Educational Research and the Metropolitan Mindset
Re-Framing the Urban-Suburban Dichotomy

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Tripping Over the Lines We Draw

Our choicest plans are fallen through,
our airiest castles tumbled over,
because of lines we neatly drew,
and later neatly stumbled over

—Piet Hein (1966).

American metropolises are largely understood through a lens that divides them into an *urban/suburban dichotomy*. We employ the term dichotomy to describe a cultural tool (Wertsch, 1998) that categorizes complex wholes into two opposite parts. Dichotomies are useful for making sense of reality, but they can also hamper our best efforts to inform our professional, social, and educational praxis (Berlin, 1990). In a dichotomy, each entity is defined both positively—by what it is, and negatively—by what it is not. In the case of the urban/suburban dichotomy, urban is primarily defined as a space of social decay and pathology. Suburban is defined as a space of normalcy, where middle-class nuclear families live well-ordered lives. We argue that the accuracy of this social geography is no longer meaningful and that its maintenance in educational research and policy is counterproductive to both the practical and the moral ends of our work (Buendia, 2011; Freemen, 2010).[1] We argue instead that educational projects will be more robust when policy-makers and researchers reframe these geographic spaces as *metropolitan*, and thoughtfully nest their work with schools within that context.

To support our argument, we draw on aggregate demographic data on the United States' 100 largest metropolitan areas, as well as on demographic and anecdotal information about Richmond, Virginia. The demographic data come largely from the evaluation of U.S. census data by demographers at the Brookings Institution. The anecdotal information comes from the authors who live in Richmond, and is used to breathe life into the more general demographic data. We acknowledge that this dichotomy, although largely outmoded, does have some basis in historical phenomena. We present examples of educational policy and research that illuminate the limits of the dichotomous approach and that suggest the possibilities offered when the metropolitan approach is taken.

Urban and Suburban Frames

Since the middle of the 20th century, the urban/suburban dichotomy has been a cultural tool for making sense of metropolitan spaces. As such, the dichotomy represents "converging lines of academic and popular conversations and texts that have come to shape our theoretical and empirical work of urban space and the urban subject" (Buendia, 2011, p. 17). We argue further that the dichotomous framework has also shaped, and distorted, the theoretical and empirical work of suburban space, and the suburban subject. The mid-20th century definitions of urban and suburban are summed up well in a classic work called *Slums and Suburbs*, by former Harvard University President and influential educationist James Conant (1961). Regarding urban areas, Conant described them as "city slums" with "neighborhoods composed of various minority groups" (p. 15) and explained that many of the children living there "come from physically and culturally impoverished homes" (p. 15). Of the suburbs, Conant said "the vast majority of the inhabitants belong to the managerial or professional class; the average level of income is high, the real estate values are correspondingly elevated" (p. 72). Over time, the prototypical images that Conant (1961) conveyed have become reified cultural stereotypes of metropolitan spaces. Suburban areas have been depicted as normative, where middle-class nuclear families live in detached homes. Urban areas have been depicted as marginal, housing those that lie outside the norm, e.g., those that are Black, Latino, and poor (see Noguera, 2003).[2] This system of categorization fails to describe contemporary metropolitan spaces accurately, but it did not emerge out of thin air either. Before we identify and debunk some common myths associated with the dichotomous framework, we explore the emergence of separate urban and suburban spaces.

The urban/suburban dichotomy emerged to explain what was, by

the mid 20th century, an historical phenomenon (Rury & Saatcioglu, 2011). The practice of manipulating political geography—e.g., municipal boundaries, zoning ordinances, and school districts—to maintain inequality and segregation has a history that dates back to the early 20th century and persists today (Baxandall & Ewen, 2000; Dreier, Mollenkopf, & Swanstrom, 2004; Kozol, 2005; Pratt, 1992). Suburbs did not become normative residential spaces until policy changes enacted after World War II allowed many ethnic and working-class whites, groups formally excluded from suburban communities, to leave central cities and take up residence in suburban ones (Baxandall & Ewen, 2000). This movement was facilitated by a massive public/private infrastructure investment, designed to respond to the housing needs of many American families (Baxandall & Ewen, 2000; Caro, 1984/1974; Dreier et al., 2004). That investment did not address the housing needs of racial minorities, however, whose residence patterns were proscribed through a process called *redlining*. This formerly official public policy maintained strict residential segregation through cooperation between developers, banks, and government agencies (Dreier et al., 2004). Thus, even though the historic *Brown v. Board of Education* decision crossed a legal Rubicon in 1954, segregated housing patterns continued, and the municipal and school district boundaries between cities and their suburbs helped to facilitate the maintenance of that segregation (Ryan, 2010).

As a legal entity, the district lines that helped create urban/suburban segregation were challenged by the NAACP, which brought suit in 1970 to challenge *de facto* school segregation in the Detroit metropolitan area. A Sixth Circuit Court judge ruled that a desegregation bussing plan would have to be created for the entire metropolitan area. The ruling was appealed and in 1974 the U.S. Supreme Court heard the case. The Court, dramatically altered by four Nixon appointees in just a few short years, handed down a 5-4 decision limiting school desegregation to Detroit's central city only (*Milliken*, 1974). In doing so, it absolved most American suburbs from bearing responsibility for segregated metropolitan housing patterns. The *Milliken v. Bradley* decision also meant that the suburbs offered a clear, easily accessible alternative for white and middle class families seeking to avoid the desegregation taking place in urban school systems.

The urban/suburban dichotomy also reflected the perceived decline of cities and growing attractiveness of newly developed suburbs. This perception helped to exacerbate the economic, social, and infrastructure stresses that were emerging within cities during the latter half of the 20th century (Baxandall & Ewen, 2000; Caro, 1984/1974; Dreier et al., 2004; Gonzalez, 2004; Jacobs, 1961; Podair, 2002; Sugrue, 2005). The

flight of the White middle class—and later the Black middle class—to suburbs left central cities disproportionately poorer and of color both in the North and South (Jargowsky, 1997). Many Americans associate these urban areas with an underclass, especially those neighborhoods that have high concentrations of people of color. Called *ghettos*, *barrios*, and *hoods*, the perception of these areas is of homogeneous poverty, drug use, single-parent homes, and crime (see Jargowsky & Park, 2009).[3]

The urban/suburban dichotomy has always been a creature of perception, containing elements of myth and reality (Buendia, 2011; Leonardo & Hunter, 2007). We have presented one dimension of this perception, and we acknowledge that there are others. Cities also exist in the popular imagination as cosmopolitan centers where the arts flourish, as well as the sites of authentic cultural expression (Leonardo & Hunter, 2007). Nevertheless, the urban/suburban dichotomy articulated by Conant (1961) is a cultural tool that continues to organize perceptions. The accuracy and utility of this framework is fading into myth, however, as the demographic realities of metropolises change. Although racial/ethnic segregation persists (Orfield & Lee, 2005), there is now substantial socio-economic, racial, ethnic, and cultural diversity in cities *and* suburbs. The most salient of these myths are: (1) poor people live in urban ghettos that are homogeneously poor; (2) suburban neighborhoods are homogeneously White and middle class; and (3) immigrants settle in dense ethnically-homogeneous urban neighborhoods. We will test these myths against demographic research of aggregate national data that has been analyzed by demographers at the Brookings Institution.

Blurring the Distinction:
Mythbusting with Demographic Data

Myth 1:
Poor People Live in Homogeneously Poor Urban Ghettos

Demographic trends over the past 40 years indicate that the percentage of poor people who live in *high-poverty neighborhoods* has waxed and waned over time, but at no time did the majority of the poor live in areas that were considered high-poverty (Jargowsky, 1997, 2003; Kneebone, Nadeau, & Berube, 2011).[4] The belief that poor people live in urban ghettos that are homogeneously poor is not entirely a myth, however. From 1970 to 1990, the percentage of poor Americans living in high-poverty neighborhoods increased from 12.4 to 17.9% (Jargowsky, 1997). This trend reversed itself in the 1990s, when the total number of people living in high-poverty neighborhoods declined by 24% (Jargowsky, 2003). The

drop was most dramatic in the Midwest and South. This change affected all ethnic and racial groups, especially African Americans, who made up 30% of the residents of high-poverty neighborhoods in 1990 and only 19% of them in 2000. During this same decade, the spatial concentration of poverty increased only in suburban neighborhoods (Jargowsky, 2003; see also Rank, 2004). During the most recent decade's period of great economic distress, there has been an increase in the percentage of poor people living in areas of concentrated poverty—from 9.1% in 2000 to 10.5% in 2010 (Kneebone, Nadeau, & Berube, 2011). Surprisingly, the current increase in the number of people living in high-poverty census tracts has disproportionately affected high-poverty suburban neighborhoods (Kneebone, Nadeau, & Berube, 2011).

Myth 2:
Suburban Neighborhoods Are
Homogeneously White and Middle-Class

This myth is perhaps the one that is most ripe for debunking. Since 2000, poverty has been on the rise in the U.S. and both cities and their suburbs have been affected. In 2005, there were equal numbers of poor individuals residing in cities and suburbs, respectively (Berube & Kneebone, 2006). By 2007, before the current financial crisis began, suburbs had surpassed cities in overall numbers of impoverished residents (Frey, Berube, Singer, & Wilson, 2009). Despite this change, city residents are still about twice as likely as suburbanites to be poor (Jargowsky, 2003), but as metropolitan areas have become increasingly suburbanized, poverty has followed suit. Thus, it is more accurate to say that poverty is mainly, although not exclusively, a metropolitan issue rather than a strictly urban one.

The demographic data have consistently pointed to the increasing ethnic and racial diversity of metropolitan suburbs. The 2000 Census revealed that 27% of suburbanites are of color (Frey, 2001) and that metropolitan segregation is declining (Fasenfest, Booza & Metzger, 2003). In a recent report on these trends based on the 2010 census data, Frey (2011) concluded that "the historically sharp racial and ethnic divisions between cities and suburbs in metropolitan America are more blurred than ever" (p. 1). This does not mean that, on the whole, cities and suburbs are the same in regards to ethnicity. In fact, an increasing number of central cities are majority minority, and such cities comprise more than half of all cities in the United States (Frey, 2011). Nevertheless, minorities now make up 35% of all suburbanites, mirroring their share of the overall U.S. population. Moreover, half of all members of minority groups in major metropolitan areas live in suburbs (Frey, 2011).

Myth 3:
Immigrants Settle in Dense
Ethnically Homogeneous Urban Neighborhoods

A startling development in suburban America is the growth of immigrant populations that make suburbs their place of entry into American society. Today, the largest share of the nation's 38 million immigrants still make large immigrant cities like New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles their first American home (Singer, 2009). The change in immigrant settlement patterns is so large, however, that by 2007, half of all immigrants were living in suburbs (Singer, 2009). Not only are immigrants choosing to live in suburbs, but they are increasingly choosing to live in areas that have not experienced much immigration for generations. Western and Southeastern states (e.g., Utah, Nebraska, Virginia, North Carolina, and Georgia) are attracting many of these new Americans (Singer, 2007). The arrival of immigrants, especially into the South, has presented regions with many new challenges. Issues such as teaching the English language in schools—the children of immigrants make up 23% of all American children under 18 (Singer, 2007)—shifting racial hierarchies, and political fallout from these changes have not played themselves out enough to make valid generalizations. Suffice it to say, however, that the arrival of immigrants in suburbs means that suburbs are less homogeneous than our conventional wisdom accounts for (see Baxandall & Ewen, 2000).

Reframing the Urban/Suburban Dichotomy

Cultures organize their commonsense ideas through a variety of communicative practices. Lakoff (2004) uses the word *frames* to describe "the mental structures that shape the way we see the world" (p. 1), and he explains that when language is used to communicate, the listener unconsciously interprets the utterances of the speaker relative to a set of cultural frames (Lakoff, 2002). Frames work as a short hand, in which a phrase captures a much larger set of meanings and emotions that limit what is (un)real, (im)possible or (un)thinkable. Metropolitan spaces are framed by the idea that they consist of two kinds of places: urban and suburban. Each of these words evokes an "essential prototype … a hypothesized collection of properties that, according to commonplace folk theory, characterizes what makes a thing the sort of thing it is" (Lakoff, 2002, p. 10). Our culturally constructed prototypes of cities and suburbs come complete with sets of ideas, images, and emotions that lock us into a limited array of possible ways to understand metropolitan social and educational issues.

Lakoff (2002, 2004) also explains that commonsense notions can be reframed, thus altering the socially constructed tools for interpreting the world. Reframing, for Lakoff, is more of a moral/political activity than an empirical one. The empirical evidence, however, is clear that urban and suburban spaces are not dichotomous, and that it is both more accurate to follow demographers, urban planners, and the U.S. Census Bureau and refer to agglomerations of urban and suburban spaces as *metropolises* (Calthorpe, 1997; Calthorpe & Fulton, 2001; Dreier, et al., 2004; U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). The metropolitan framework reorganizes geography, making it possible to imagine cities horizontally, like rhizomes, with many vectors and connections to work, school, leisure, and friends.

Certainly, the metropolitan frame makes it easier to conceptually assimilate the demographic changes discussed above. There is more at stake here, however, as reframing the urban-suburban dichotomy can lead to educational policies that support better (e.g., fairer, more equitable, increasingly just) outcomes and research programs that can support such outcomes. All social-science research involves choices that are not only empirical, but moral and political as well (Flyvbjerg, 2001). The choice to employ the metropolitan frame is a moral one because it can widen our sense of community. The fates of suburbanites and city dwellers have always, in important ways, been tied together. The metropolitan frame, however, renders this connection difficult to ignore. Using metropolis to frame the modern American city creates new possibilities with implications for policy, politics, educational praxis, and possibly identity.

An Example: Richmond, Virginia

Richmond, Virginia, a mid-sized southern city, has for a long time confirmed common-sense ideas about American metropolises. The *inner city* has a high poverty rate, is majority African American, and contains many struggling schools. The urban core is surrounded by counties that are thought of as *suburban*, *ex-urban*, and *rural*. These counties are majority White, middle class, and contain many high-performing schools. Although these descriptions contain no deliberate inaccuracies, demographic shifts in Richmond and the surrounding counties have rendered these descriptions less accurate than common-sense notions would lead us to assume. Like metropolises around the country, economic, ethnic, and racial diversity in Richmond has been substantially suburbanized. One way to experience Richmond is to take a drive along Broad Street, starting in its oldest part and heading west through the city, then into older suburbs, newer suburbs, and the exurbs.[5] To the east, Broad Street

commences at Church Hill, a mix of tidy working-class homes, public housing projects, boarded-up houses, and empty lots, as well as gentrified pockets of beautifully refinished houses complete with period ironwork and slate roofs. The area is known for its antebellum and reconstruction-era housing stock, its stunning views of the James River and Downtown Richmond, and for its high crime rate.

Heading west on Broad, one encounters a gentrified former industrial area where tobacco warehouses have been converted to upscale lofts and night spots, and a conventional downtown, complete with hospitals, offices, municipal buildings, and the state capital. This area soon gives way to turn-of-the-century buildings housing a revitalized, but still gritty, cultural zone. Art galleries, theatres, trendy restaurants, new hotels, and the Richmond Convention Center populate this part of Broad Street, as do pawn shops and empty storefronts. Continuing westward, buildings are more likely to have been built in the 1950s and1960s and to be more spread out. We are now squarely in what is typically thought of as the suburbs. You may not have even noticed the small sign indicating passage from Richmond City to Henrico County. The neighborhoods to the south are dense, but homes are detached and each has a yard. Older, smallish strip malls become more common and large box stores begin to pop-up with some frequency. Businesses in this suburban area are mostly national chains, rather than the trendier independent establishments in Church Hill and downtown. If one looks closely, however, this stretch of Broad also boasts some of the best ethnic restaurants in Richmond, including Mexican and Chinese restaurants, Vietnamese noodle houses, Latin bodegas, halal butcher shops, and an Indian supermarket.

Further west, the newer suburbs/exurbs are evident in bigger, upscale, more recently constructed strip malls, larger shopping malls and ever larger box stores. Ironically, as one reaches the toniest part of the Western suburbs, a faux-urban village appears, complete with Whole Foods and Trader Joe's markets, sidewalks, and mixed-use apartment buildings. The surrounding neighborhoods here are only accessible by car and are predominantly White—but increasingly South Asian—and upper-middle class.

This anecdotal depiction of Richmond is supported by demographic trends in the metro-area that also reflect larger national trends (Brookings Institute, 2011). Richmond experienced a long period of out-migration beginning in the 1960s making it a *donut city* in which the suburbs contain the bulk of the metro-area's population. In 2009, the Richmond metropolitan area had 1,238,187 residents, with 1,033,736 of them living in the three suburban counties that surround the city, which had only 204,451 residents. The city is majority minority. The largest single

ethnic group is African American, comprising 49.1% of the population, followed by Whites at 40.4%, Hispanics at 5.4%, and Asians at 1.7%. The aggregate suburban population, however, is majority White—65.6%, followed by African Americans at 25.2%, Hispanics at 4.0%, and Asians 3.0%. Trends emerging over the past decade indicate that the movement to the suburbs of Richmond is now largely an African-American phenomenon, with Richmond city losing 10.0% of its African-American population since the year 2000. In this same period, the White population of the city grew by 10.4%, a higher rate than it grew in the suburbs. Asian and Hispanic populations also grew in the city and in the suburbs, but at a faster rate in the suburbs (Brookings Institute, 2011). Overall, like many of the top 50 metropolitan areas, in the past several years Richmond's central city has grown at a faster rate than the suburban counties that surround it (Frey, 2013)

The city-suburban divide in the Richmond metropolitan area is still stark when taking poverty into account. Almost one in four city residents are in poverty, a statistic that dwarfs the suburban counties around it where fewer than one in 10 live in poverty (Brookings Institute, 2011). Nevertheless, in terms of total numbers there are almost twice as many poor people in the suburbs as there are in the city. Thus, while Richmond maintains some characteristics of the "chocolate city" and "vanilla suburbs" that George Clinton sang about (Clinton, Collins, & Worrell, 1975), it also represents newer realities.

Redrawing the Lines:
Implications for Educational Policy and Research Praxis

The persistence of the urban/suburban dichotomy can limit the possibilities of education policy and research to address contemporary issues. Likewise, reframing these geographies opens up new possibilities. Examples exist among a handful of school systems across the country that have, under varying circumstances, bridged the traditional city-suburban divide in spite of the 1974 *Milliken* decision. In some cases, political boundaries have been formally erased through consolidation or annexation processes. Two of the more well-known examples of these metropolitan-wide school systems are Raleigh-Wake County, North Carolina, and Louisville-Jefferson County, Kentucky. Both systems actually manipulated district boundaries in order to facilitate school desegregation, actions prompted by the state courts in Louisville-Jefferson County and by the state legislature in Raleigh-Wake County (Grant, 2009; Phillips et al., 2009).

Metropolitan approaches to the organization of school systems have

important implications for equity and social justice. A growing body of research that compares demographic patterns in divided and united metropolises links much lower and more stable patterns of school segregation, as well as faster declines in residential segregation, to metros where schools are united into large city-suburban districts (Frankenberg, 2005; Housing Scholars Brief, 2006; Pearce, 1980; Siegel-Hawley, 2013). For instance, between 1990 and 2010, levels of school segregation between black and white students were far lower in Louisville-Jefferson County than in the separate Richmond area school systems. Over the same period, black-white housing segregation in Louisville-Jefferson County declined at twice the rate of the Richmond metro (Siegel-Hawley, 2013).

Importantly, the city-suburban merger in Louisville-Jefferson County was accompanied by a comprehensive school desegregation policy that has persisted over four decades with widespread support from the community (Orfield & Frankenberg, 2011). Despite legal and political challenges, the school system continues to voluntarily pursue school desegregation through the use of an innovative student assignment policy. The plan relies upon census data to define the racial and socioeconomic characteristics of neighborhoods, and then seeks to ensure that each school in the city-suburban district reflects a mixture of students from communities with differing racial and economic compositions (Richards et al., 2012).

The underlying theory supporting the finding that metropolitan school desegregation plans are linked to faster declines in housing segregation stems from one of the country's founding principles: The best way to broaden narrow political interests is to expand the limits of the community itself (Madison, 1787; Orfield, 2001). When families faced with an impending move know that they can (re)locate to any part of a larger metropolitan community and remain connected to high quality, diverse schools, the close connection between school and residential decisions unravels. In this manner, metropolitan school desegregation plans open up the housing market for a community broadly defined.

In Richmond, a 1973 legal hurdle foreshadowing the outcome of the *Milliken* decision prevented the consolidation of the three major metropolitan area school systems (*Bradley*, 1973). Thus, like most metropolitan areas in the United States, Richmond continues to have several school districts separated by municipal and district lines (Weiher, 1991; Wells et al., 2009). Today, legal efforts to create metropolitan mergers for the purpose of school desegregation through federal courts face a number of hurdles (Ryan, 2010). However, legal and political efforts at the state and regional level have some potential for success.

If barriers to actual consolidation prove insurmountable, metropolitan communities might also consider cooperation. This has been accomplished

through the Connecticut state court system with regional magnet schools, located near urban-suburban lines and attracting students from multiple jurisdictions (Cobb, Bifulco, & Bell, 2009). Further examples include the nation's eight long-standing interdistrict programs (Holme & Wells, 2008). These plans allow students to apply to transfer from city school systems to suburban ones, or vice versa. Finally, Omaha's new regional learning community showcases an innovative metropolitan agreement related to education. The learning community represents a collaboration between 11 school districts and features revenue-sharing, an expanded set of magnet programs, and efforts to socioeconomically integrate students across the region (Holme, Diem, & Mansfield, 2011).

The metropolitan approach can also be transformative in terms of sharpening empirical approaches to studying educational policy and outcomes.[6] Terms like urban and suburban appear to provide an efficient tool for framing studies of educational inequality, but they can lead to distorted conclusions. For example, Dooley and Assaf (2009) set out to compare how high-stakes testing policies were affecting teacher praxis in two schools that serve very different communities. In the report, the authors chose to define suburban as "a predominantly White community with abundant financial resources" (Dooley & Assaf, 2009, p. 359) and urban as "an area with a high-density population that typically serves a large percentage of children who come from low-income families…that lack the safety and resources that many affluent suburban schools offer" (p. 359). This framework encourages the reader to stereotype one specific context as a representation of a diverse range of contexts in a geographic area. Thus, readers are left with the impression that high-stakes policies affect cities and suburbs in completely different ways, when in fact the issue is much more complex. The otherwise excellent research presented in the report could have been strengthened had the researchers framed their study as one that highlights the different effects of high-stakes testing policies on schools that serve different demographic groups in a single metropolitan area. Adopting a metropolitan outlook connects disparate schools into a single frame, making it more difficult to rely on deficit models to explain inequality. In this way the comparison between schools as institutions that serve distinct populations is strengthened because income disparity and ethnic difference are the transparent and salient factors that explain the inequitable effects of a policy.

Employment of the metropolitan framework can enhance educational research and is especially useful for making sense of how policies affect issues of equity. For example, Holme and Richards (2009) studied the effects of a policy in Colorado that gives parents the option of transferring their children from one district to another. The authors

noted that previous research on the effects of similar policies focused only on individual districts in isolation. Such a narrow focus means that researchers can only speculate on the effects of choice policies in a metropolitan area and cannot generalize to other metropolises. Using a metropolitan database on transfers that included demographic information made it possible for the researchers to connect "choice trends to existing patterns of racial, ethnic, and income stratification between school districts" (p. 152). The researchers found that the interdistrict-choice policy in Colorado exacerbated ethnic, racial, and income stratification of the 15 school districts in metropolitan Denver (Holme & Richards, 2009). They extended previous findings showing that well-off White families in the metropolis were more likely to transfer their children out of racially diverse districts into less diverse districts. The researchers also found that low-income students and students of color "used interdistrict choice to flee from predominantly White and affluent districts to districts in which there were *higher* proportions of students of their own backgrounds" (Holme & Richards, 2009, p. 169, emphasis in original). This second trend was missed by previous studies that focused on transfer trends in isolated districts.

Conclusion

Organizing our thinking around metropolitan areas rather than municipalities can blur hard-and-fast municipal and county lines. These lines often protect privilege and cauterize poverty, but they are increasingly becoming obsolete even for these morally objectionable purposes. Choosing to replace the urban-suburban frame with a metropolitan frame is practical, ethical, and empirically appropriate. Furthermore, this choice can help to illuminate current problems, such as suburban poverty and dispersed populations of English language learners, to name just two. Our hope is that reframing metropolitan spaces in ways that conform more closely with the practice of demographers and sociologists will open new possibilities for researchers to make sense of contemporary social and educational problems. Ultimately, we hope this research will inform the crafting of productive and socially just educational policy.

Notes

[1] Blurring distinctions was at the heart of John Dewey's entire philosophical project (e.g., 1916; 1967). We draw on the Deweyan project here, particularly in acknowledging the practical roots in the existing dichotomy and how, rather than turn our backs on the once useful but now calcified ways of thinking, we use them as the basis for what ought to come next.

[2] We acknowledge that, to a certain extent, our presentation of the dichotomy is overly simplified, especially in regards to the urban. Leonardo and Hunter's (2007) discussion of urban explains that it is "constructed through multiple and often contradictory meanings," (p. 780).

[3] The word underclass evokes "a mysterious wilderness in the heart of America's cities; a terrain of violence and despair; a collectivity outside politics and social structure, beyond the usual language of class and stratum, unable to protest or revolt," (Katz, 1993, p. 4). This fear may contribute to the vague language used to define the term. Thus, "underclass" is defined by behavior rather than occupation, income, or other non-behavioral data.

[4] Throughout this article we use Jargowsky's definition of a "high poverty neighborhood," namely, a census tract where at least 40% of the residents live below the official poverty line.

[5] We employ the very categories we wish to trouble, as they are so common it is impossible to find a way to introduce the reader to this area without employing the ideas. Our hope is to use them in an effort to transcend them.

[6] For an example of a legitimate use of the term urban, see Vasquez Heilig & Darling-Hammond (2008). The authors use urban as an adjective that describes a single geographic/political entity. The entity, a large school district, does not extend beyond the municipal borders of the central city in a larger metropolitan area. The authors are also very transparent in defining the population of interest as "low-income, and students of color" (p. 76) who attend schools in this district.

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