Demographic Dynamism and Metropolitan Change: Comparing Los Angeles, New York, Chicago, and Washington, DC

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Abstract

The fluid dimensions of demographic status—age, career progression over time, geographic redistribution, and growing duration of residence—have not been sufficiently recognized in urban theory and policy. Demographic dynamism deserves special attention because it is through the presumed consequences for people that we judge the desirability of economic, political, and physical changes in a city. To explore the magnitude and significance of these issues, population dynamics and associated poverty and homeownership trends in four major metropolitan regions are compared.

Los Angeles may be changing more rapidly, but its dynamics only accentuate trends under way elsewhere. Rising proportions of the population that are neither in the white "majority" nor black "minority," the low proportion of longtime residents, and the new challenge of immigration call into question fundamental assumptions about links between people and urban policy. The meaning of both poverty trends and homeownership attainments must be reassessed.

Keywords: Demographics; Homeownership; Minorities

Introduction

It is through the consequences for people that we judge the desirability of economic, political, and physical changes in cities. For that reason, accurate measurement and interpretation of changes in social and demographic conditions are extremely important. The risk is that social and demographic changes will be misinterpreted and used to support erroneous urban policies. So powerful are these changes in major metropolitan areas that they dominate our social indicators of well-being. Failure to grasp the significance of demographic changes can lead to failure to design appropriate and effective urban policies.

Urban theory places little emphasis on demographic change and how residents' well-being changes over time. One explanation for this stance is the choice dilemma posed by the dichotomy between "people" and "place" perspectives on urban change. Urban theorists and policy makers favor a place perspective that emphasizes the conditions of cities and how they change over time. The characteris-

tics of residents are examined, for the most part, only as a means of gauging the conditions in the places where they live. By contrast, an alternative viewpoint emphasizes the life chances of people themselves, apart from the trends in their current place of residence.

Demographic dynamism is a term used here to emphasize the fluid dimensions of demographic status that change over a person's lifetime—age, geographic location, duration of residence, and housing or economic careers—in contrast to static demographic characteristics such as gender or race, which are largely invariant over a lifetime. References made to changing demographics usually pertain to a changing population composition made up of different racial groups. Demographic dynamism includes that factor but extends also to the changes experienced *within* the existing population as people grow older and live longer in their current place of residence. Both the changing composition of the city and the longitudinal experience of its residents are important to urban policy.

Los Angeles is often singled out as an urban area undergoing dramatic economic and demographic change. However, other major metropolitan areas may be experiencing similar forces. In this article, I compare Los Angeles with New York, Chicago, and Washington, DC. The principal argument advanced here is that the apparent differences between Los Angeles and the others only accentuate demographic dynamics also present in New York, Chicago, and Washington, DC. Once understood in exaggerated form in Los Angeles, the same factors become visible in the other cities as well.

Perhaps of greater significance is how the major features highlighted in Los Angeles lead us to view the problems of cities differently. Demographic change has been viewed, for the most part, with considerable rigidity and pessimism. Recent trends have been interpreted as signs of decline and social failure. Once grasped, the lessons to be learned from Los Angeles are more positive. This new evidence reflects a healthy demographic dynamism that should be fostered as a source of solutions to urban problems, not used solely as justification for despair. Nevertheless, certain burdens fall disproportionately on cities in rapid change, which deserve assistance if they are to help their residents achieve the upward mobility this article shows is possible.

Many lessons can be learned by viewing cities through the lens of demographic dynamism. One pertains to a reassessment of the assumption of population stability that links people and place-based policies. The course of people's lives flows through different urban areas and is not contained by a single location for a lifetime. The lessons learned also extend to exposing the black-white paradigm

bias that underestimates the significance of growing ethnic diversity. The lessons include the pervasive effects of immigration, not just in its volume, but in the impact of recency of arrival followed by growing settlement. And the lessons include as well new insights about the prevalence of upward mobility in the city, particularly as illustrated by immigrants. All of these insights are highlighted in the case of Los Angeles, but data for each of the other regions reveal similar dynamics at work in all.

Demographic dynamism and urban theory

State of urban theory

Contemporary urban theory emphasizes economic and political dimensions, along with spatial relations, more than it does social behavior and social outcomes. There is good reason for this. The increasing global integration of the economy has unleashed restructuring forces that are remaking urban areas. An international division of labor is leading to polarized job opportunities and spatial rearrangements of jobs and residences in the city. In turn, political interest groups compete for new opportunities and seek to displace new burdens onto others. In this sense, the well-being of urban residents can be viewed as indicating how the benefits and costs of restructuring are distributed.

Much urban theory and policy, coming out of Midwestern- or Eastern-based analyses, is concerned with how a skills/jobs mismatch has led to increasing unemployment of working-class black men who are left behind in deindustrialized inner cities (Jargowsky 1997; Kain 1992; Kasarda 1988; Wilson 1987). This framework is stretched to its limits when it is applied to major immigrant-receiving metropolitan areas such as Los Angeles or New York. The immigrant population is a working poor, rather than an underclass.

In contrast to urban theories based on the modern city wracked by deindustrialization and outmigration, an emerging Los Angeles school of thought has pushed urban scholars to look to the complexity of Los Angeles for hints of a new urban reality (Dear, Schockman, and Hise 1996; Scott and Soja 1996). In doing so, these scholars have challenged the Rustbelt/Sunbelt, city/suburb, local/global, industrial/postindustrial, and black/white notions that underlie most urban theory and policy. The new Los Angeles school has successfully challenged old assumptions about economic structure and space. Yet these scholars have yet to incorporate one of the most vital dimensions underlying their city—the demographic dynamism of a population in flux. The neglect of this dimension amid the con-

certed attention to urban restructuring is ironic, for demographic dynamism may be one of the most vital lessons to be drawn from Los Angeles.

Population factor

It is well understood that population recomposition has accompanied the changes in economic activity. What is not understood is how fully integrated these demographic changes are with the broader forces of restructuring or how much the demographic changes are embedded in our measurements and interpretations of social outcomes. The dynamics and consequences of contemporary demographic changes have simply not been comprehended. Two decades ago, William Alonso (1980) called attention to the population factor and urban structure, emphasizing the role of demographic change as a driver of other urban changes. He spoke principally about the aging of the baby boom generation, falling household sizes, and new migration patterns within the United States.

When Alonso was writing, the major demographic change of the late 20th century—immigration—had yet to make its effects felt. How immigration should be incorporated is a particular challenge to contemporary urban theory and policy. More than just adding immigrants to the discussion, the intersection of immigration with racial change, poverty, and housing problems forces a reconceptualization of those very issues. As Roger Waldinger (1989), who has studied immigration in both Los Angeles and New York, has observed: "[I]n a sense, much of the sociological research on the new immigration to the United States is about people who just happen to live in cities. Today one could argue that much of urban theory and policy is about cities who just happen to have people living in them" (211). After a concerted effort to direct sociologists' and others' attention to ethnic changes in Los Angeles, those who describe themselves as urban theorists are only beginning to take these factors into account (Waldinger and Bozorgmehr 1996).

To date, however, Alonso's argument that demographic changes were integral to changes in urban structure has been largely disregarded, regardless of the extensive body of social research in cities. In practice, the demographic factor has been excluded as an important element of urban theory and policy. A current illustration of this neglect is Robert Fishman's (1999) poll of 149 urban specialists regarding the top ten influences on the American metropolis of the past 50 years. Demographic factors were scarcely visible to these urbanists; instead they highlighted mass-produced suburban tract housing and the enclosed shopping mall. Similarly, the recent collection on urban theory by Fainstein and Campbell (1996) ignored demographics in most chapters and, when addressing race in only two, focused on black-white differences. Two other collections of ur-

ban theory writings on Los Angeles emphasized a broader set of ethnic groups (Dear, Schockman, and Hise 1996; Scott and Soja 1996), but where attention was given to demographic factors, it was focused on the most static dimensions. Race, gender, and class are personal descriptors that change little, if at all, over a person's lifetime. By contrast, virtually ignored in urban theory are the fluid dimensions of demographic status: age, family status, career trajectories, and for immigrants, increasing duration of residence.

This attention to only the most static of demographic factors is contradictory to the spirit of contemporary urban theory that emphasizes restructuring (Soja 1996). Among Los Angeles scholars, many have observed that the "demographic metamorphosis of the region during this period was as dramatic and far-reaching as its industrial restructuring" (Ong and Blumenfeld 1996, 324). Others have pointed out that demographic changes and changing life chances may be a more important part of urban restructuring than economic restructuring (Sandercock 1998). Indeed, demographic changes and economic restructuring are closely coupled via a migration process that imports labor to fill expanding occupational niches (Scott 1996). Even if economic restructuring is a root cause of demographic change, the latter deserves our special attention because it is through the consequences for people that we typically judge the desirability of economic change.

People versus place orientations

One explanation for why urban theory places little emphasis on demographic change and, at most, addresses only static demographics like race is the choice dilemma posed by the dichotomy between people and place perspectives on urban change. Urban theorists and researchers favor a place perspective that emphasizes the conditions of cities and how they change over time. The potential conflict between "place prosperity" and "people prosperity" has long been recognized (Winnick 1966). The core issue is that a locality's residents do not remain the same over time, and the lifetime trends experienced by residents often diverge markedly from the place trends. Explicit attention to the people being served by planners could also lead to substantial differences in planning policies.

One problem emphasized by Edel (1980) is that place-targeting of public programs (such as entitlement zones) is an inaccurate way to target people in need: "[I]nitially ineligible people become beneficiaries by their place of residence, while some intended beneficiaries are excluded for the same reason" (178). In high-growth areas, in particular, newcomers often arrive to take advantage of the place-targeted benefits, displacing the original residents for whom the programs were intended. For example, a study in Atlanta found

that the benefits of employment programs intended for local black young adults were often intercepted by the high volume of new migrants, many of them also black (Sawicki and Moody 1997).

The longer the period of analysis, the more important the people versus place distinction becomes. Normal processes of mobility can lead to substantial population turnover after a decade or more. Even if the city's population remains constant, new arrivals usually have characteristics systematically different from those who are departing. Or, even if the newcomers resemble those they replace, their newness implies that their situation is unrelated to any benefits or experiences previously provided to residents in that location.

The trends recorded for a place can differ dramatically from the trends experienced by the people themselves. For example, a recent study of upward mobility patterns in Los Angeles found that successive waves of arrivals moved between places as their status increased (Myers 1999a). At a given point in time, measurement of residents' characteristics includes the most disadvantaged newcomers to a city but not the more advantaged "graduates" from the place. When the influx of disadvantaged newcomers is growing or when the departure of upwardly mobile residents is increasing, the city's average economic status will decline over time. This leads to an odd paradox: The downward trend for the place is the opposite indicator of the upward trend enjoyed by the residents themselves.

There is certainly nothing wrong—and a lot good—with studying places and with using more accessible data. However, urban scholars must always beware of the potential biases of a people-place discordance. If at all possible, we should avoid forming misleading conclusions about the life chances of people when we have studied only the characteristics of residents found in a particular place at a particular time.

Black-white conceptions of race

One clear-cut illustration of how demographic change is ignored by urban theory is the maintenance of a black-white conception of race. Even though most sociologists and scholars of ethnicity have now turned to a multiethnic and multifaceted concept of race, urban scholars for the most part retain the view of an earlier time. During the civil rights revolution and urban disturbances of the 1960s, the problem of race in America meant the problem of how to incorporate blacks into white America. The experiences of this decade left a strong and lasting impression on the scholarly and political outlook of today's senior urban scholars.

Since 1970, numerous other racial and ethnic groups have burgeoned in number, because of immigration from Asia, Mexico and

Latin America, Africa and the Caribbean, and Europe and the Middle East. These newcomers have not fit easily into the preset mold of black-white relations. Africans, West Indians, and Haitians resist being cast as blacks (Waters 1994), while Asians resist the model minority label (Cheng and Yang 1996), and Latino leaders are ambivalent about whether their group should be treated as disadvantaged like the black underclass or held up as a model of self-sufficient striving (Massey 1993; Skerry 1993).

Despite the changing ethnic makeup and a consensus among scholars of ethnicity, many urban researchers and policy makers have held to a simpler black-white focus. In part, this is warranted by the persistence of severe black disadvantages and by the continuing black-white makeup of many cities and regions. However, accommodating the new multiethnic urban America requires new thinking, not simply about the meaning of race, but also about the recent origins and dynamic changes accompanying many rapidly growing groups. As will be shown, the old, static black-white paradigm applies poorly in Los Angeles, and it is becoming less useful in other major cities as well.

Life-cycle trajectories in the city

An inherent difficulty is that the data used by urban researchers reinforces a place orientation, since data are collected and reported for specific locations at a moment in time. Indeed, the constitutional mandate for conducting the decennial census is to count the population in specific jurisdictions for purposes of political representation by place. Much less often are data assembled for special subject groups of the population (e.g., the elderly), although this can be accomplished by rearranging the place-based data. Most urban analysts remain content to study the more accessible data describing place characteristics instead.

How can we conceptualize changes for the individual residents of cities? One strategy is to collect individual life histories that provide deep insights into how life chances interact with the changing structure of opportunity in the city. An excellent example is Rocco (1996), who summarizes the results of extensive ethnographic research and the life histories of 90 Latino families over a number of years. These interviews illustrate in human detail how families' experiences have been shaped by economic restructuring. By its nature this qualitative research is limited in scope, but not in depth. We cannot know how well this limited sample reflects the experience of most Latinos or of other groups. But Rocco's contribution illustrates how much could be learned if a broad-based demographic analysis were coupled with such an in-depth qualitative analysis (Cranford 1999).

An alternative to tracing individual life histories is the cohort longitudinal approach, a means of describing the average trajectory of large groups of people through time (Myers 1999b). The rates of change within cohorts measure the average life course experience of specific groups of people, tracking net changes for them as they grow older and reside longer in an area. Readily available census data are used to group residents into cohorts defined by their age or by their decade of arrival in the United States. When these cohorts are observed at two points in time, changes can be traced for each group as it grows older, lives longer in the United States, and gains more experience. Differences can also be observed between successive cohorts that are following higher or lower trajectories (such as between those ages 25 to 34 in 1980 and the next cohort entering that age in 1990).

A potential drawback is that cohort measurements risk some bias because of outmigration from an urban area. If attrition from a cohort is substantial and if those who leave the study area are different from those who stay, then the changes observed for cohorts could be biased representations of average experience over time. The most extreme example would be that if all the "failures" left the area, the status of remaining cohort members would rise markedly. More typically, it is the "successes" who depart a locality as part of their upward mobility, leading to underestimates of progress observed among those who remain. In the analysis that follows, the boundaries are drawn to enclose entire regions in the study area, thus capturing the residential mobility between city and suburbs. Nevertheless, the circular migration between Mexico and the United States, for example, could substantially alter the makeup of cohort members remaining over time. Fortunately, as discussed in Myers and Lee (1998), analysis of education trends and other factors within cohorts in the Los Angeles region does not reveal substantial bias over time. Moreover, even if cohort measurements are inevitably biased to some degree, they provide a more accurate and comprehensive depiction of trends than either cross-sectional measurements or locally available life histories (Myers 1999b).

Urban change transpires not only through the changes recorded as existing cohorts progress forward in time, but also through the compositional change created as new cohorts arrive. New cohorts are formed by the arrival of new groups of people, such as through migration, through birth into childhood, or through maturation into adulthood. When combined with the departure of former residents, whether through outmigration, death, graduation from school, or retirement from the labor force, the total mix of the population (labor force, public school students, etc.) will change through this replacement process. In the case of immigration, a city can see dra-

matic changes caused by the arrival of new waves with very different characteristics than those of previous residents.

None of the literature on urban theory makes these distinctions about sources of observed change. Instead, for the most part, authors either focus on demographic differences at a single point in time or focus on overall changes recorded across a decade. The danger is that researchers cannot draw a clear interpretation of how residents' experiences may have changed over time. Some of the change in an outcome indicator such as poverty or employment may be due to the impact of restructuring on the overall economy, some may be due to a changing mix of the population residing in the region, and some may be due to the changes in life trajectories of specific population groups. Failing to recognize these possibilities, previous writers have tended to ascribe *all* of the observed differences to one dimension or another. Myers (1999a) provides a detailed analysis of how policies can be misinformed in this way.

Comparison of four cities

Our theories of urban change and our beliefs about good urban policy are rooted in the experiences of particular cities, which may or may not be typical. Chicago has long been the prototype for understanding the large industrial city in 20th-century America. This position stems from its place as the site of the Chicago school in sociology and urban studies. New York is also seen as important for its great size and for its role as a financial and media center, and because it serves as a principal gateway for immigrants to America. The Big Apple exemplifies trends toward economic polarization, with pockets of wealthy reinvestment set amidst poverty and the continuing struggle against urban decline (Sassen 1991). A third city, Washington, DC, exerts a subtle influence on urban policy because it provides the urban experience shared by federal policy makers, against which they informally test their implicit assumptions of urban reality.

Los Angeles is often treated as more exceptional than these other cities. It is perceived as newer, rapidly growing, lower-density (more uniformly "suburban"), and less industrialized. However, Los Angeles is the prototype for a different kind of city, one increasingly prominent in the late 20th century, but not the type of older city facing decline that draws the attention of federal problem solvers. Los Angeles is the paragon of sprawling cities throughout the sunbelt and located even on the growing edge of otherwise large, stagnant northern cities.

Despite the perceived differences, Los Angeles is also treated as similar to the comparison cities. Like New York, Los Angeles is a gateway for immigrants and is ethnically diverse. Like the other cities, it shares problems of poverty and economic polarization, racial segregation, and housing affordability. Both views may be true: Los Angeles can be very different and at the same time have similar problems. But the very nature of those common problems is transformed by the different context of Los Angeles, implying not only different causes and outcomes, but also a different understanding of what the problems mean.

As will be shown, these apparent differences only accentuate features also present in New York, Chicago, and Washington, DC. Once understood in exaggerated form in the case of Los Angeles, the same factors become visible in these other cities as well. In addition, the Los Angeles model already well represents growing cities in both the United States and the developing world, and the changes seen in Los Angeles may be a precursor of changes to come in other cities.

Data and geographic definitions

Comparing Los Angeles with New York, Chicago, and Washington, DC, yields important clues, and some surprising findings on the influence of demographic changes. For this comparison, we use both 1980 and 1990 census data, so that we can compare not only differences at one point in time, but also rates of change. The Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS) data files for 1980 and 1990 permit highly detailed analysis through custom tabulations and provide very large sample sizes for some relatively small groups. More current data, from the Current Population Survey (CPS), have a sample size only about one-hundredth as large. Also, the CPS does not include as consistent a set of variables over time (such as year of immigrant arrival). Pending the release in 2002 of detailed data from the 2000 census, much can be learned from studying the dynamics of change recorded in the last two censuses. Indeed, lessons uncovered here may serve to guide analysis of the 1990 to 2000 period once the necessary data are available.

A basic principle of spatial area analysis is that the smaller and more fine-grained the spatial areas defined, the more extreme the variations among them. Similarly, changes are often much more dramatic in narrowly bounded areas than in larger cities or whole regions. In the latter, sharp local variations tend to average out. Thus, a focus on broad regions affords a much more conservative view of urban changes than a focus on selected small communities and neighborhoods. Substantial changes recorded at the metropoli-

tan scale are all the more remarkable for the breadth of the regions involved. The analysis of whole regions also affords a more conservative estimate of demographic dynamism and a more conservative test of the discrepancies between people and place perspectives alleged above.

Each of the four cities is defined as a broad region that approximates a Consolidated Metropolitan Statistical Area (CMSA). An obstacle to defining exact CMSAs with PUMS data is that the geographic building blocks are restricted to areas of at least 100,000 people; hence, it is often necessary to take in larger territories on the periphery of the region than would otherwise be desired. The chief objective in defining city regions is twofold: first, to develop a geographic area delineation for each region that is identical for 1980 and 1990, and second, to make that area large enough to include not only the central city but virtually all of the suburbs. For the most part, I have adopted a set of metropolitan area delineations developed by Ellis, Reibel, and Wright (1997) for use with 1980 and 1990 PUMS data. (The Los Angeles region also includes San Diego County.) Whenever the term "cities" is used, it is always meant to imply these PUMS-based greater city regions that resemble CMSAs.

Growth and racial/ethnic composition change

Population growth. Two of the city regions (New York and Los Angeles) are much larger than the others, but more important is the fact that two of them are growing more rapidly (Washington, DC, and Los Angeles). New York and Chicago barely changed at all in total population between 1980 and 1990, whereas Los Angeles grew by 26.9 percent and Washington, DC, by 16.4 percent. As a context for urban policy making, these differences in growth rate are likely much more important than total population size.

Los Angeles stands out for its high population growth (table 1). None of the four major racial/ethnic groups declined in number: Whites even increased by nearly half a million, while Latinos increased by more than 2 million. In fact, the increase in Latinos is truly exceptional: It is four times greater than the growth of any other racial/ethnic group in any of the four regions. The sources of this exceptional growth are commented on in a later section.

In the Chicago region, total population fell by 0.6 percent, and both white and black populations declined by even greater amounts, 5.8 percent and 2.1 percent, respectively. Similarly, in New York, the white population also fell, by 7.5 percent, but the black population

Table 1. **Growth of Regional Population by Race-Ethnicity, 1980 to 1990**

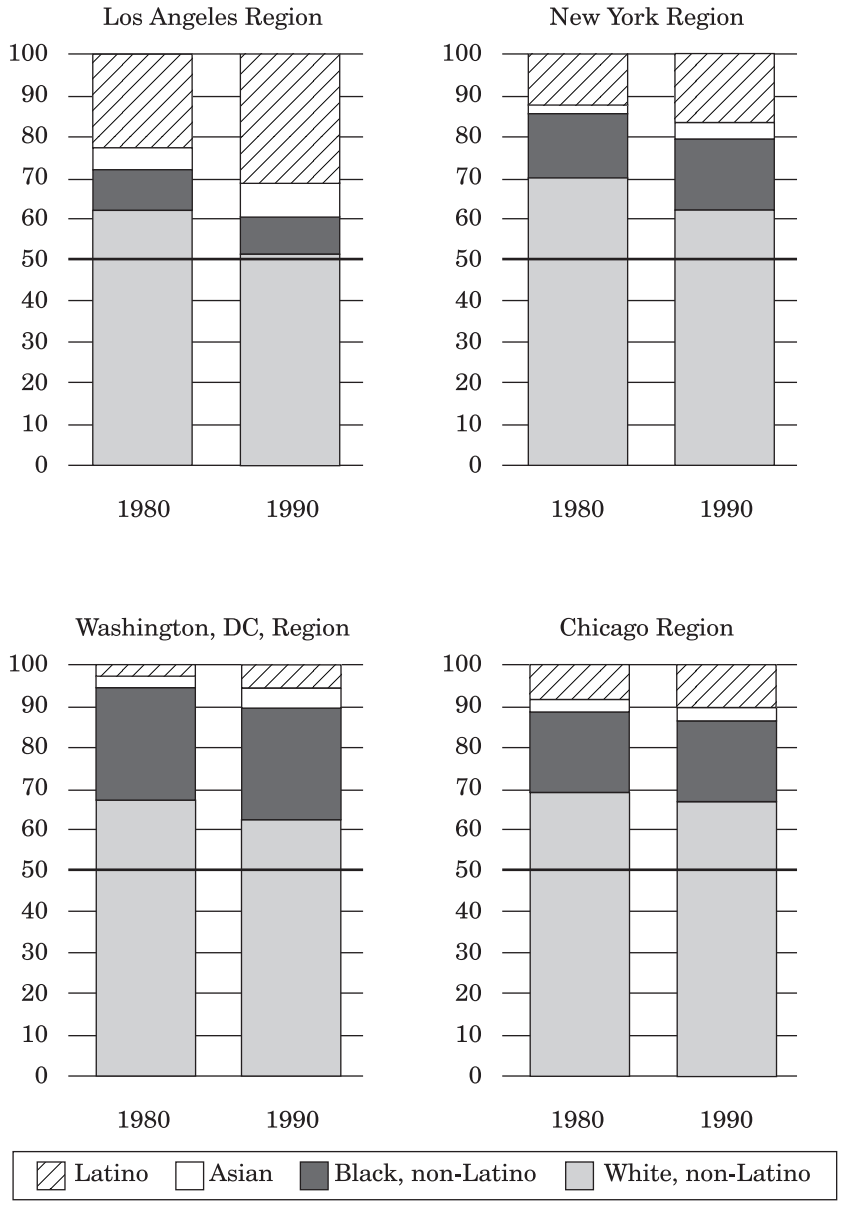
	Los Angeles Region			New York Region		
	1980	1990	Growth (%)	1980	1990	Growth (%)
White, non-Latino	8,440,940	8,919,490	5.7	12,229,920	11,314,356	−7.5
Black, non-Latino	1,154,480	1,314,951	13.9	2,727,080	2,978,997	9.2
Other	140,540	148,811	5.9	46,900	68,641	46.4
Asian	696,720	1,543,171	121.5	402,320	863,476	114.6
Latino	3,050,520	5,179,175	69.8	2,077,820	2,655,300	27.8
Total	13,483,200	17,105,598	26.9	17,484,040	17,880,770	2.3
	Washington, DC, Region			Chicago Region		
	1980	1990	Growth (%)	1980	1990	Growth (%)
White, non-Latino	2,200,360	2,365,231	7.5	5,526,800	5,207,337	−5.8
Black, non-Latino	875,020	1,026,697	17.3	1,555,220	1,522,753	−2.1
Other	15,860	13,076	−17.6	19,420	18,579	−4.3
Asian	89,340	200,164	124.0	158,480	251,447	58.7
Latino	94,780	208,173	119.6	636,360	852,412	34.0
Total	3,275,360	3,813,341	16.4	7,896,280	7,852,528	−0.6

increased. In the other regions, white and black populations increased but by much less than the other groups. In fact, in all four regions, the white population increased less than all other groups. The highest rate of population growth in each region was among populations of Asian origin, ranging from 58.7 percent in Chicago to 124.0 percent in Washington, DC. The Latino population grew by 34.0 percent in Chicago and 119.6 percent in Washington, DC. Some of these high percentage increases are distorted by the small base from which the group expanded, however.

Racial/ethnic composition. The result of these differential growth rates is a substantial reshaping of the racial composition of the four cities. Figure 1 depicts their racial composition in both 1980 and 1990. Three major differences stand out: First, in Los Angeles, the white share of the population has fallen to close to 50 percent, despite growing by nearly half a million persons. In the other cities, the white share did not decline as sharply from 1980 to 1990; nor did it reach as low a level by 1990.

A second difference is that the black share of the population is much lower in Los Angeles, amounting to less than 8 percent. By contrast, the black share in 1990 was 27 percent in Washington, DC, 20 percent in Chicago, and 16 percent in New York. In fact, the black share of the population in Los Angeles is now the smallest of

Figure 1. **Racial Composition in 1980 and 1990 (Percentage of Total Population in Each Racial/Ethnic Group)**



all four major racial/ethnic groups, exceeded even by that of Asians, who elsewhere are outnumbered by blacks by three to one, or more.

Third, what compresses the other groups to such small shares in Los Angeles is the unusually large and growing number of Latinos,

whose share of the population increased from 23 to 30 percent between 1980 and 1990. In the other cities, the next largest Latino share is found in New York, where it is only 15 percent. Waldinger and Bozorgmehr (1996) have commented on the relative dominance of this one group (mostly Mexican in origin) in Los Angeles, contrasting it to the more diverse composition found in New York.

Overall, the black-white conception of racial composition fits least well in Los Angeles. Both the small size of the black population and the declining share held by the white population lead to much greater relative significance for the Asian and especially the Latino populations. Yet the growing Asian and Latino populations in the other cities are heading in the same direction, merely lagging behind by a decade or two. As discussed below, the multiethnic balance in Los Angeles creates a different policy context from the black-white dominance of the other cities.

Migration history

A major unstated premise of urban theory or policy is that the changes observed for cities over time reflect the experiences of their residents over time. The key underlying assumption is that the great majority of residents have lived out their lives in the regions where they now reside, so that their lives have been intertwined with the changing conditions of the places where they live. This assumption implies that most current residents were born and grew up in the region where they now live and that only a relatively small proportion are newcomers. In fact, evidence presented here shows that many residents have moved into their current urban area from other parts of the United States or from other nations. The relative permanence of the population differs between the four cities as well as between racial/ethnic groups. Thus, the discordance discussed above between people and place prosperity is greater in some cases than in others.

As a test of the premise, data for the adult population aged 25 and older in 1990 were assembled. These adults have had at least two decades of life experience, including enough time to relocate from their region of birth and childhood. Local regions of birth are defined somewhat more broadly than the city regions used in the rest of the analysis. Limitations in the place-of-birth variable in the census require that whole states be included, and so the local origins of Los Angeles residents are defined as all of California, local origins of New York residents as the three-state region of New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut, local origins of Chicago residents as the three-state region of Illinois, Indiana, and Wisconsin, and local ori-

gins of Washington, DC, residents as the region formed by the District of Columbia, Maryland, and Virginia.

Total population. As shown in table 2, only 27.5 percent of Los Angeles adults were born locally, that is, in California. This contrasts to local origins for 57.6 percent of New Yorkers and 60.5 percent of Chicago residents. Among Washington, DC, residents, 34.5 percent were born locally. Not surprisingly, the two high-growth regions have many more migrants from outside the area.

White residents. Given the ongoing change in racial composition, it seems likely that a higher proportion of whites are native to their current region of residence, while Asians and Latinos are more likely to be newcomers. This supposition is only partially borne out, however. Remarkably, only 31.7 percent of whites in Los Angeles and 32.2 percent in Washington, DC, were born in their current regions of residence (table 2). These figures are little different from the average for all residents in the respective regions. In New York and Chicago, the share of locals among whites is at least 10 percentage points higher than for those regions as a whole. This reflects the fact that white residents have participated more fully in recent migration to Los Angeles and Washington, DC, than to New York and Chicago.

Black residents. The black population of Los Angeles closely resembles the migration history of white residents: Only 27.8 percent of blacks are native to the region; most have migrated from other states. In Chicago, blacks are much more likely to be natives, but half (50.5 percent) of all Chicago-area blacks were born in other states, versus 19.7 percent of Chicago-area whites. This obviously reflects the great post–World War II northward migration of blacks, whose social and economic consequences are described by Wilson (1987).

In Washington, DC, we see that over half (52.5 percent) of the black adults are native to the region, far surpassing the figure for whites and exceeding the local origins of blacks in any of the four cities. This relative permanence of residency among area blacks is compounded by their unusually large share of the regional population (figure 1) to make that group especially well-established and prominent in the area.

Finally, black residency history in New York is the most complex. Blacks are somewhat evenly divided among locals, migrants from other states, and immigrants from abroad. Fully one quarter of black adults in New York have migrated from outside the United States, and none of the other regions has as substantial a share of foreign borns among the black population. A substantial literature

Table 2. **Place of Birth of 1990 Adult Residents, by Race-Ethnicity (Percentage of All 1990 Residents Aged 25 and Older Who Were Born in Each Location)**

Los Angeles Region	Total	White	Black	Asian	Latino
California	27.5	31.7	27.8	9.3	23.2
Other states	42.2	57.5	66.7	6.2	9.8
Other U.S. territories	0.3	0.0	0.2	0.9	0.9
Other nations	30.1	10.8	5.3	83.5	66.1
Total	100	100	100	100	100
	10,497,254	6,268,499	767,362	941,891	2,519,502

New York Region	Total	White	Black	Asian	Latino
NY, NJ, CT	57.6	73.4	37.2	3.9	17.6
Other states	14.0	12.0	37.3	1.9	1.4
Other U.S. territories	4.0	0.1	0.6	0.4	30.0
Other nations	24.5	14.6	25.0	93.9	50.9
Total	100	100	100	100	100
	11,990,269	8,101,113	1,777,948	554,361	1,521,335

Chicago Region	Total	White	Black	Asian	Latino
IL, IN, WI	60.5	71.0	47.4	4.2	19.2
Other states	23.7	19.7	50.5	5.1	9.5
Other U.S. territories	1.1	0.0	0.0	0.2	13.0
Other nations	14.7	9.4	2.0	90.6	58.4
Total	100	100	100	100	100
	5,007,580	3,569,394	857,729	153,628	416,240

Washington, DC, Region	Total	White	Black	Asian	Latino
DC, MD, VA	34.5	32.2	52.5	2.2	4.1
Other states	49.6	59.7	39.1	5.6	13.3
Other U.S. territories	0.3	0.0	0.1	0.2	5.7
Other nations	15.6	8.1	8.2	92.0	77.0
Total	100	100	100	100	100
	2,506,195	1,622,766	632,473	125,325	117,347

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census (1993).
Note: Population totals do not include "other" race groups and so may not equal the sum of the four groups shown. Percentage totals may not sum to exactly 100 percent because of rounding.

has developed in New York about the unique situation of black immigrants from the West Indies and other areas (Kasinitz 1992; Waters 1994). The question about whether black immigrants are better off adapting to the norms of native-born blacks in the inner-city neighborhoods where the immigrants reside, or whether they are better off resisting this acculturation has been construed as a challenge to mainstream assimilation theory.

Asian and Latino newcomers. In contrast to the black population, the great majority of Asian adults in every region are newcomers, mostly from other nations. The proportion of foreign-born Asians ranges from a low of 83.5 percent in Los Angeles to a high of 93.9 percent in New York. In fact, only in Los Angeles is there any significant percentage of Asian adults who were born locally (9.3 percent).

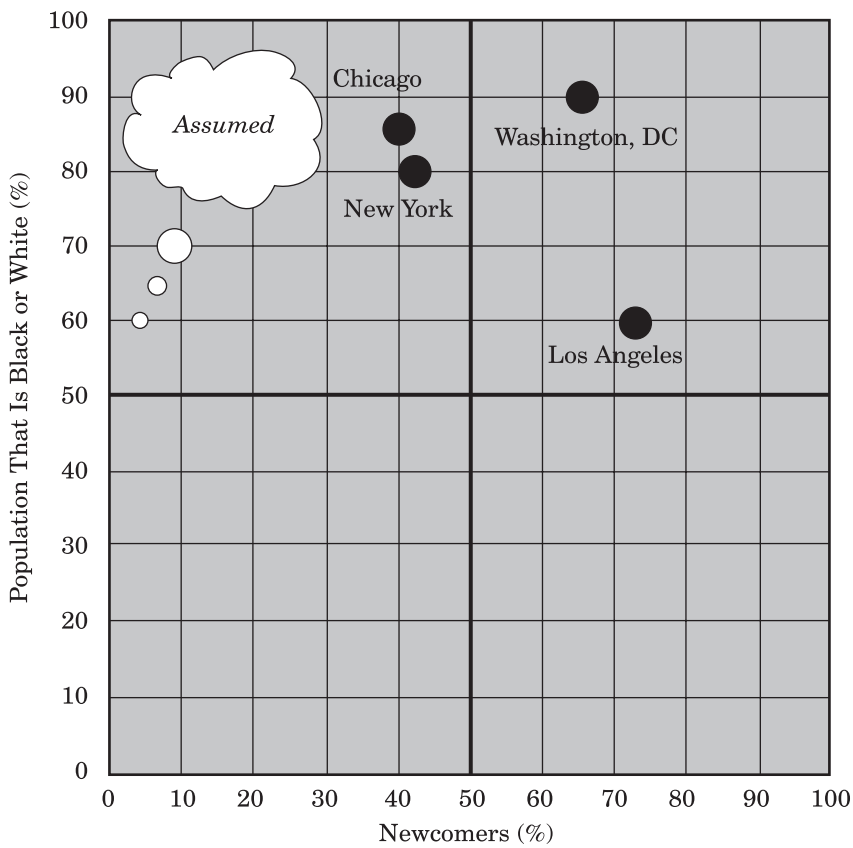
Latinos are much more likely to have been born in their current region of residence, although they also comprise large numbers who were foreign born. As with Asians, the number of locally born Latinos is highest in Los Angeles (23.2 percent) and lowest in Washington, DC (4.1 percent). The foreign-born share is highest in Washington, DC (77.0 percent) and lowest in New York (50.9 percent). However, a large portion of the Latino population of New York is from Puerto Rico, a U.S. territory. Although these residents are not considered foreign born, those who were island born are similar to those who were foreign born. If we add to the foreign-born numbers the 30.0 percent of Latinos who were born in other U.S. territories, the resulting total of 80.9 percent from outside the 50 states is considerable (table 2).

Overall comparisons of the four cities. Despite the distinctive migration histories imprinted on the adult population of the four cities, the evidence supports a common theme. Of greatest significance is the fact that these findings severely challenge the implicit assumption underlying urban policy that residents are permanently linked to their regions of residence. Out of 16 possible combinations of four groups in four cities, in only three instances were half or more of the adults born in their current region of residence. The exceptions are whites in New York and Chicago, and blacks in Washington, DC. In fact, in Los Angeles, less than one-third of the adults in *any* racial/ethnic group were born in their region of residence. In short, the lifetime fortunes of the current residents do not match the trends exhibited in their region of residence.

When viewed in combination with the lingering stereotype of urban policy that assumes black-white dominance of racial composition, the challenge to old assumptions is even more critical. Profound change in population composition at the end of the 20th century is

combining with rapid changes in population membership through migration to produce a much more fluid, variegated resident base in cities. Figure 2 displays these twin factors in combination. Here, in contrast to the vague unstated assumptions implicit in contemporary urban theory, the actual data for the four regions are represented. The fuzzy assumption is that most of the population is either white or black, with other groups only incidental to the main story. And the implicit assumption is that most residents have lived their lives in the region where they now live, allowing for only a small proportion of newcomers. These twin vague assumptions are represented in the upper left quadrant of figure 2. In fact, we find that the greater regions of Chicago and Washington, DC, and to a slightly lesser extent New York, closely reflect the implicit assumption of black-white dominance. However, Los Angeles and Washington, DC, along with Chicago and New York, all have much greater numbers of newcomers than might be assumed.

Figure 2. **Four Regions' Departure from Assumptions of Black-White Dominance and Permanent Residents**



Los Angeles emerges as distinctively different from the other cities. Its adult population is characterized both by an extreme degree of nonlocalness and by a very low degree of black-white dominance. As the composition of other cities continues to change to look more like Los Angeles, it will follow a downward track represented in the diagram by the vector from the implicitly assumed resident base toward that characterized by Los Angeles in 1990. If that city is a harbinger of the future, the unstated biases of urban theory—black-white dominance and lifetimes in one place—will need to be corrected even in places such as Chicago.

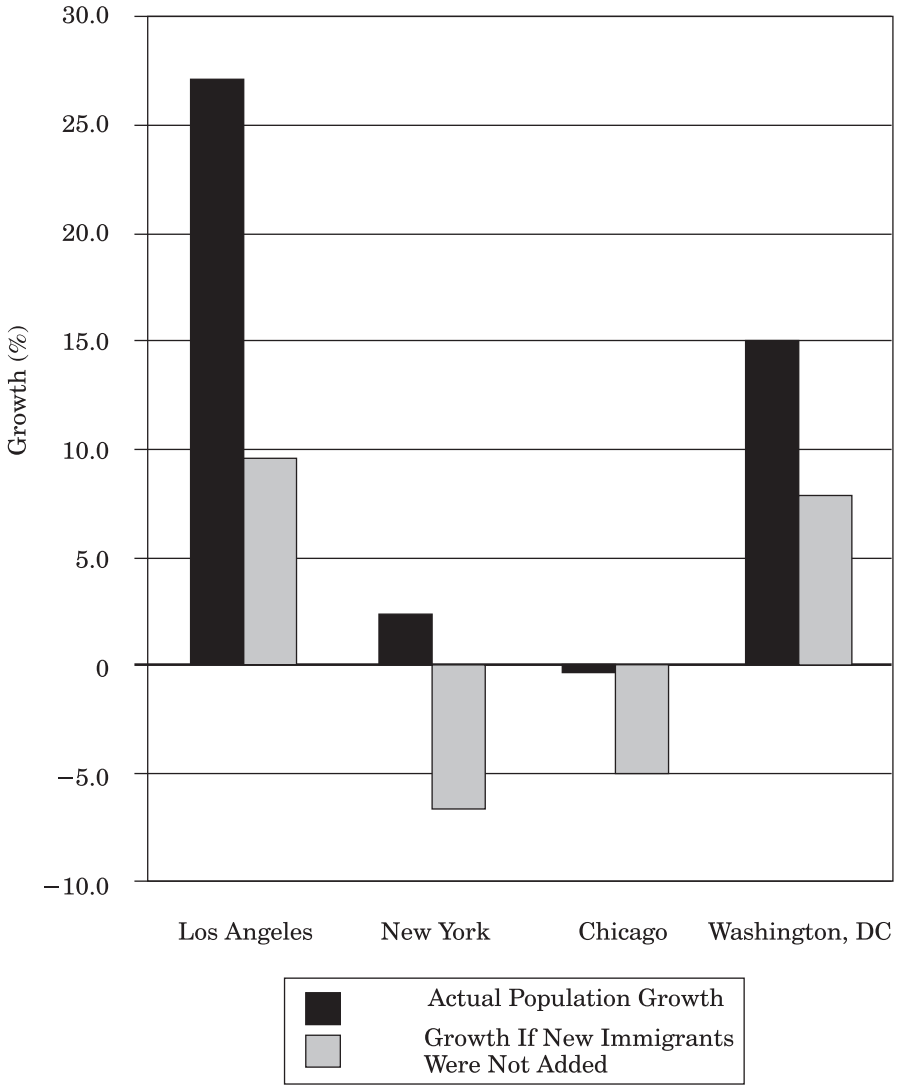
Immigration

Immigration is the dominant demographic shift of the late 20th century. Following the major revision of the immigration law in 1965, the number of new immigrants arriving in the United States has approximately doubled each decade (although it is beginning to level off at a high volume in the 1990s). As a result of these newcomers, the total foreign-born population of the United States increased from 4.8 percent of the population in 1970 to 7.9 percent in 1990 (and 9.8 percent in 1998). The new immigrants have been fairly localized, concentrating in gateway regions in a handful of states. The four cities under study here are among the leading immigrant destinations. (Others are Miami, San Francisco, Dallas, and Houston.)

The most obvious overall impact of immigration is its contribution to the total population growth of a region. In the rapid-growth cities, immigration was less important than in slower-growth cities. As shown in figure 3, total population in both New York and Chicago would have *declined* by 5 percent or more between 1980 and 1990 were it not for new immigrant arrivals. By contrast, in Los Angeles and Washington, DC, subtracting the immigrant newcomers would have cut population growth by more than half, but those regions would still have grown in population by 7 to 10 percent. It is reasonable to surmise that the positive benefits of immigration are more greatly appreciated in those slow-growth cities where the newcomers staved off an actual decline in population.

Aside from the total volume of foreign-born population, the most important aspect of immigration is the recency with which immigrants have arrived. Virtually all studies of immigrant incorporation emphasize that newcomers have very different characteristics from those who have lived in the United States for a longer period of time. For example, more settled immigrants are more likely to speak better English, to become U.S. citizens, to have higher incomes, and to become homeowners (Alba and Logan 1992; Chiswick

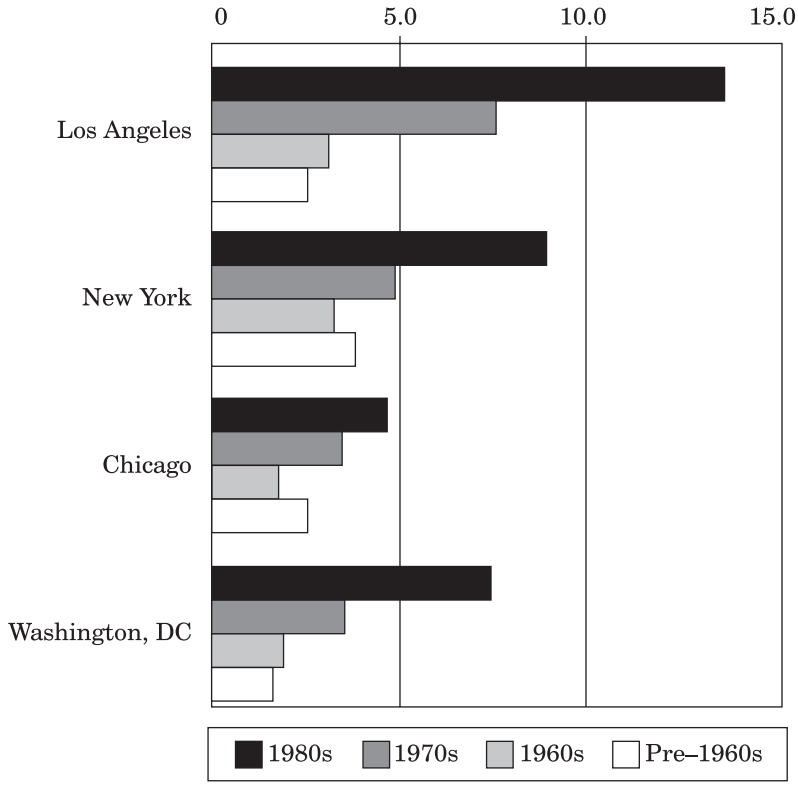
Figure 3. **Comparison of Regional Population Growth from 1980 to 1990, with and without the Contribution of Immigrant Arrivals during the 1980s**



and Sullivan 1995; Jasso and Rosenweig 1990; Myers and Lee 1998).

What is most striking about these foreign-born residents of the four cities is how many more of them arrived in the 1980s than in previous decades. Figure 4 displays the proportion of total population (foreign born and native born) consisting of immigrants who arrived in different decades. The newest immigrants in these 1990 data are

Figure 4. **Percentage of Total 1990 Population That Had Immigrated to the United States, by Decade of Arrival**



those who arrived in the 1980s, amounting to 13.6 percent of total residents in the Los Angeles region, 8.8 percent in New York, 7.3 percent in Washington, DC, and 4.6 percent in Chicago. In three of the cities, these newcomers are nearly twice as numerous as those who arrived in the 1970s and who are now relatively settled.

The comparison between Los Angeles and Chicago is especially significant. Whereas Chicago has a more evenly balanced proportion of residents in each of the four arrival periods, the long-settled immigrants in Los Angeles are far less numerous than those who arrived in the 1970s, who are in turn much less numerous than the newcomers of the 1980s. In short, Chicago's immigrants are more mature residents than immigrants who live in Los Angeles (mainly newcomers). The consequence is that Chicago's immigrants may display more advantaged characteristics. In addition, the changes experienced in that region over the 1980s will be less heavily affected by newcomers than in Los Angeles, where the newest wave of arrivals carries more weight (Myers 1999a).

Dynamism and upward mobility

I now turn from a description of the underlying demographic dynamism in the four cities to an assessment of the urban outcomes. Implicit in demographic dynamism is a strong thrust toward upward mobility by urban residents. Over time, residents in all ethnic groups make advances in both their economic and housing careers. This underlying process deserves to be nurtured and accelerated wherever possible. However, the prevalence of the upward mobility dynamic often goes unrecognized, and urban problems instead are often characterized as reflecting downward mobility. This leads to very different policy interventions.

The force of upward mobility is neglected because it is disguised by the changing composition of the population. New arrivals are frequently from less advantaged ethnic groups, and most are young people who have yet to advance very far in their careers. With a large inflow of such newcomers, the average status of the whole population can be falling downward, even though at the same time each cohort is advancing upward. This dynamic is especially pronounced in selected subareas of the region, often points of entry for newcomers, because the successful upwardly mobile residents depart for the suburbs and are replaced by less advantaged newcomers (Myers 1999a).

A second reason that upward mobility is neglected is that urban data comprise a snapshot in time that reveals only current characteristics, not the changes experienced as a cohort grows older and settles in. The cohort approach enables such a longitudinal view to be constructed by using standard census data. For technical reasons, longitudinal changes can be more fully described for immigrants than for native-born residents, and for that reason we highlight them here.[1]

Of course, not everyone experiences upward mobility to the same degree, and immigrants dramatize this process. Nevertheless, it is the arrival of immigrants who are in general relatively disadvantaged that draws so much attention to failing social and economic status in cities, and it is the upward mobility of immigrants that then cuts against that trend.

[1] Census data collected from immigrants ask in what year the person came to the United States to live, thus permitting a measure of duration of residence that grows longer between censuses for each arrival cohort. By contrast, for native-born residents, we have data only on place of residence 5 years ago, not their periods of arrival (10 or 20 years ago) that would permit us to trace cohorts as they settled longer.

Upward mobility is measured here by two major outcomes important to both people and the places they live: poverty and homeownership. This is shown most easily by examining the effects of new immigrant arrivals. Initially, they depress the status levels in their region, especially if they arrive in large numbers, but over time they advance dramatically.

Poverty rates

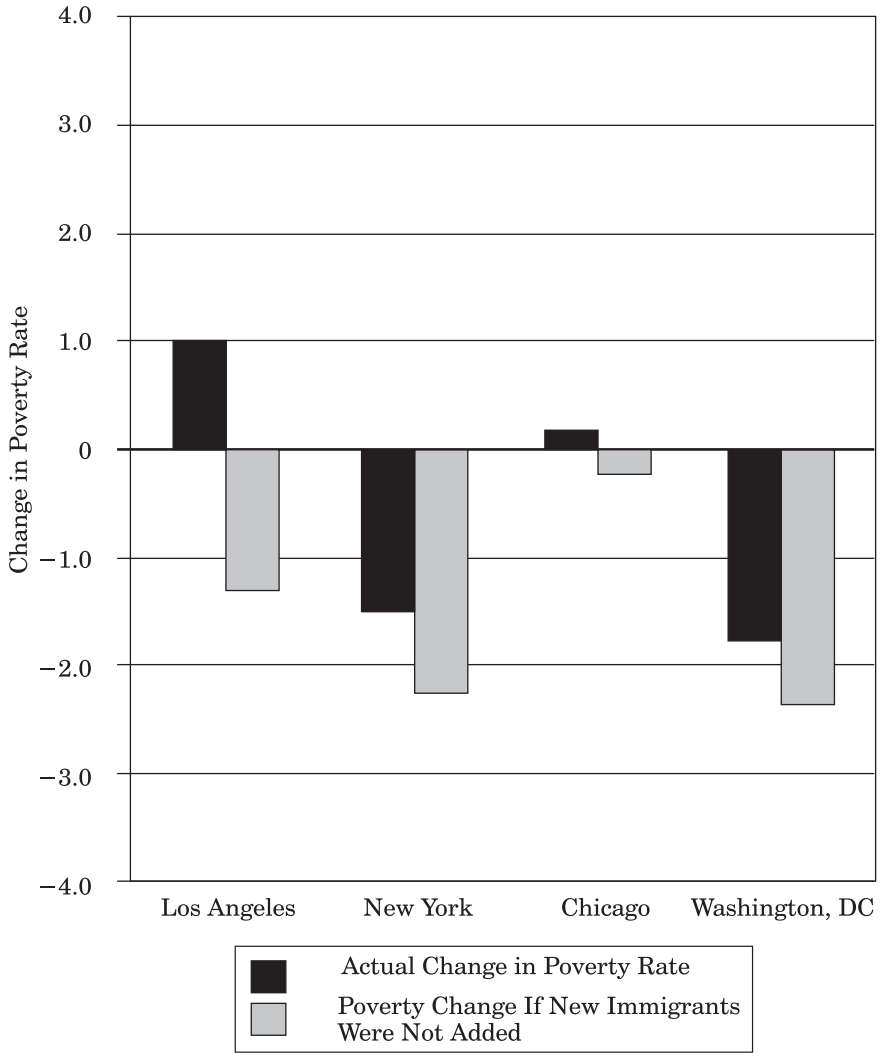
Overall changes. What is the impact of 1980s immigrants on average changes in poverty observed from 1980 to 1990 for each city region? If the poverty rate in 1990 could be calculated only for residents who were living in an area in 1980, we could learn how much the fortunes of these continuing residents had changed over the decade. Unfortunately, data limitations preclude this, because the census records place of residence only five years earlier for the entire population. However, an alternative to tracing population changes over a full decade is to isolate only new immigrants, because these can be identified by year of arrival, thus permitting us to separate out 1990 residents who immigrated after 1980.[2] On this basis, we can calculate poverty rates including or excluding these recent immigrants. It must be stressed that this is only a hypothetical calculation. In the absence of immigrants, a host of other changes would ensue, including the entry of new disadvantaged residents who would step into the role occupied by immigrants, and the economy would adjust in unknown ways.

As shown in figure 5, the change in overall poverty rates in each city region is altered somewhat if new immigrants are not included in the calculation. The greatest difference is found in Los Angeles, where the actual poverty rate increased by a full percentage point between 1980 and 1990, but where the adjusted rate (absent new immigrants) *declined* by 1.3 percentage points. In both New York and Washington, DC, the actual poverty rate declined over the decade but would have fallen by half a percentage point more in the absence of new immigrants. In Chicago, the poverty rate was fairly stable, with or without new immigrants. Overall, comparing these four cities, the impact of immigrants appears greatest in the cities where new immigrants made up the largest share of the population (see figure 4).

Underlying trends. The poverty trends behind these net changes are displayed in figure 6, showing the 1980–1990 changes not only

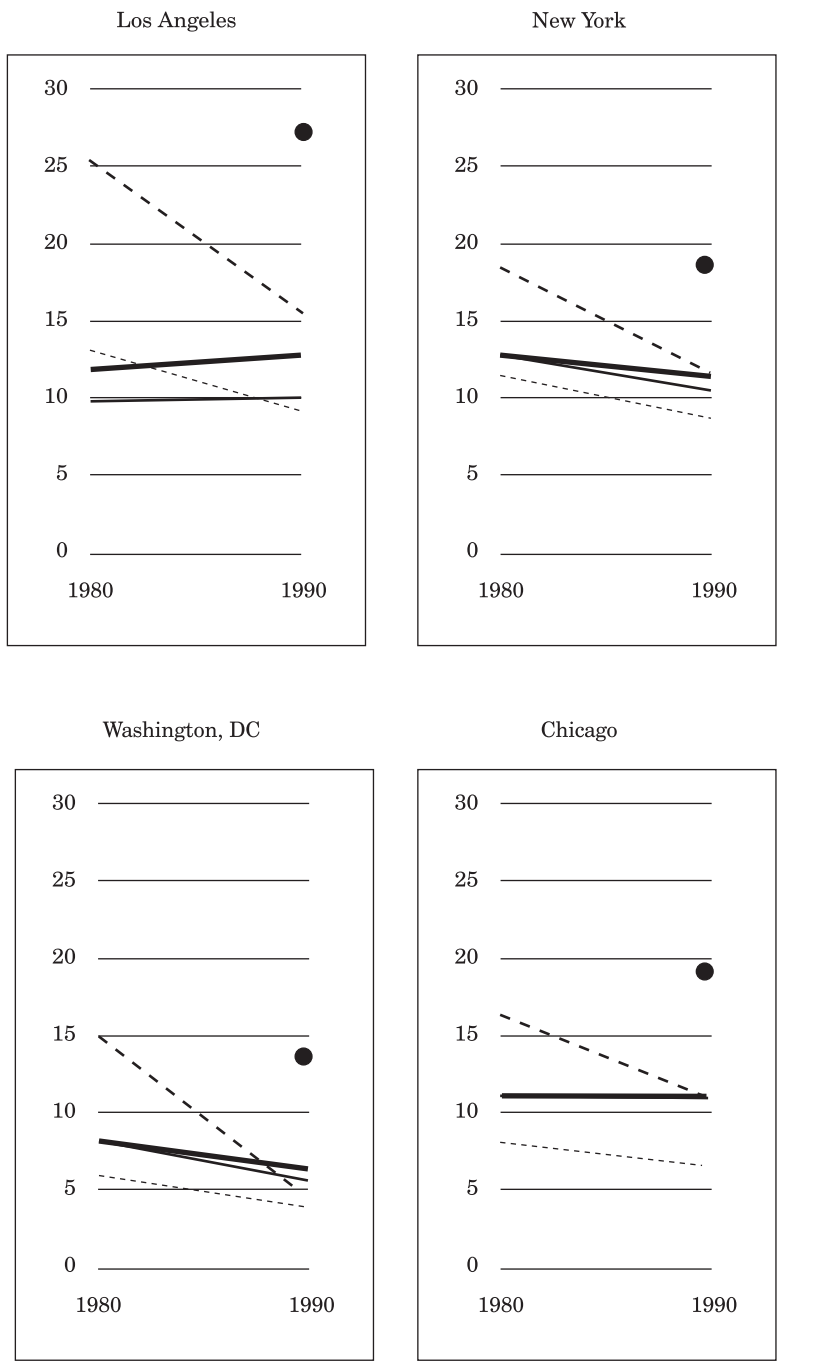
[2] Although these reported dates of immigrant arrival are subject to some error, observed discrepancies are concentrated in the first years of reported arrival, smoothing out as elapsed time passes five years (Ellis and Wright 1998).

Figure 5. **Change in Regional Poverty Rate from 1980 to 1990, with and without the Contribution of New Immigrant Arrivals during the 1980s**



for the total population, but also for native-born residents and for immigrants who arrived in different decades. The black dot depicts the poverty rate observed in 1990 for new immigrant arrivals in each region, a rate far above that of the total population. The heavy dashed line represents the poverty rate of the previous wave of new immigrants in 1980, together with their progress from 1980 to 1990. Generally speaking, those earlier arrivals also began with much higher-than-average poverty, but the rate fell sharply as their residency grew longer. Weaker declines from already lower levels are also observed for immigrants who arrived in the 1960s.

Figure 6. **Trajectories of Poverty Rates in Four Regions**



Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census (1983, 1993).

Although poverty rates are highest in Los Angeles and lowest in Washington, DC, the same basic pattern of change is found in all four cities.

Trends for specific cohorts by ethnic group. Not all new immigrants have fared equally well. Latinos and Asians make up the bulk of the new immigration, and those groups have been found to have very different rates of success, because of differences in economic, human, or social capital. In addition, immigrants of different ages may also fare differently, with younger or elderly immigrants less advantaged than middle-aged ones. Cities with different mixes of residents in their new immigrant populations thus could have very different achievement levels. Accordingly, it makes sense to observe the rate of upward mobility for more detailed cohorts. Figure 7 connects the 1980 and 1990 poverty rates of specific birth cohorts of immigrants, tracing their net changes in poverty as they grew 10 years older (passing from the white dot to the black one) and as their residency in the United States extended. These 1970s arrivals were new immigrants in 1980, just as the 1980s arrivals were new in 1990, and their progress can be traced over the ensuing decade.

The overall pattern observable in figure 7 is that poverty declined from 1980 to 1990 for each cohort. The steepest declines were observed among Asians in Los Angeles and Washington, DC, and Asian poverty levels were lower than Latino ones in every city. Nevertheless, upward mobility characterized all cohorts under age 65 in both ethnic groups in all four areas. These trends are very different—even opposite—from the overall trends recorded for places.

Homeownership rates

Overall changes. The impact of 1980s immigrants on average changes in the homeownership rate can be calculated in the same manner as was done for poverty.[3] The change in overall rates in each city region from 1980 to 1990 is larger if new immigrants are not included in the calculation (figure 8). As with poverty, the greatest difference is found in Los Angeles, where the actual homeownership rate increased very little between 1980 and 1990, but where the adjusted rate (absent new immigrants) increased by 3.7 percentage points. In the other three cities, the actual homeownership rate increased substantially between 1980 and 1990, but in all three the rate would have increased by another 1 to 2 percentage points in the absence of new immigrants. Overall, comparing these

[3] Whereas the poverty rate was calculated as a percentage of all persons, the homeownership rate is calculated as a percentage of all households. The ethnicity, age, and immigration status of households is determined from the householder.

Figure 7. **Cohort Trajectories of Poverty Change from 1980 to 1990 by 1970s Immigrant Arrivals**

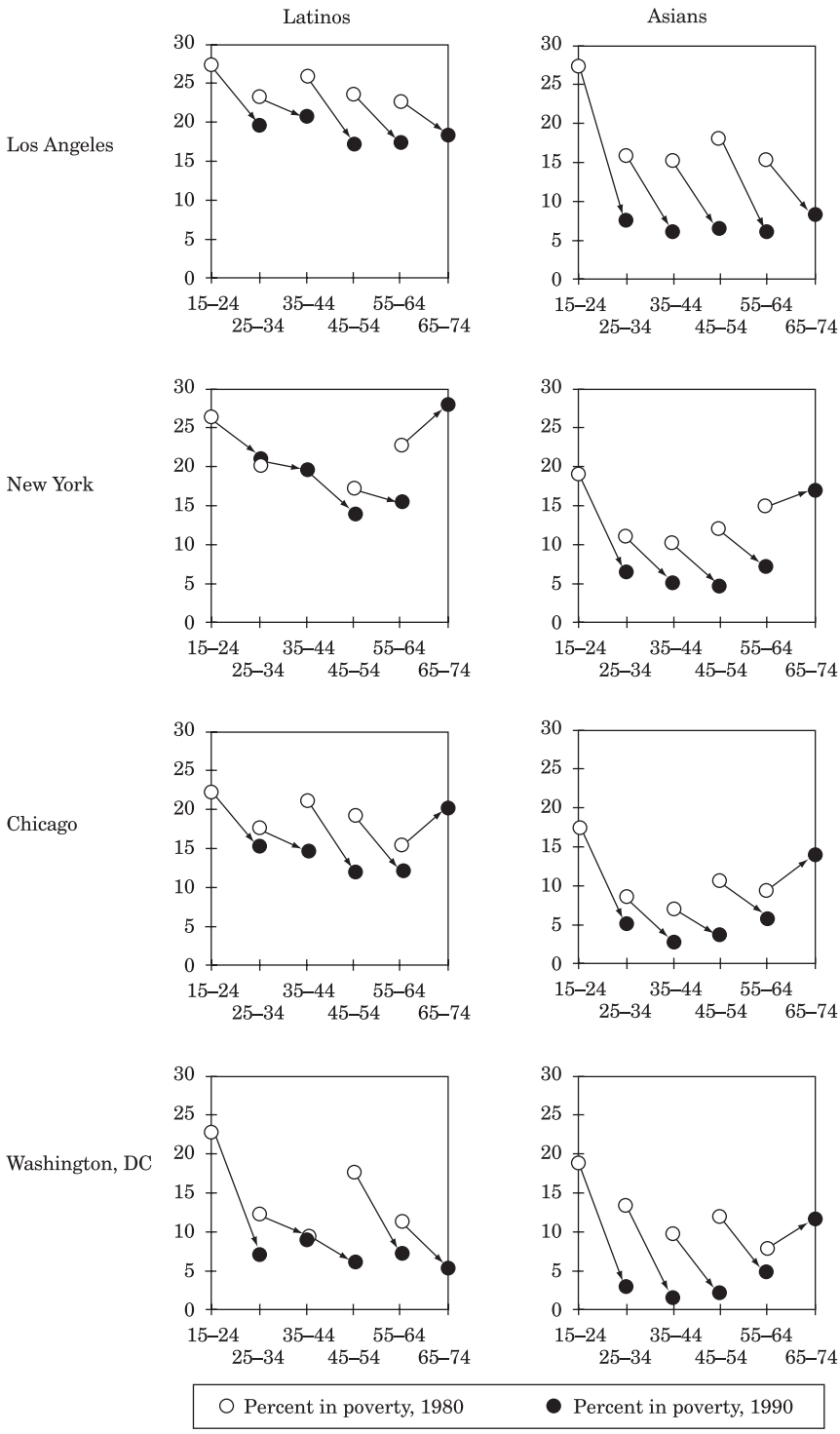
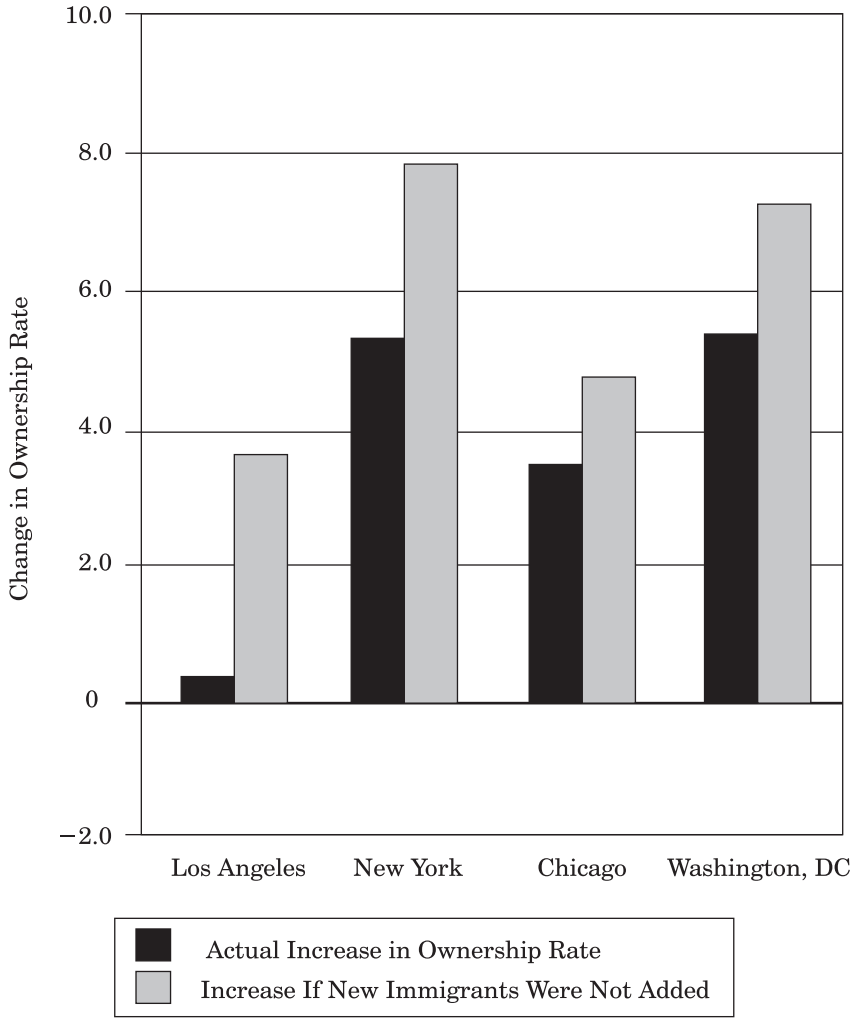


Figure 8. **Change in Regional Homeownership Rate from 1980 to 1990, with and without the Contribution of New Immigrant Arrivals during the 1980s**



four cities, the suppressant effect of immigrant arrivals on homeownership appears greatest, as is the case with poverty, in the cities where new immigrants made up the largest share of the population (see figure 4).

Underlying trends. The homeownership trends behind these net changes are displayed in figure 9, showing the 1980–1990 changes not only for the total population, but also for native-born residents and for immigrants who arrived in different decades. The black dot depicts the homeownership rate observed in 1990 for new immigrant arrivals in each region, a rate far below that of the total

Figure 9. **Trajectories of Homeownership Rates, 1980 to 1990**

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census (1983, 1993).

population. The upward sloping, heavy dashed line represents the homeownership rate of the previous wave of new immigrants first observed in 1980, showing their progress from 1980 to 1990. Those earlier arrivals also began with much lower-than-average homeownership, but their rate increased steeply as their residency grew. Weaker increases from already high levels are also observed for immigrants who had arrived in the 1960s. A very similar pattern of change is found in all four cities.

Trends for specific cohorts by ethnic group. Which immigrant cohorts have fared best in their pursuit of homeownership? Cities with higher mixes of certain ethnic groups and age groups in their new immigrant populations might have higher overall achievement levels. Accordingly, it is again necessary to observe the rate of upward mobility for more detailed cohorts. Figure 10 connects the 1980 and 1990 homeownership rates of specific birth cohorts of immigrants, tracing their net changes as they grew 10 years older (passing from the white dot to the black one) and as their residency in the United States lengthened.

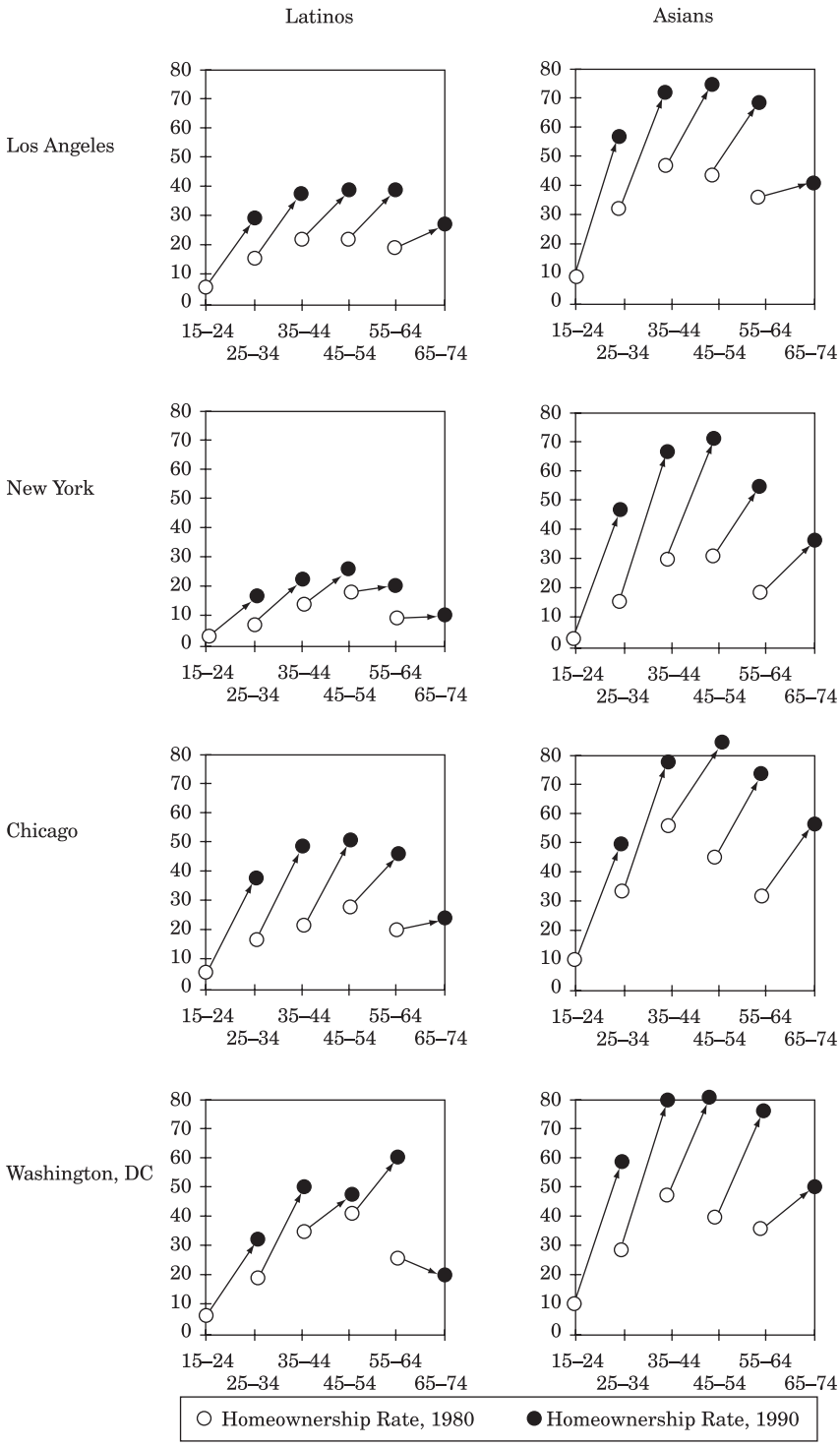
The overall pattern observable in figure 10 is that homeownership increased from 1980 to 1990 for each cohort. The highest rates and steepest increases were observed among Asians in all four cities. Among Latinos, there is more variability across cities, with the greatest success in Chicago or Washington, DC, and the least in New York. Nevertheless, even in the Latino cohorts with the lowest homeownership in 1980, upward mobility led to a doubling of homeownership among all cohorts under age 45. This finding of steep upward trajectories into homeownership has been reported by other studies, including a detailed analysis that adjusted for differences in income and housing prices across 101 metropolitan areas (Myers, Megbolugbe, and Lee 1998). This demographic dimension to homeownership attainment is an important illustration of the powerful influence of demographic dynamism.

Conclusion

Demographic dynamism is a neglected element of urban structure. Failure to account for the dynamics of population change and the process of upward mobility leads to a flaw in conventional urban theory and policy making. The simplest deficiency is that the lives of people are largely ignored in place-based urban thinking, yet the deeper flaw lies in misinterpretation of demographic change.

Demographic dynamism deserves our special attention because it is through the presumed consequences for people that policy mak-

Figure 10. **Cohort Trajectories of Homeownership Rates from 1980 to 1990 by 1970s Immigrant Arrivals**



ers evaluate the desirability of economic, political, and physical changes in a city. So powerful are the demographic changes in Los Angeles and other cities that they dominate our social indicators of well-being. Yet those same indicators are used to justify one policy instead of another, often on a misguided basis. Failure to clearly grasp the significance of demographic changes can lead to a failure to design effective policies.

Los Angeles has experienced more profound demographic change than any other urban region in recent decades. This is reflected in its high rate of population growth, high percentage of immigrant residents, and rising proportions of Latino and Asian residents. These changes imply distinctly different situations than those at the core of urban theory and policy making.

The black-white paradigm for urban policy analysis assumes one minority group of long-standing residence and past discrimination. When Los Angeles is compared with New York, Chicago, and Washington, DC, it is found to have a far lower share of its population in the black and white racial groups and is truly multiethnic. The implications of this transformation have yet to be incorporated into urban theory, even though other cities are moving in the same direction.

The people versus place assumptions of urban theory emphasize the belief that the history of economic and social conditions in a locality reflect the history experienced by current residents. One of the most surprising findings of this analysis is how few adult residents of Los Angeles were born in the region. Even in Chicago and New York, barely 60 percent of adults were born in their respective regions, and the proportions are much lower for blacks, Latinos, and especially Asians. It is clearly erroneous to cling to the belief that the history of the place and its residents are the same.

The upwardly mobile perspective is far more descriptive of the real experience, with newcomers entering the region, often at low status levels, and achieving rapid improvement with regard to both poverty and homeownership. This upward trajectory is disguised by summary statistics that lump all residents together and allow the disadvantaged status of newcomers to dominate the change in the total.

The distortion imposed by newcomers is greatest when they are most numerous, as clearly illustrated by comparing the four cities. Los Angeles has the highest share of new immigrants in its population, followed by New York, and the impact on poverty and homeownership is greatest in those cases. Thus, the appearance of

disadvantaged trends in Los Angeles is created by so many newcomers.

Immigrants should not be blamed for the negative trends that result from their impact on the totals. They are merely the latest group to participate in the upward mobility that is so central to demographic dynamism. Immigrants are often poor when they first arrive, but they surely view their lives as following upward trajectories of opportunity. This is a very different problem perspective than the assumption of the downward mobility of a disadvantaged class.

Of principal concern to policy makers should be the immigrants' fate after they arrive: Do they remain mired in poverty or do they succeed in advancing themselves? It would be small comfort to explain away the negative trends by declaring that a new disadvantaged class of residents was simply distorting the average. Fortunately, the evidence shows that new arrivals do not remain stuck at the bottom. Instead, they advance out of poverty and into homeownership. Their disadvantaged status appears only temporary (although they are replaced by a fresh round of new arrivals who again enter at the bottom).

Local officials understandably have a different perspective. Upward mobility is often accompanied by spatial mobility, with certain communities serving as gateways for the underprivileged and other communities as destinations for the successful. This creates a dilemma for local officials, who are responsible for well-being in only one jurisdiction and want to show positive changes. Elsewhere I have characterized the dilemma: "What is a mayor to do? Take credit for all the successful residents who have moved out of his or her city? Or extol the virtues of less advantaged newcomers who are ready to draw upon the city's services?" (Myers 1999a, 153). The clear policy solution to this dilemma, I argue, is to provide intergovernmental assistance to the gateway communities providing the key human investment services (education, health, and the like) that will enable their residents to become upwardly mobile (Myers 1999a).

In conclusion, all of the elements of demographic dynamism are more accentuated in the case of Los Angeles than they are in the comparison regions. At the same time, however, all of the elements are also clearly visible in the other regions as well. The conclusion to be drawn is that Los Angeles may be different but that its differences only highlight important commonalities found in New York, Chicago, and Washington, DC. The lesson to be learned from Los Angeles may be the realization of the great importance of demographic dynamism in our urban areas.

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