

the public needs of the community and the kinds and amounts of governmental services required.

For the 190 largest standard metropolitan statistical areas (SMSA's), the percentage of the population falling into each category in the central city and in the remainder of the SMSA, respectively, was calculated. The remainder of an SMSA, after subtracting its central city, is referred to hereafter as suburban for purposes of simplicity. Thus the suburbs, in this analysis, include a number of outlying cities and older communities.

The degree of central city-suburban disparity in each metropolitan area was expressed as the difference between the proportion of central city residents having certain characteristics and the proportion of suburban residents having the same characteristics. These differences were then correlated statistically with six major characteristics of metropolitan areas in general: Region, size, population dispersion, rate of population growth, percent of nonwhites, and economic base as measured by rate of employment in manufacturing, trade, and finance and services.

SUMMARY OF DISPARITIES

The results of this statistical analysis reveal the extent of disparities between the central city and suburbs for each population characteristic in each metropolitan area, the kinds of metropolitan areas in which disparity patterns are similar, and under what circumstances disparity patterns vary. The strongest conclusion to be drawn from the analysis is that very few meaningful generalizations about economic, social, and racial disparities can be applied to all metropolitan areas. For a number of population characteristics, the differences among metropolitan areas are far larger than the differences between central cities and their surrounding area. For most characteristics, it is possible to generalize about disparities only for particular kinds of metropolitan areas.

The classic dichotomy of the poor, underprivileged, nonwhite central city contrasted with the comfortable white suburb does not hold true throughout the country. While racial disparities are large everywhere, the other elements of the dichotomy—education, income, employment, and housing—fit the stereotype consistently only in the large metropolitan areas and those located in the Northeast.⁵ The Northeast includes 41 of the 190 standard metropolitan statistical areas studied, and outside of that region there are 39 metropolitan areas with populations over half a million. For the remaining 110 metropolitan areas, this dichotomy does not generally apply.

In the small and medium sized metropolitan areas outside the Northeast, some elements of both high and low socioeconomic status tend to be equally prevalent in both central cities and suburbs, while other low status characteristics predominate in the suburbs and some high status characteristics are more significant in the central cities. In many metropolitan areas of the South and West, poverty, especially among nonwhites, is more typical of the suburbs than the central city.

⁵ See also Leo F. Schnore, "The Socio-Economic Status of Cities and Suburbs," *American Sociological Review*, XXVIII (February 1963), pp. 76-84.