeconomic, and educational development. However, the development of the urban African American community is a joint venture of both public policy and the determined mobilization of African American households and institutions.

These 10 challenges are metaphors for those faced by Hispanic, Asian, and native Americans in the regional metropolis. Ten challenges also define boundary as a reified combination of race, class, residential location, and jurisdiction, all combining to create a negative meaning of boundary in the metropolis. From this perspective, diversity would not be considered a strength but a dangerous liability in the eyes of many metro dwellers. Rampaging stereotypes of criminal behavior, sloth, illiteracy, and inattentiveness to clean and quiet neighborhoods pervade the minds of many on one side of this boundary. Racism, financial selfishness, exploitation, and resistance dominate the stereotypes on the other side of the boundary.

Redefining Metropolis by Boundary Reform

The mere description of these 10 trends wraps a cloak of apparent deep darkness around the boundaries of urban black America. Destruction, decay, and atrophy seem intractable. But, beneath these trends persist thousands of initiatives and actions promoting the survival and viability of households, neighborhoods, cities, and metropolitan African American communities. Despite sharp and devastating declines in federal assistance to cities or corporate investment in the last 12 years, many of these initiatives mobilize citizen resources, not to transcend but to redefine boundaries: churches, corporations, foundations, and nonprofit institutions. These citizens and institutions adamantly confront a range of complex and ominous challenges while shifting the meaning and messages embedded in negative metro boundaries.

Their light flows from a dynamic, restless, stirring, spiritual reservoir deep within those who care, not only within the African American community, about racial, class, and jurisdictional division in the metropolis but also, ultimately, themselves. Many of these actions occur within neighborhood or community boundaries. But many are linked to metropolitan development or seek to go through and beyond neighborhood or jurisdictional boundaries.

In East Palo Alto, California, a predominantly African American municipality seeks to reach across racial, educational, and county boundaries to create economic programs for the residents of this town of 18,500. Town leaders pursue San Mateo and Santa Clara counties, Stanford University in Palo Alto, California, the Silicon Valley communities, and the United States government in their desire to refine the racial, class, and jurisdictional boundaries in which they live.

The first National Environmental Summit for People of Color convened in Washington, D.C. in October 1991, under the leadership of the Commission on Racial Justice, the Environmental Equity Task Force, and urban environmental analysts and leaders like Carl Anthony, Robert Bullard, and Charles Lee. During and since that summit, many urban environmental projects, programs, and coalitions have emerged in the midst of serious urban conditions. In Maryland, a unique coalition has emerged between the Baltimore Urban League under the leadership of Roger Lyons and the Chesapeake Bay Foundation under the leadership of Will Baker. With the support of the Morris Goldseker Foundation, this inner-city environmental partnership will pursue urban environmental education, environmental employment development, urban revitalization through more balanced metropolitan growth strategies, and toxic waste reduction in Baltimore City and surrounding counties. African Americans in Baltimore City are now more conscious of their place in the Chesapeake Bay ecological watershed and are shifting their conception of their boundaries. Similarly, leaders and staff of the Chesapeake Bay Foundation have reoriented their regional conception of boundary to include inner city communities.

Another creative approach taken to the reconstruction of boundary is through historic preservation. A sparkling example of the combination of the development of consciousness about the history of African American urban community through historic preservation and the cultivation of a local self-development ethos is the development of old but historically significant geographic areas and structures in African American neighborhoods and central business districts. There are two generic kinds of historic districts:

- those that are listed in the National Register of Historic Places pursuant to the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966; and

- districts created or regulated by local or state governments pursuant to state enabling legislation.

Historic preservation not only promotes consciousness of the historic significance and evolution of urban neighborhoods and commercial areas but also increases commerce, raises property values, promotes investment in the city, and may serve to attract the patronage and support of citizens throughout the metropolis. History and current function coalesce in a mutually-reinforcing partnership and boundaries are reformulated.

Two examples of historic preservation as contemporary self-development and metropolitan boundary reform include the Sweet Auburn Historic District in Atlanta and the Orchard Street Church Development in Baltimore. In the early 1890s, the Auburn Street area in Atlanta became a focal point for black business development. It became to blacks what downtown Atlanta had become for whites. It also was the commercial point at which white and black downtown met both to infuse black businesses with white products and to broker the employment of blacks in menial and semi-skilled trades in the white part of downtown. Black and white downtown districts functioned virtually side by side. Many of the original buildings were destroyed in a huge fire in 1917 but were replaced by larger and grander buildings. By the 1920s, Auburn Avenue became known as the wealthiest black street in America, thus earning its name, "Sweet Auburn."

Beginning with the late 1950s Sweet Auburn experienced rapid decline; little building renovation or new development occurred. Then, in 1977, part of Auburn Avenue west of the downtown expressway was designated the Sweet Auburn Historic District. The area between the District and the Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Landmark was named a historic conservation district under Georgia law. Slowly, com-

bined with local community organizations and financial and institutional support throughout the Atlanta metropolitan area, the historic preservation designation facilitated both a commercial renewal and a tenacious self-development spirit in this vital black community. What is significant is that support for the historic institutions in this community comes from the metropolis, thus redefining the boundaries as channels for resource exchange.

In Baltimore, the Urban League affiliate acquired the property rights to the abandoned, 19th century Orchard Street Church at the intersection of two historic African American neighborhoods. The league not only successfully advocated historic designation for the church but renovated the building as its metropolitan headquarters. *Architectural Digest* and other magazines identify Orchard Street as a brilliant example of historic preservation, community consciousness, current function and self-development potential. The church headquarters enables the Urban League to realize its mission to serve the community and city. But the building has constructively shifted the boundaries of race, class, and jurisdiction by providing a facility to which metropolitan business and community leaders come and has become a kind of tourist attraction to many outside of this vital Baltimore City neighborhood.

Redefining Diversity and Boundary in the Regional Metropolis

These examples illustrate the essential and recurring elements of urban self development and metropolitan boundary redefinition. Boundary is now becoming less a barrier and more a focal point of economic, cultural, political, and infrastructural exchanges across the metropolis. Boundaries are not just limits and barriers but points at

which cultural, socioeconomic, and historical intelligence and information about the varied constituencies and communities in the metropolitan region may be identified and gathered. Information and intelligence are vital ingredients for creative boundary reconstruction, reformulation, and renaissance. They bring inner city and suburban community together. They bridge central city and suburban and edge city leadership. They make possible the pursuit of five essential components for metropolitan social transformation.

1. Collective community resolve. Deep from within the spirit of those pursuing the social, economic, political, and cultural development of the African American community is a collective resolve undaunted by the encroachments and setbacks of crime, reduced government support, or institutional atrophy. Banking, foundation, nonprofit, and leadership institutions from across the metropolis have creatively committed to this resolve. Boundary is not barrier but resource to these efforts.

2. Pervasive transformation. No concept of self development pursued across boundaries ultimately succeeds by benefiting only a fleeting segment of its community. Class divisions and conflicts within the African American community have historically impeded development. But the emergence of leadership within and beyond the geographical confines of the African American community contribute substantially to efforts to transform the socioeconomic foundation of its communities. African Americans living in suburban communities continue to transcend jurisdictional and class boundaries to lend support to inner-city African American communities.

3. Dynamic coalitions. As the current trade status of the United States indicates, no successful nation can thrive without diplomacy, trade, and alliance. Urban black America requires strategic coalitions to promote self development. Those coalitions

proceed on mutual self interest and on the maintenance of community vision and interdependence. Metropolitan coalitions are emerging through urban America defying historical boundaries of race, class, and jurisdiction while promoting socioeconomic transformation in both African American and other communities in the metro region.

4. Developmental entrepreneurship.

Much rhetoric about black business pervades public policy and dialogue in the African American community. However, urban African American entrepreneurship is ultimately useless without making more than money in the community. Constructive employment, quality services, physical infrastructural development, environmental consciousness, youth development, historic preservation, institutional development, and, most importantly, a sense of opportunity and mobility through the metropolitan region must ultimately animate business as communities are both empowered by urban entrepreneurs and linked across communities in the metropolis.

5. Constructive, creative, and consistent use of public policy. In its 1997 session, the Maryland General Assembly passed Governor Parris Glendening's Smart Growth and Neighborhood Conservation Act; the act designates all municipalities in Maryland as "priority funding areas," thus making these places eligible for certain state funds related to growth and discouraging urban sprawl. While controversial and flawed, this new statute is an example of creative approaches to redefining racial, class, and jurisdictional boundaries in metropolitan growth policy. The priority funding areas urge growth and revitalization in already-built areas, thus providing a policy resource for the restoration of big and small inner city communities. Although voluntary citizen initiative is always the preferred way to reconstruct metropolitan racial, class, and jurisdictional boundaries, public policy is also a vital resource capable of contrib-

uting substantially to this end.

These five components not only address the obvious diversity and shameful disparities resulting from negative boundary definition in the metropolis, but seek to reconceptualize and reformulate boundary and diversity as assets and resources available to the entire metropolis. No regional initiative will be ultimately successful without this vibrant and vital kind of metropolitan diversity. ■

Notes

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