Residential segregation has been one of the more frequently studied and controversial research and policy issues for urban researchers and policy makers during the last few decades. *Residential segregation* refers to the concentration or uneven distribution of residents from different socio-economic or racial/ethnic backgrounds across a city or region. Although research on residential segregation has focused on a diversity of issues, ranging from the causes and consequences of segregation to changes in the levels and patterns of segregation in a particular area, most of the literature regards residential segregation as a negative phenomenon assumed to have harmful impacts on the segregated population. The “Black ghetto” of the American metropolis represents perhaps the most extreme example of segregation. It is assumed that poor housing quality, inferior educational opportunities, deficient health services, and high crime levels go hand-in-hand with ghetto life, limiting the opportunities available to residents of the community. Moreover, although affluent (and predominantly White) Americans voluntarily cluster in suburban neighborhoods, it is assumed that the segregation of low-income and racial/ethnic minority households in inner-city urban areas happens mostly involuntarily.

In recent decades, policy makers have begun to address the problematic effects of residential segregation by targeting pockets of *concentrated poverty* in urban areas. The notoriety of large public housing projects as sites of urban blight, shrinking governmental budgets for affordable housing, and several lawsuits filed against the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) alleging racial discrimination in housing, led to substantial modifications in the agency’s housing programs from the late 1980s onward. To prevent both racial and income concentration in project sites and neighborhoods, HUD curtailed further construction of low-income housing projects and imposed significant restrictions on municipal public housing authorities regarding the geographic placement of subsidized housing. As a result of

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*Residential Segregation of Immigrants: A Case Study of the Mexican Population on St. Paul’s West Side*  
*by Eva Dick*
lawsuit settlements, several former public housing projects were bulldozed and replaced with mixed-income units, and programs were established to relocate former residents to low-poverty or nonminority communities, sometimes against their will.

The present research project has several origins. First is the limited success of recent desegregation or dispersal initiatives. On the whole, these efforts have been largely unsuccessful at achieving desegregation, have provided limited benefits to relocated households, and have met frequent resistance from those who were involuntarily relocated, particularly racial/ethnic minorities and immigrant communities. In addition, there are serious questions about the transferability of the African American residential segregation experience to new immigrant communities. Discussions of residential segregation in the United States traditionally have focused on African American/White segregation. However, recent immigrants to the country from Asian or Latin American countries often cluster in ethnic enclaves within the communities where they live, and empirical studies in Europe in the 1990s suggest that residential clustering or segregation may convey social and economic benefits to new immigrants. Finally, research on immigrant groups and communities historically has been shaped by an integrationist or assimilationist normative framework. Within this framework, ethnic enclaves are assumed to pose a threat to national social cohesion, as well as to the social, economic, and cultural advancement of immigrants. However, some evidence suggests that ethnic enclaves favor the development of co-ethnic networks that not only help immigrant newcomers to become established in their new communities, but also foster social mobility and provide bridges to the dominant culture.

Using the Mexican population on the West Side of St. Paul as a case study, this project explored the impact of residential segregation on the development of social capital and social mobility of immigrants. The project was supported in part by my residence at CURA during 2002 and 2003 through the Visiting Scholar Program, and served as the basis for my Ph.D. dissertation.

The Mexican Population on St. Paul’s West Side
The Twin Cities metropolitan area epitomizes a recent feature of urban demographics in the United States: Metropolitan areas in the North and Midwest with little past immigration have become centers for a new wave of immigration from Latin American and other less-developed countries. In 1980, 89% of the population of St. Paul was non-Hispanic White. By the year 2000, this proportion had decreased to 64%. Figures for the larger Twin Cities metro area indicate a similar trend (Table 1).

I chose the West Side of St. Paul as a case study location for two reasons. First, this neighborhood has a high percentage of racial/ethnic minorities, low-income households, and low housing values, as well as higher poverty rates. All of these characteristics are typical of the types of neighborhoods the literature

### Table 1. Ethnic Composition of the Twin Cities, St. Paul, and the West Side Neighborhood, 1980–2000

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13-county Twin Cities metro area</td>
<td>94.5</td>
<td>91.5</td>
<td>84.7</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Paul</td>
<td>88.6</td>
<td>80.4</td>
<td>64.0</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Side neighborhood</td>
<td>85.4</td>
<td>65.4</td>
<td>48.8</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* People of Hispanic origin can be of any race.
on residential segregation usually addresses. Second, in the context of the metro area in general and St. Paul in particular, the West Side neighborhood has one of the longer-standing and larger Mexican and Latino populations in the region—a population that has been steadily growing since the 1990s (Table 1 and Figure 1).

Conceptual Framework and Methodology

The question guiding this research project was: What is the impact of residential segregation on the development of immigrants’ social capital and social mobility? The research drew on French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu’s concept of social capital as “the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to the possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition—or, in other words, to membership in a group.”

For Bourdieu, the value of social capital lies in its potential to be converted into economic or educational (cultural) capital, creating opportunities for upward social mobility. For example, a person might learn from a neighbor about a desirable employment opportunity which, in turn, might lead to a better job with higher income potential and the possibility of acquiring new skills. According to Bourdieu, individuals—both consciously and unconsciously—use their social capital to maintain or increase their social status.

To conceptualize the relationship between an individual’s residential location and his or her acquisition of social capital and mobility, I used Bourdieu’s concept of localization profits. An underlying assumption of this concept is that physical space strongly influences social structures and vice versa. The influence of the physical world on the social capital and status of individuals works via two types of profits of localization. The first is profits derived from the proximity to desirable agents and goods, such as a person’s neighbors or community and service infrastructure. For instance, for households with children, proximity to good-quality schools is an important criterion when choosing where to live. For households with a small budget, proximity to the workplace may be

the most important criterion because it frees up limited income that would otherwise be used for transportation expenditures. The second type of profit of localization is profits of position or of rank. For example, a person who lives in a prestigious neighborhood may earn respect or be considered “successful” simply because of where his or her home is located. In contrast, a person who lives in a crime-ridden neighborhood might be suspected of being involved in illegal activities.

Thus, living in a low-income neighborhood is likely to adversely affect a person’s social capital, both in a material and symbolic sense. High resident turnover may be a disincentive for residents to build social relationships in the community. Opportunities for socializing may be limited because of high levels of neighborhood violence and low police presence. Adolescents may be particularly at risk if they are exposed to adults and peers with behavioral patterns and values at odds with those of mainstream society (e.g., alcohol and drug abuse, violence, disinterest in education). Symbolically, living in a neighborhood that is considered by others to be a “poor” or “minority” neighborhood may convey a negative reputation on the community’s inhabitants. As Bourdieu explains, “the stigmatized area socially degrades its inhabitants, who, in return, symbolically degrade it.”

Although this negative attribution is created from the outside, neighborhood residents may appropriate it by, for example, avoiding mentioning their home address in status-relevant situations such as applying for a job or making new friends.

Although this research project focused on analyzing the effects of residential segregation, it also looked at the causes for ethnic clustering on the West Side. Based on the literature on residential segregation, I assumed income and social status, housing preferences and experiences, and institutional factors (such as discriminatory housing practices by real estate agents or lending institutions) to be the most important factors leading to segregated living patterns. Figure 2 illustrates the conceptual framework I used to analyze the causes and effects of residential segregation.

I conducted the empirical portion of this research from August 2004 to July 2005 using a mix of quantitative and qualitative research methods, based on both primary and secondary data (Figure 3). During this time, I carried out 27 semi-structured interviews with Mexican residents living on the West Side of St. Paul. The interviews were structured around a prepared interview guideline with open-ended questions that centered on the residents’ life history on the West Side, the type and geographic extent of their social networks, the relevance of these social networks for getting along and getting ahead, and the advantages and disadvantages of living in

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an “ethnic community.” To account for differences in social capital–related outcomes, I used a purposive (as opposed to random) sampling design to ensure that interview partners of different social-class backgrounds, gender, age, and immigration cohort (between first- and fourth-generation) were selected. I conducted a total of 15 resident interviews in English and 12 in Spanish, according to the preference of the persons being interviewed. My analysis of the interviews followed the principles of grounded theory: simultaneous data collection and analysis, use of different coding techniques, progressive definition of patterns and concepts by seeking confirming and disconfirming cases, and eventual linking back to existing or additional theories.

In addition, I interviewed 15 housing and community development experts from federal, state, metro-area, city, and neighborhood institutions, again following open-ended interview guidelines. The main purpose of the expert interviews was to gather information on general housing policy and planning issues, as well as issues specific to the study areas such as the housing market constraints in the West Side and other St. Paul neighborhoods, and the relationship between different Mexican immigration cohorts on the West Side.

Another research method I used was observation, which included participating in neighborhood events and meetings of neighborhood organizations. For six months, I participated in the weekly meetings and training sessions of the self-help group Hispanic Women in Action (Mujeres Hispanas en Acción), participated in neighborhood events (e.g., Cinco de Mayo celebrations), attended a Spanish Church service and parish gatherings, and attended meetings of the West Side Citizens Organization (WSCO). I took neighborhood walks to familiarize myself with the West Side neighborhood and to gain a visual impression of the Mexican imprints in the neighborhood, such as sculptures and murals on neighborhood buildings.

My secondary data sources included reports and leaflets from housing and community development organizations in St. Paul and the West Side neighborhood, and statistical information from the 1990 and 2000 U.S. Censuses. I analyzed statistical data both to provide background information on the study area and to corroborate or crosscheck information from my interviews.

The Effects of Residential Segregation

The case study of the West Side of St. Paul suggests that ethnic residential segregation brings about both localization “profits” and localization “deficits.” In addition, the study identifies the concrete conditions under which ethnic segregation plays out positively or negatively. These conditions may be found on the individual, neighborhood, or macrosocial level.

**Conditions on the Individual Level.** The way residential segregation of immigrants on the West Side is manifested on the individual level is illustrated in Table 2. My research results suggest that no general conclusions can or should be drawn with respect to the clustering effects of a neighborhood on the individual person. Rather, ethnic segregation has differential effects on individuals with different characteristics. The individuals’ immigrant cohort, gender, and age are particularly important in determining these effects.3 My general findings are summarized below.

**First-Generation Adult Immigrants of Lower Social Status.** These individuals benefit most from the spatial proximity of co-ethnic households and ethnic services or commerce for several reasons. First, linguistic and legal barriers often limit their opportunities to socialize with the native population and to access jobs in the mainstream economy. Thus, job opportunities are accessed via informal contacts or immigrant service providers such as Neighborhood House, located on the West Side. For example, 39-year-old, first-generation immigrant Hermosa,4 who got her first paying work as a hotel janitor, recalls:

> In the context of Neighborhood House where I participated in the group, a lady came to the group and offered a class in hospitality. And this was about how to work in a hotel. So, [after] I took this class with this lady, I went to a hotel. And then, well, they gave me the job in the hotel.

Second, recent first-generation Mexican immigrants tend to feel safer

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3 Social class or status constitutes a further important factor influencing neighborhood effects on the individual. However, in the context of the case study, class appeared largely as a function of the immigrant cohort (born or not-born, or length of time, in the United States), rather than as an independent variable.

4 All interview-participant names cited in this article have been changed to protect confidentiality.
Table 2. Localization Profits and Deficits Derived from Living in an Ethnic Neighborhood

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proximity to desired agents and infrastructure</th>
<th>Position or rank; size of occupied space</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Profits</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▶ Walking distance to self-help groups and social services</td>
<td>▶ Reputation of West Side among Latinos as the Latino neighborhood in the Twin Cities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▶ Proximity to downtown jobs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▶ Accessibility of same-language services and commercial infrastructure</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▶ Comfort associated with socially and culturally familiar environment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▶ Concentration required to attain critical mass for specialized, ethnic services</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▶ Protection from outside judgment and discrimination</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deficits</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▶ Low-quality educational infrastructure</td>
<td>▶ Negative image of neighborhood in rest of the city</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▶ Contact with problematic peer role models, especially youth gangs</td>
<td>▶ Self-perception as low-income neighborhood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▶ Physical mobility hampered by violence in some areas of the neighborhood</td>
<td>▶ Historical disinvestments in neighborhood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▶ Social and economic barriers reinforced through (past) sociospatial segregation</td>
<td>▶ Low market values of housing and real estate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▶ Low use value of housing and old, dilapidated housing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

and more comfortable in a co-ethnic social and neighborhood environment, where they can avoid anticipated or actual discriminatory attitudes. When asked about alternatives to living on the West Side, 26-year-old Esteban, who at the time of the interview had lived in the Twin Cities for three years, replied:

Well, we would like to live in an area with not so much traffic and less noise, you know,… in the kind of areas where the Americans are. They are cleaner and quieter…. But then we would not like to live there because the people there treat you as the “bad Latino” or they look at you with a strange face, you know.

Third, recently arrived immigrants tend to have limited physical mobility, partly due to economic reasons (insufficient income to own a car or pay public transit fees) and partly due to the gendered division of labor and consumer goods (resulting in many immigrant women being unable to drive). Proximity benefits are accentuated in residentially segregated areas because culturally or linguistically targeted services (healthcare, employment training, religious services, etc.) are usually located close to their clientele.

Long-standing Immigrants. For long-standing (beyond first-generation) immigrants, the proximity of co-ethnic households and services is a matter of emotional comfort rather than need. None of the 13 long-standing residents of the West Side I interviewed had acquired his or her present employment through co-ethnic networks. It appears that the relative importance of what might be called the instrumental versus the intrinsic dimension of neighborhood capital—the first related to social mobility, the second to emotional well-being—changes over time through subsequent generations of immigrant families and their descendants. For newcomers, proximity to co-ethnics and ethnic neighborhood infrastructure tends to be of instrumental importance to “get along” and “get ahead” in their new society, although sociocultural comfort and familiarity no doubt is also essential. For second- and subsequent generation immigrant descendants, the comfort factor associated with proximity to co-ethnics and the ethnic neighborhood environment becomes dominant. As 55-year-old second-generation immigrant Ronald put it,

I like the people, I like being familiar with my community, and my community being familiar with me…. I like to know who runs the businesses, and when I go in there they’ll call me by name, um, I like being around people that look like me, that act like me, and uh, and, come from a basic fundamental value system, of what I come from.

Children and Adolescents. Young people are the most heavily impacted by potential locational deficits. In some measure, the deficits result from being surrounded by potentially harmful peer or adult role models in the family, neighborhood, or school environment. Sixteen-year-old West Side high school student Tamara illustrates this point:

I don’t like it because there is a lot of violence, I mean it is a bad school, I mean in terms of its students. The teachers are very good and all, but the students make it a bad school.

These deficits also result from educational entities ill-prepared to confront the challenges or draw on the potential of a multiethnic and socio-economically burdened parent and student constituency. For instance, parents’ lack of familiarity with the American school system, linguistic constraints, and sociocultural barriers are likely to result in their lack of involvement in school affairs, traditionally considered an important factor in children’s educational success. Several experts I interviewed observed that only recently have schools taken action to address this issue, for example, by pursuing culturally specific parent involvement strategies. For such children, educational barriers are likely to result in mobility constraints in the future. To the extent that parents worry about social and educational risks to their children, they are also strongly affected by these locational disadvantages.

Individual-Independent Characteristics. Study results suggest that living in an ethnic neighborhood provides rather limited profits of position or rank
Immigrant youth are the most heavily impacted by potential locational deficits that result from being surrounded by harmful environmental influences or being consigned to schools that cannot address the challenges or potential of such youth.

...to individuals. As 46-year-old Francisco, second-generation immigrant, observes:

You know, the negative is I guess the perception, some people think that, you know... maybe still to this day, they fear from the West Side, they still think that it’s bad, that you’re poor, that you’re hanging out, that you might be part of a gang, or, you know, that you either have bad house or gang or a lot of trouble and things which are not totally true.

As long as the dominant, middle-class, White society maintains a negative image of the neighborhood, immigrants are unlikely to capitalize upon (at least in a material sense) the subjectively perceived locational advantages of their ethnic neighborhoods. Tangible manifestations of this fact are housing disinvestments, relatively small or slowly increasing housing values, and frequent residential turnover (implying that economically stronger ethnic and White households tend to leave the neighborhood). I further elaborate on this point in a later section. **Conditions Related to the Neighborhood and City Environments.** Neighborhood characteristics, as well as characteristics of the city and urban region as a whole, also influence the way racial/ethnic residential segregation plays out at the individual level.

For instance, neighborhoods where the majority of inhabitants experience high levels of poverty are likely to have different neighborhood effects than, say, mixed-income neighborhoods. Overall, wealthy urban areas can be assumed to offer more income-generating opportunities than economically depressed ones, and to provide more opportunities for population groups with lower skill levels.

Because the case study was carried out in one neighborhood only, I was not able to gather comparative qualitative data for different types of ethnic neighborhoods in the same or in other urban regions. Therefore, the conclusions I reached should be considered tentative at best. The following are some factors I found to be of importance when considering urban environment-related variations of ethnic residential segregation.

**Economic Situation of Neighborhood and Urban Area.** Income levels and distribution, as well as skill levels of the inhabitants in a neighborhood, provide important clues about the socialization environment, particularly for children and youth. On the level of the city as a whole, apart from employment opportunities, the income levels of inhabitants determine the tax base of the city and thereby the financial resources the city has available for mobility-relevant services and infrastructure, such as schools.
members or participants with useful or instrumental social capital depends on the kind and quality of their services. It can be assumed that more mature institutions, in the sense of having a longer institutional history, are better able to meet the needs of their mono- or multi-ethnic constituency and are able to offer more effective bridges to the nonethnic society and the larger city context.

According to some of my interviewees, the service networks on the West Side that developed during early Mexican immigration at the beginning of the 20th century effectively assist today’s immigrants in getting along and getting ahead in their new home. The few long-standing Mexican Americans who continue to be involved in the networks were described as the “anchors of the community” and as particularly valuable role models for youth.

In short, the West Side neighborhood context may provide some advantageous components to the social networks and social mobility experience of its Mexican population that might not be found to the same degree in other ethnic neighborhoods.

Conditions Pertaining to the Macrosocial Environment. The case study of the West Side indicates that the influence on individual social capital and mobility of living in ethnic neighborhoods greatly depends on how the neighborhood and its population are viewed from the outside. The relationship between these factors points to the symbolic dimension of localization effects—that is, the profits or deficits of position and rank.

Value judgments about a certain social or ethnic population group and their residential location manifest themselves in observable ways. For instance, housing values on the West Side are lower on average and increase at a slower rate than housing values for St. Paul as a whole. According to one housing expert I interviewed, they have been “undervalued for many, many years... because of this reputation that it was an ‘ethnic’ neighborhood.” Another example of these observable manifestations is school curricula. For many years, educational instruction in West Side primary and secondary schools occurred exclusively in English, despite the high presence of nonnative students, many of them Mexican. Only recently, reading lessons for English-learners have been introduced, Spanish-speaking staff have been hired, and extracurricular activities have been developed that are targeted at a multicultural parent and student population.

These manifestations of outsiders’ images of a group affect people’s lives in both material and symbolic terms. For instance, one resident named Leon did not consider buying a house on the West Side to be a very good deal because “it’s always looked [at] more as a low-income [area],” thus providing less opportunity for housing-based asset building. As another example, many Mexican Americans who grew up on the West Side in the mid-20th century do not speak Spanish because their parents made sure their children only spoke English at home. It is likely that the parents recognized speaking English as a key attribute for getting ahead in American society. Both examples (buying housing property, retention of native language) suggest that the negative

Or, inversely, recognized that the Spanish language is not valued (e.g., by teachers, peers, prospective employers) and that learning to speak Spanish thus lacks instrumental utility. In contrast, today, multilingual backgrounds are attributed a higher value, and are more frequently promoted in U.S. schools. Against this background, most Mexican immigrants now try to make sure their children retain their language of origin, in addition to learning the English language, as an element of cultural pride.
outside image of a group and its attributes are not only known about, but also partly appropriated, by the group. Despite this, the present case study indicates that there are tensions between the outside and inside value judgments. For example, the long-standing Mexican American residents of the West Side vigorously reject the negative outside image of their community with respect to perceived security. As one interview subject named Dora noted,

I walk the streets at any time in the day or night. You know, hey. People are getting bombed out and killed in the suburbs, more than in my neighborhood.

Another tension lies in the outside labeling of the West Side as “the” Mexican or Hispanic neighborhood. Long-standing Mexican American residents of the community tend to emphasize the socioeconomic and cultural differences between themselves and the recent Mexican immigrant population with respect to such things as eating or clothing habits, the level of appropriation of the American way of life, and spoken language. It is clear that underscoring these differences plays a status-reaffirming role for long-standing residents in response to the majority-White society view that identifies Mexicans as those who, in the words of one expert interview subject, “aren’t making it in schools, who’re dropping out of school.”

Conclusions
This case study of St. Paul’s West Side illustrates that ethnic residential segregation or clustering can have both positive and negative effects on ethnic residents. Any assessment of ethnic residential segregation, however, should consider not only the effects of residential segregation, but also the factors leading to it. More precisely, it makes a difference whether immigrants or their descendants live in an ethnic neighborhood as a result of discrimination or due to their own choice or preference.

This case study of the West Side suggests that the majority of the Mexicans or Mexican Americans who were interviewed chose to live or stay on the West Side, precisely in order to live near co-ethnics. No cases of direct discrimination (e.g., by real estate agents or banks) were reported. However, for one resident interviewed, anticipated discrimination from neighbors was mentioned as a reason they moved to a “Latino” neighborhood. The importance of preference notwithstanding, limited housing affordability as well as the need to use certain services or infrastructure, such as public transportation, effectively narrows the range of housing choices from the start, especially for low-income, first-generation Mexican households.

As stated at the beginning of this article, policy responses to residential segregation that are focused on residential dispersal of minorities have produced rather unsatisfactory results. They have failed to lead to a numerically significant deconcentration and have provoked opposition from those to be dispersed, particularly racial or ethnic minorities. Several housing experts I interviewed expressed apprehension about dispersal policies, including one who described the typical reactions of the African American community:

[It is] viewed very cynically, that there is some federal government plan to deconcentrate poverty/race, it’s just a way to take away our power…. So there’s this kind of sophisticated argument that efforts to deconcentrate are misplaced. Don’t tell us what good you are gonna do for us. We’ve chosen to live here.

Against this backdrop, a reconsideration of U.S. housing policy and planning responses to residential segregation, whether racial or ethnic based, seems necessary. The results of the empirical research on the West Side of St. Paul suggest future policies should be oriented around the following principles.8

Recognizing the relevance of ethnic neighborhoods for individual well-being. Immigrant neighborhoods have a distinct value in terms of satisfying their inhabitants’ need for social comfort and safety, in addition to their mobility-relevance. The experience of comfort and sociability cannot necessarily be replicated in other, majority-White neighborhoods.

Supporting the bridging potential of ethnic neighborhoods and capital. Living in immigrant neighborhoods and being involved in local ethnic networks can provide access to opportunities outside of the neighborhood, and thus to social and spatial mobility. However, this bridging potential requires active institutional and policy support. Such support may include increasing the asset-building capacity of residents of an ethnic neighborhood by providing linguistically adequate homeowner-ship counseling, or housing maintenance and rehabilitation loans.

8 In my doctoral thesis, these principles are translated into more concrete policy recommendations.
Fostering an integrated approach. Although housing is a critical mechanism for fostering social inclusion, it is not the only one. Specifically, measures to enhance individuals’ educational and employment opportunities, as well as to advance intercultural understanding among ethnic groups, need to be embraced to foster urban social inclusion.

Seeking outgroup-sensitive policy solutions. Policy measures need to account for the differential impacts of residential segregation on specific groups. For instance, children and youth constitute the groups most susceptible to possible detrimental effects of segregation. Particular efforts should therefore be made to improve educational quality in immigrant communities and provide an affirmative attitude toward the children’s culture of origin. Homeownership options adjusted to the economic and cultural needs of an ethnic group are another example of a group-sensitive approach.

Eva Dick is currently a lecturer and research fellow in the Department of Spatial Planning at the University of Dortmund, Germany, where her work focuses on urban development and planning in developing countries. She has a masters degree in sociology from the University of Hamburg, Germany, and successfully defended her doctoral thesis at the University of Dortmund in June 2007, on the topic of this article.

The changing racial composition in the Twin Cities was the focus of a recent keynote address by Reynolds Farley of the University of Michigan’s Population Studies Center. Farley spoke at a January 24, 2008, symposium on “Advancing Interdisciplinary Research and Action on Health and Education Disparities,” sponsored by the University of Minnesota’s Children, Youth and Family Consortium; School of Public Health; and Minnesota Population Center. In his keynote, Farley traced sociodemographic changes in the Twin Cities during the last half-century based on a detailed analysis of U.S. Census data and readings about the history of the region.

According to Farley, Minneapolis and St. Paul have weathered the fundamental economic changes in the United States since World War II better than other cities in the Midwest and Northeast. That economic success has attracted migrants to the region, particularly since 1970. These migrants have included large numbers of Latinos, African Americans, and immigrants from abroad, transforming the area from being almost exclusively White. Racial/ethnic minorities have always resided in Minnesota, but in very small numbers. Residential and school segregation of those minorities has been lower than in other cities in the Midwest and Northeast, but higher than places in the South and West. Poverty rates among African Americans are several times higher than that of Whites, whereas Latinos and Asians fall somewhere in between. Farley concluded that the Twin Cities are better positioned than other places to deal with economic and health disparities because they have a diverse economic base, a good reputation to maintain, a well-educated and affluent population, an ethic of corporate tithing and corporate support for the public good, a governmental tradition of supporting the public welfare, and strong public institutions to work on reducing these disparities.

Farley’s PowerPoint presentation (with voice narration) is available online at http://cpheo1.sph.umn.edu/healthandeducation/, along with presentations from other speakers at the symposium.

Changing Racial Composition: Minneapolis–St. Paul