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The Formation of the U.S. Racialized Urban Ghetto

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Introduction: The Racialized Urban Ghetto

During the last three decades of the twentieth century, most inner city communities in large urban areas of the United States experienced continuing social deterioration in terms of increasing rates of unemployment and poverty, violence and disease, drug trafficking and use, deteriorating housing and environmental conditions, inadequate educational resources, and declining availability and/or accessibility to adequate health and social services. As stated in this book's introduction, when I arrived in the Washington, D.C. area in the fall of 1988, the public concern regarding these issues seemed to even greater than they had been since the War on Poverty programs during the 1960s. To better understand these issues, in the fall of 1989 I initiated the Cultural Systems Analysis Group (CuSAG) at the University of Maryland, as an applied ethnographic research unit that I would then be used as a research vehicle to collect data that would help me to better understand these conditions. Between 1990 and 1998, CuSAG carried out more than a dozen ethnographic and qualitative research studies in low-income communities in the Baltimore Washington urban corridor. Through open-ended, group, and ethnographic interviews, and full neighborhood ethnographies*, the CuSAG research explored issues related to employment and unemployment, drugs and drug trafficking, crime, violence and incarceration, male-female relationships, sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS, poverty and neighborhood conditions, and the availability and accessibility of health care, including services to those living with AIDS. We interviewed regular community residents, young drug traffickers, male and female clients of STD clinics, incarcerated males and females,* health and human service personnel and vice policemen.

In the work that CuSAG teams have carried out in communities in the Washington, D.C. area, we found it interesting that some of the residents who were 40 years and older would repeatedly talk about how the deterioration of their neighborhood began with the riots following the murder of Martin Luther King in 1968. Prior to the riots they say, there were more businesses, stores, and employment opportunities in their neighborhoods, and after they were burned out or forced out by the fallout from the riots, they did not return.

Since the riots were carried out by primarily African Americans in their own communities, many academic and popular observers of the riots used the traditional *deficit* or "blaming the victim" model that has long been used to explain behaviors of low income blacks that were considered by the mainstream to be antisocial or nihilistic (**References to be Added**). This model supports the idea of pathology on the part of blacks for "burning down their own neighborhoods." More serious urban scholars, however, while taking the riots into account, places them as well as the ongoing social deterioration of these communities into larger structural contexts and processes. Rather than seeing the riots as cluster of acts in a stream of pathologies practiced by low income blacks, they view them as a response to conditions that had been brought on by forces partially beyond their own control*, such as a continuation of racist policies and practices by the larger American society, and shifts in the U.S. and the global economies. Such structural approaches are much more illuminating in helping us to better understand why, despite the various War on Poverty Programs that were initiated by the Johnson and Nixon administrations in the 1960s to address many of the problems of the inner city poor, we continued to see increases during the last three decades of the twentieth centuries inner city communities as poverty, single parent families, poor work histories and lower levels of educational achievement of family heads, dependence on public assistance, and rates of incarceration of residents.

Urban scholars and laypersons, including the residents of the poorest urban neighborhoods, have long referred to these neighborhoods as “ghettos.” As a graduate student and young urban researcher during the 1970s and 1980s, I was never comfortable with the word. My problem with the concept was that at that time, most social scientists who studied the so-called ghetto usually discussed these neighborhoods in terms of the behavioral and attitudinal shortcomings of their residents, similar to the deficit model discussed above. Again, there were few if any attempts to provide a contextual analysis of the broader structural factors that contributed to the creation or conditions of the ghetto, as well as to the emergence of the behaviors and attitudes of ghetto residents that were being described. I was also uncomfortable with the term ghetto because almost all of the people living in these neighborhoods were African Americans, and the descriptions of their lives tended to continue the simplistic deficit or pathology models, mentioned earlier, that had long been used in the social sciences to describe the circumstances of low income African Americans. Moreover, there was a general tendency in ghetto studies at the time to generalize about the residents of these communities, leaving readers with the impression that the behavior and living conditions of all “ghetto dwellers” were the same. These studies gave no attention to the fact that all African Americans living in the ghetto were not poor, but continued to live in areas being discussed as ghettos, either because of personal preference, or because of racist attitudes of whites living in other areas of the city, their inability to afford living in non-ghetto areas, or because of racist federal, state and local policies that promoted racial segregation, and inequities in terms of public services and resources. These studies also gave little attention to the fact that not even *all of the poor people living in the Ghetto are the same*. In fact there were some poor ghetto dwellers who ran their lives with the same values as non-poor Americans, and were continually finding ways to pull themselves or their children from the conditions of poverty. This lack of attention to individual and community agency helped me to understand a ghetto community activist who commented to me years later “You all just come into our community, look for all the dirt that you can find, then write up all of the negative things you can about us, and we never hear from you again. We are about healing our communities, not about having someone continuously talking about how sick we are.”

So rather than the word ghetto, I adopted the common terms used by most urban scholars of “inner” or “central” city communities in discussing these urban neighborhoods straddled by poverty. However, as the conditions associated with these communities spread beyond the inner or central city, it seemed to me to be inaccurate to continue using such terminology. For example, the eastern neighborhoods of Washington, D.C., in Wards 7 and 8, are among the poorest in the city. They also have the highest concentrations of African Americans, 97 and 96 percent respectively. During the 1970s and 1980s, many of the blacks who could afford to move out of these urban ghettos to the suburbs of Prince Georges (PG) County, Maryland did so. However, not only has inner city conditions spread to these PG neighborhoods, but by the year 2000, some of these inner city problems, such as per capita or median household income, crowding, and violent crimes, are now higher in some of these PG county neighborhoods than they are in Wards 7 and 8. It is not only the concentrated poverty that these PG county neighborhoods share with their eastern D.C. ghetto neighborhoods, but over the past two decades, they have come to share a majority population of low income blacks, as they have undergone the economic and demographic transitions that inner or central city communities experienced from the 1950s into the early 1980s: the exodus of whites and also blacks who could afford to move, and the in migration of more poor blacks.

As I observed the spread of these poverty related conditions from the inner cities to communities bordering these cities, I adopted the use of the phrase of "low income urban communities." However, I eventually came to see that this descriptor was not accurate to describe the sites of my own work. My work did focus on low income urban communities, but not *all* low income urban communities. The focus of my work has been in neighborhoods in which the predominant residents were low income African Americans, and very seldom in communities that were predominantly white. This differentiation reflects the role of race has played in the settlement patterns of most metropolitan areas in the United States. For example in Washington, D.C., the majority of black residents live in those neighborhoods on the eastern side of the city, while the majority of whites live on the western side. In Baltimore, black neighborhoods are found mostly in the western part of the city, while the western side of the city is dominated by neighborhoods that are predominantly African American. Such patterns of racial segregation are found in many of America's largest metropolitan areas, a condition that Massey and Denton (1993) have referred to as a form of "American apartheid."

So, despite my earlier trepidations regarding the concept of the Ghetto, I eventually came to find it useful as an analytical construct for discussing the urban communities that most of my work is being carried out, communities that have been greatly influenced by the role of race and class in U.S. history and society. Because my own work focuses on predominantly on low income African American urban neighborhoods, to not lose sight of race in the creation of these neighborhoods, the concept that I use to discuss these urban communities is the *Racialized Urban Ghettos, or RUGs*. I define RUGs as residential areas of 2,000 or more persons* found in large metropolitan areas, middle sized cities, or smaller towns, and which there is a concentration of the following characteristics: (1) physical isolation characterized by race (or ethnicity) and class; (2) extreme poverty; (3) low employment opportunities and labor force participation; (4) low adult education levels; (5) high levels of crime, dilapidated housing and general environmental deterioration; (6) inadequate educational, health, social and other human services; (7) low levels of social organization; (8) and social and cultural isolation. The present chapter discusses these RUG characteristics, the social processes that contributed to RUG creation, and the impact of RUG characteristics on the youth living in these communities. In discussing the processes leading to RUG formation, I will be covering a historical period from the late 1920s until about the mid 1980s.

Policies Leading to the Formation of the Physical Isolated Racialized Urban Ghetto in the United States

Racialized urban ghettos are not only urban areas wherein the majority of the residents are African Americans who are poor, in poverty, or in extreme poverty,* but the residents of these areas are physically isolated from non-poor residential areas. Physical isolation is characterized by "... the distancing of [RUG]* residents from the suburban locations where jobs are being created, and the racial isolation imposed by segregated housing patterns." (Peterson and Harrell 1992:1). This distancing of RUG residents from not only suburban areas, but also from more affluent sections of the city, was a process that began as early as the 1930s, and was stimulated by federal policies that favored whites to the detriment of blacks. For example, as early as 1934, the Federal Housing Act, which in its efforts to stimulate homeownership to millions of American citizens by providing government support to private lenders to home buyers, created the Federal Housing Agency (FHA) which developed "confidential city surveys and appraiser's manuals with "overtly racist categories ...[that] channeled almost all of the loan money toward whites and away from communities of color." (Lipsitz 2000:351-352).

These practices continued into the 1940s, as the FHA continue to underwrite mortgages to prevent foreclosures that accrued while the country was still struggling to overcome the economic downturns of the Great Depression.(Massey and Denton 1993). At the same time however, these practices favored whites buying homes in the suburbs and discriminated against non-whites and residents of mixed urban communities. Support in buying homes from the FHA and the Veterans Administration (e.g., the GI bill), not only favored whites, but encouraged urban white ethnic groups, already concerned with the increasing number on non-whites moving into their neighborhoods, to join other whites in the suburbs. The policies of these agencies provided mortgage interest tax exemptions and veterans were provided mortgages, and construction companies in the suburbs were stimulated through "quick, cheap, production of massive amounts of tract housing" (Wilson 1996:46), while "federal and state tax monies routinely funded the construction of water supplies and sewage facilities for racially exclusive suburban communities..." (Lipsitz 2000:352).

As whites left the cities for the suburbs, cities lost their abilities to annex their suburbs that they had had since the turn of the twentieth century, as the suburbs developed their own zoning, land-use policies, covenants, and deed restrictions. These practices by suburban communities made it all but impossible for non-whites to penetrate their communities until the public pressures for integration in the 1960 (Wilson1996:46). Also by incorporating themselves as independent municipalities, these exclusively white suburban communities were able to gain access to federal funds that were supposedly allocated for assistance to urban communities (Logan and Molotch 1987).

While the housing policies discussed above contributed to the movement of millions of whites from the inner city neighborhoods to the suburbs, there were some whites who remained in cities, mostly in neighborhoods that were predominantly white. A continued process of urban segregation was facilitated by federal and local housing policies. As summarized by Lipsitz (2000:352):

"For years, the General Services Administration routinely channeled the government's own rental and leasing business to realtors who engaged in racial discrimination, The Federal Housing Administration and the Veterans Administration financed more than \$120 billion worth of new housing between 1934 and 1962, but less than 2% of this real estate was available to non-white families--and most of small amount was located in segregated areas"

New housing tracts built in segregated urban neighborhoods were particularly attractive to whites who were employed in professional and white-collar positions in urban communities to be close to their places of employment. At the same time, federal transportation and highway policies were developed to fund highway systems between the suburbs and the cities to accomodate those whites who had moved to the suburbs, but continued to work in the cities. Many of these highways were built through the centers of some cities, creating boundaries between some business districts and the sections where most non-whites lived. These highway systems then acted to create barriers between the poor and minority neighborhoods and the central business districts.

In the meantime Racialized Urban Ghettos became increasingly black and poor, as the migration of poor blacks from the South continued, and they moved primarily into these were also

moving into these neighborhoods. Moreover, the various housing policies that mandated the building of public housing for the poor and moderate income contributed to a continuing segregation of housing in these communities by class as well as race in that restricted occupancy to the most economically disadvantaged.

The concept of the Racialized Urban Ghetto that has been discussed thus far is a reference to those urban neighborhoods that have become predominantly black, as whites moved out. It should be noted however, that over the past two decades, many RUG neighborhoods have again become mixed as members from other ethnic groups have moved in. However, rather than being mixed in terms of black and white, those moving in have been primarily non-whites. As more and more whites were moving out of inner city communities, more non-whites, of varying ethnicities, were moving in. Most of these people, however, were of low incomes (Kasarda 1988). This brings us to another characteristic of the Racialized Urban Ghetto, and that is, regardless of the ethnicity, these are urban neighborhoods that are isolated not only by race, or ethnicity, but also by class, as the poorest of the urban poor, regardless of ethnicity, reside in these spaces.

RUGs are Characterized By High Rates of Poverty and Extreme Poverty

By the beginning of the Crack Decade (1985), over half of the nation's population living in central cities were poor as compared to just one third in 1972 (Reichauer 1987; Kasarda 1992). Moreover, between 1970 and 1985, the number of people living in extreme urban poverty census tracts (i.e., 40 percent of the residents fall below the poverty line), expanded by 66% (Bane and Jargowsky 1988) *. However, between 1970 and 1980, Peterson and Harrell (1992:5) state that the total number of people living in the poorest urban census tracts increased by 230 percent. Part of this rise in urban poverty was due to declines in employment opportunities and rises in unemployment (discussed in more detail later), declines in the median income of those making the lowest salaries in these communities*, the immigration of more poor people into these neighborhoods*, immigrants who become poor or poorer after moving into these neighborhoods with fewer employment opportunities (Wilson 1996:43), and the outmigration of not only whites, but most middle class blacks as well (More on this latter point later) (See Wilson 1987, 1996)*.

RUGs are Characterized By Increases in Unemployment and Declines in Employment Opportunities

One of the indicators often used by urban sociologists as a major reason for the increasing rates of poverty among African American residents of inner city communities, and those are participation in the work force, and poor work histories, particularly on the part of young African American males. However, this declining participation must be viewed in the context of another set of structural factors beyond the control of inner city residents: local, national and global economic restructuring. The CuSAG study participants were partially right in pointing to the 1960 riots as one contributor to smaller businesses leaving inner city communities, taking jobs as well as services to these communities. But what probably had a more significant impact was the loss of millions of manufacturing jobs in large cities since the 1960s, and billions of dollars in manufacturing incomes (Wilson 1987, 1996; Kasarda 1992, 1998). For example, as the number of extreme poverty urban census tracts greatly increased between 1970 and 1980, Kasarda (1992:47) points out that two thirds of that increase occurred in four of America's largest cities: New York, Chicago, Philadelphia, and Detroit. At the same time, "between 1967 and 1987, Chicago lost 60 percent of its manufacturing jobs, Detroit 51 percent, New York City 58 percent, and Philadelphia

64 percent. In absolute numbers, New York City's manufacturing employment declined by 520,000 jobs and Chicago's by 226,000 jobs. (Kasarda 1992:71).

The loss of manufacturing jobs in inner city communities had a significance beyond just their economic well being for African Americans residing in these communities, because of their long struggle against the barriers of discrimination, racism, and policies of segregation that had kept them out of these jobs in the past. The first half of the twentieth century saw millions of African Americans migrate from the American South to the cities of the North and West for the better employment opportunities that seemed to exist in urban manufacturing. However this migration often led to an expansion of racialized urban ghettos, as blacks were usually denied access to these jobs, except as temporary strike breakers (which only worked to inflame the anti-black sentiments of white workers). After a half century of increasing exclusion from such positions, this trend was broken following World War II and the labor shortages it brought (Lane 1991; 1992). By the 1950's, manufacturing jobs were a major employer of working urban blacks, and according to Kasarda (1995:239, cited in Wilson, 1966:31): "As late as the 1968-70 period, more than 70% of all blacks working in metropolitan areas held blue-collar jobs at the same time that more than 50% of all metropolitan workers held white-collar jobs. Moreover, of the large numbers of urban blacks classified as blue-collar workers during the late 1960s, more than half were employed in goods-producing industries."

At the same time, by 1968, we were also seeing the beginning of the end of this "golden age" of urban African American economic growth, manufacturing jobs in inner city areas were entering their twilight years due to a restructuring towards a more service economy (Kasarda 1995). As Peterson and Harrell comment in introducing Lane's article in their 1992 volume, after a long struggle to overcome racial discrimination to gain access to manufacturing jobs, it was as if "black workers [had been] being "piped aboard a sinking ship." After only two decades of being able to take advantage of the employment opportunities, African Americans once again found themselves in a similar position as they had been prior to World War II.

As manufacturing employment opportunities left inner city areas, so did secondary employment opportunities (e.g., those in stores, support services, banks, and so on). Our CuSAG study participants in the District of Columbia were of the opinion that the 1968 riots were the primary reason that non-manufacturing businesses that were in their neighborhoods before the riots (e.g. stores, banks, and so on) and were also employers, did not return after the riots. However, other cities that did not experience these riots (e.g. New York and Philadelphia) were also losing such businesses in their inner city communities. Their departure was probably more the consequence, as Wilson (1996:35) suggest were due to the departure of the large industries who paid the salaries to local residents who used these smaller businesses. Many of these smaller businesses.

RUGs are Characterized By Employment and Educational Mismatches

Prior to World War II, the primary route that African Americans had to middle class incomes and/or lifestyles were through African American institutions such as businesses that were owned by and catered to blacks, the black church, black schools and colleges that existed as a consequence of America's segregated policies, and through menial civil service jobs. But by the 1950s, employment in such major U.S. industries as steel, automobile manufacture, shipbuilding, and textiles, provided numbers of them middle class salaries and lifestyles with just a high school

diploma or less. But the decline of manufacturing and the rise of the high skilled service economy meant mismatches between the educational levels of the urban poor and the education and skill levels demanded by this new economy. The number of jobs available for those without a high school education dropped dramatically in most urban areas, while good jobs became increasingly available in the high skilled service sector that was being driven by new technological innovations. And even as more urban dwellers finished high school, these improvements did not keep pace with the increasing skill demands of the new economy (Karsada 1992)*. Moreover, says Kasarda (1992:79), in northern U.S. cities between 1970 and 1980 "....much of the job increase in the 'some college' or 'college-graduate' categories was absorbed by suburban commuters, many job losses in the 'less-than-high school complete' or 'high school-only' categories were absorbed by city residents..."

Employment Opportunities Moved From Central Cities to More Affluent Sections of Metropolitan Areas

Similar to to the movement of whites to the suburbs, the employment opportunities in the new economy tended to increasingly occur in the more prosperous sections of the city, the suburbs, or in the rapidly developing "edge cities"*. As suggested by Bloch (1994:124, cited in Wilson 1996:) "...new plants [as well as secondary forms of employment] now tend to locate in the suburbs to take advantage of cheap land, access to highways, and low crime rates; in addition, businesses shun urban locations to avoid buying land from several different owners; paying high demolition costs for old buildings, and arranging parking for employees and customers." What this meant for residents of low income inner city communities, was that as job opportunities were rapidly declining where there were predominantly blacks and other non-white minorities reside, they were rapidly increasing in locations in which the percentage of blacks and non-white ethnics were miniscule*. For those inner city dwellers who might have the skills or desires for jobs in the new economy now located outside their communities, there were now the problems of transportation and commuting time and costs. (Fernandez 1991; Kasarda 1992; Peterson and Vroman 1992).

The Exodus of Middle Class Blacks from Racialized Urban Ghettos

Not only did jobs leave the inner city, but also did those residents, black as well as white, who were better educated and had higher incomes (Wilson 1987; 1996). The outmigration of middle class blacks was prompted by the various processes of social deterioration that we have been discussing thus far, and will continue to discuss in this paper. Perhaps the best description of black middle class exodus of from socially deteriorating inner city neighborhoods was a quote from one of Wilson's (1996:6) respondents who stated:

"If you live in an areawhere you have people that don't work, don't have no means of support, you know, don't have no jobs, who're gonna break into your house to steal what you have, to sell to get them some money, then you can't live in a neighborhood and try to concentrate on trying to get ahead, then you get to work and you have to worry if somebody's breaking into your house or not. So, you know, its best to try to move in a decent area, to live in a community with people that works."

Wilson (1996:38) says that "the pattern of black migration to the suburbs in the 1970s was similar to that of whites during the 1950s and 1960s in the sense that it was concentrated among the better-educated and younger city residents. However, in the 1970s this was even more true for

blacks, creating a situation in which the education and income gaps between city and suburban blacks seemed to expand at the same time that the differences between city and suburban whites seemed to contract." The migration of more middle class blacks from central city neighborhoods to the once primarily white suburbs during the early 1970s was also fueled by increasing pressures on these communities to integrate. But as Wilson (1996:46) points out that "suburbs chose to diversify by race rather than class. They retained zoning and other restrictions that allowed only affluent blacks (and in some instances Jews) to enter, thereby intensifying the concentration and isolation of the poor."

The Immigration of Other Ethnic Groups into Racialized Urban Ghettos and Increased Competition for Inadequate Employment Opportunities

The exodus of the majority of non-poor RUG residents meant the increasing proportions of the poor in these neighborhoods. The increase in the proportion of non-poor residents was accelerated by a continuing increase in the number of poor immigrants coming into RUGs. In addition to increasing proportions of poor residents in these neighborhoods was also an increase in the competition for decreasing number employment opportunities (Mahan 1995). Of great concern for the poor residents already residing in RUGs was the fact that many of those moving in were from other countries. Competition was created for poorly educated native workers, particularly those with less than a high school education, in somewhat contrasting ways. First most immigrants had little formal education depressed the wages available for unskilled workers, being willing to take less in wages*. Then there were immigrants who had much more formal education than low income inner city residents, but being unable to get jobs in the U.S. equal to their skill levels, were hired at lower level jobs because of their better education or skill. (e.g., someone trained as an engineer in their home country, but who may work as a cab driver or carpenter's assistant in the U.S.).

Problems of RUG Residents Taking Advantage of Employment Opportunities in Suburbs or Edge Cities

Wilson (1996:39-40) discusses the various problems associated with low income urban dwellers attempting to get out to where the jobs are: "Among two car middle-class and affluent families, commuting is accepted as a fact of life; but it occurs in a context of safe school environments for children, more available and accessible day care, and higher incomes to support mobile, away-from-home lifestyles. In a multi-tiered job market that requires substantial resources for participation, most-inner-city minorities must rely on public transportation systems that rarely provide easy and quick access to suburban locations." Wilson's respondents give reasons as why sometimes they have to turn suburban jobs down: (1) Not owning a car; (2) having to get up at 5 am to be to work by 8, (one hour preparing for work; 2 hours travel time); (3) worse problems in winter; (4) the timing of public transportation not in sync with time needing to be at work; (5) people not knowing where the suburbs are, and some getting lost trying to get out there. Other problems according to Wilson (1996:40-40): (1) the cost of owning a car, which is more than simply the purchase price but also the cost of gas, maintenance, and insurance; (2) the expense of travelling to the suburbs to look for a job that you may very well not get; and (3) the probability of facing racial harassment when one enters suburban white communities*. Wilson (1996:42) then cites the work of Holzer and colleagues (1994) who "concluded that [given all of these issues] it was quite rational for [low income inner city] blacks to reject these search-and-and travel choices when assessing their position in the job market."

The Problem of a High Incidence of Female Headed Households in Racialized Urban Ghettos

Another problem for the racialized urban ghetto that is related to their low income or poverty status and high unemployment rates, especially among RUG males, is the high number of households with children that are headed by women, particularly African American households with children. In the United States in general, between 1970 and 1985 marriage rates declined (Mare and Winship 1991), while the percentage of households headed by single females (both with and without children) increased (See Jargowsky and Bane 1990, 1991. These patterns, however, were greater for African Americans than for other groups (Wilson 1987; Wacquant and Wilson 1989), and were greatest among African American households in racialized urban ghettos. From the end of slavery up to the 1960s, most African American households with children were headed by both parents. For example, in 1890, eighty percent of African American households with children had both parents present, a proportion that was still 78% by 1960. (U.S. Bureau of the Census (1980). Yet by 1970, the proportion of African American households with children headed by single females, having only been 20 percent in 1960 had increased to 33 percent, to 49 percent in 1980, and by 1990, had increased 57 percent. So "for the first time in history, female-headed [households]* outnumbered married couple* families with children." (Billingsley 1992:36)

Wilson (1987) has argued that the sharp increase in black male joblessness since 1970 accounts in large measure for the rise in the rate of single-parent families, and that since jobless rates are highest in the inner-city ghetto, rates of single parenthood are also highest there." While the continuing loss of legal employment opportunities in RUGs from the 1970s through to the present day, has negatively affected both "low-skilled males and females, the problem of declining employment has been concentrated among low-skilled men" (Wilson 1996:25). There emerged the continuing growth of a nonworking class of males in the prime of their lives (between the ages of 22 and 58), along with "a large number of those who are often unemployed who work part-time, or who work in temporary jobs is concentrated among the poorly educated." (Wilson 1996:26; Also see Kasarda 1989 and Tienda 1989). At the same time that job opportunities were declining for low skilled RUG males, there was an increase in job opportunities for RUG females. This difference in gender related to job opportunities was a function of the lost of blue collar factory, transportation, and construction jobs, traditionally held by men, jobs in manufacturing, while there was an increase in jobs for workers with limited education and experience in support and social services, such as clerical, and the health, education, and welfare industries), that had traditionally hired more women (See Kasarda 1991:67; Wilson 1996:27). Moreover, inner city males were slow to move into these position.

Wilson (1996:95) points out that there are national studies that find no or little relationship between the employment and the marital status of young black males. However, he also points out that these studies are based on national data, while the local data from the Urban Poverty and Family Life Study in Chicago (UPFLS), showed little relationship between the employment status of black males between the ages of 32 and 44, they did show that employment status was definitely related to younger black males (18-29) entering marriage after the birth of the child. In the CuSAG studies, young black unmarried fathers frequently talked about marrying their childrens' mothers once they can get a job that would allow them to support a family, while older (35-60) married black males talked about their getting married after having a steady job, while already having fathered one or more children. Older (23 to 55) low income black females in the CuSAG studies, on the other hand talked about having little time for males who could not afford a family.

Ethnographic studies (e.g. Liebow 1967; Hannerz 1969; Valentine 1972) have long found problems with finding stable employment to be a primary factor in the family marginalization of black males. In fact, studies using census data to show that the proportion of inner city adult males to females declined between the 1960s to 1980s (e.g. Kasarda 1989, 1991, 1992, and 1998), are using partially skewed data because the census were missing millions of men who were not picked up by the census because of their family marginality. Then there were some men who were not in the homes because of welfare policies that would punish their families if they were in the home.

But regardless of the the factors leading to the rapid rise in African American households with children headed by single females that were in place by 1970, by 1985, such households were of the majority in the racialized urban ghettos of most the nation's largest cities. What is relevant of this form of household structure, is that they are America's "poorest demographic group" (Edin (1994:29). Moreover, they were the households that would experienced the most persistent poverty (having incomes below the poverty line during at least eight years in a ten year period--Wilson 1996:91). There are numerous reasons for the persistent poverty in households with children headed by single females. First of all, the increase in households without fathers means more households without the fathers income, or the potential incomes of both parents in today's common practice of two income families. In many instances, a household with children, particularly young children, headed by single females alone without the presence of other adults, will often times not even have a single income, because of the lack of childcare, even if they wanted to work (Weicher 1990)*. But even if single mothers did find employment, their chances are greater for having lower incomes than households with working males because of lower credentials or less work experience than such males, or because many employers are still disposed to pay males more, even if a woman has the same credentials, skills, and experiences*. As a consequence the working heads of single female headed households in racialized urban ghettos "seldom earn enough to bring their families out of poverty and most cannot get child support, medical benefits, housing subsidies, or cheap child care." (Edin 1994:29, cited in Wilson 1996:91-92). Given these various obstacles, single female heads of households with children residing in racialized urban ghettos found themselves having to turn increasingly to welfare to support their children, at the same time that the real value of of welfare benefits was declining due to the fact that welfare payments were not indexed to inflation (Cocoran and Parrott 1992; Farley 1988; Gans 1995). This does not bode well for the future prospects of children growing up in such households, since there is research showing that they are "more likely to be school dropouts, to receive lower earnings in young adulthood, and to be recipients of welfare." (Wilson 1996:2) .

Research has show that there are other problems for children growing up in households held by single females, other than and related to their greater probability of experiencing growing up and continuing to live in poverty as adults. There is also evidence of children growing up without an adult male parent having problems with sex role development because of the absence of same sex role models for boys, or models of healthy female-male relationships that girls and boys can emulate*. There is also research suggesting that boys growing up without the presence of father role models are more likely to be hyper-masculine and violence prone*. Finally, there is also the association with crime as recent research on incarcerated juveniles find that more than two thirds of the juveniles grew up in households where the fathers were absent*.

Racialized Urban Ghettos are Characterized by Social Disorganization and Ecological Deterioration

As residents of racialized urban ghettos became more physically isolated from the non-poor, these neighborhoods also began to experience more rapid social disorganization, ecological deterioration, crime and violence. For a long time, sociologists studying the concept of social disorganization would simply define it in terms of female headed households. However, the economic factors and other structural factors associated with this condition, as discussed above, has nothing to do with whether families are disorganized, and in fact a conjugally intact family may be more socially disorganized than one that is headed by a single female. I prefer the more extended description of the concept, particularly as it applies to RUG households, that has been provided by Wilson. Following is a a modifications of his dimensions of social disorganization (1996:20):

- (1) the prevalence and quality of wider society (Wilson calls them "formal") institutions and agencies (e.g. educational, political, and security institutions, health and human service agencies), ethnic, family and kinship organizations, voluntary associations (e.g., religious, work and political party organizations, block clubs, and parent-teacher organizations), and informal networks (e.g. neighborhood friends and acquaintances, co-workers, marital and parental ties);
- (2) the level of support provided the various types of institutions, organizations, and networks, and the level of participation in their activities by residents;
- (3) the strength and interdependence of these institutions, organizations, and networks;
- (4) the extent of collective supervision that the residents exercise and the degree of personal responsibility they assume in addressing neighborhood problems; and
- (5) the extent to which neighborhood residents are able to realize their common goals and maintain effective social control

As industries, businesses and the better educated and more affluent residents the racialized urban ghettos, it had a negative impact on the prevalence and/or quality of the the wider societal institutions and services that were left in these neighborhoods. For example schools in the racialized urban ghettos came to be charactized by aged and deteriorating schools, facilities, books, and equipment, overcrowded classrooms, unimaginative curricula, and "only a small proportion of teachers who have confidence in their students and expect them to learn. (Wilson 1996:xv). These factors of course became related to the higher school dropout rates for inner city African American youth, ranging from 30 to 50 percent during the 1970s and 1980s (See Kasarda 1992:79), and continuing poor academic performance for those who continued through high school (e.g., See Henderson 1984:18). During this period, we also saw similar deterioration in the health services available to the residents of racialized urban gettos, as most health professionals had little interest in continuing to serve communities in which most residents have no insurance or other means to pay, and the bureaucracy and fees of such public assistance programs as Medicaid are considered not worth enough to bother.

The exodus of industries, businesses and the non-poor and better educated residents from racialized urban ghettos were also characterized by a decline in other essential services in these neighborhoods, such as the quality of housing and transportation services, garbage pickup and public lighting, security (fire and police) services, and so on. In turn, the decline in these services contributed to a decline in the general environmental conditions of racialized urban ghettos. For example during the 1970s, we see an increase in most of the larger northeastern and midwestern cities with racialized urban ghettos, we saw a decline in the housing units available to the poor, and an increase in the proportion of rental as opposed to owned housing units, higher rental costs, dilapidated and crowded housing units, units without central heating, and vacant or abandoned units. (e.g. see Weicher 1990).

In addition to the increase in dilapidated and vacant housing units, racialized urban ghettos also saw increases in the amount of litter and garbage found in and around the houses, as well as in the lots left vacant by the urban renewal efforts that were carried out in some of these neighborhoods. Indeed for both residents and academics studying these neighborhoods, they came to resemble "war zones." (Wilson 1996:34). At the same time that we were seeing a decline in the quality of housing and the general environment in these neighborhoods, we were also seeing an increase in the rate of violence and crime, further contribution to the perception of them as war zones. Violence and crime in racialized urban ghettos will be discussed in more detail later. At the present time, however, I want to point out that a declining presence of police services in these areas, or a police presence that seems to many residents of these communities to be hostile, contributes to the increase in crime and violence. At night there is much less lighting in racialized urban ghettos as there are in more affluent areas of the large American cities, another factor leading to increases in crime. As pointed out to me in focus group interviews with young drug traffickers in Southeast Washington, D.C., where RFK football stadium where the Washington Redskins played when I was collecting this data:

"There are no street lights in Southeast. One of the reasons that drug dealers are successful in Southeast because the only time that you can see at night is when there are Redskin games in the late afternoon and evenings and they turn the lights on at RFK stadium."

Another commented:

"Drug dealers know that they can sell their drugs any other day beside Thursdays, because Thursdays is the only day that the policeman drive through these neighborhoods."

There are a number of reasons given for the decline in various services leading to housing and environmental deterioration of racialized urban ghettos. First with the exit of industries, businesses, and the better educated non-poor, there was also the departure of a tax base to support the basic services necessary to an adequate quality of life for those left behind. Moreover, those left behind were in greater need of such services, but without the tax base to pay for them. As a consequence, according to :

"... distressed [extremely poor] households are being separated from the governmental institutions intended to support them. Municipal budget cutbacks have brought, among other things, a recentralization of social services, which threatens to add 'government' to the list of institutions no longer accessible in the inner city." (Peterson & Harrell 1992:7)

In addition to the loss of various public services in racialized urban ghettos, there were other factors that contributed to the environmental deterioration of these neighborhoods. One was the housing policies and practices discussed earlier. We have discussed how federal and local housing policies and practices during the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s, contributed to the creation of RUGs by making mortgage loans for home ownership in the suburbs very easy for whites, while denying such loans to African Americans. Meanwhile in the inner city, unscrupulous realtors, mostly white, could overcharge African Americans and other nonwhites migrating into the inner cities to live in ever increasing substandard housing, without any fears of legal retribution. As these processes continued, in the 1950s, transportation policies, led to the construction of highway systems, to accommodate the suburbanites and the U.S. automobile industries, that ran right through many low income inner city communities. Not only did this process destroy the homes of millions of urban residents, but it also tended to create barriers that restricted the poor into certain sections of central cities.

As the number of housing units was declining for these low-income populations, more of them were migrating in creating crowded and what would be considered urban slums. Urban Renewal Programs were then created during the 1950s and 1960s supposedly to address slum conditions and the problems of housing shortages for the urban poor. However, ninety percent of the low-income units removed through urban renewal were never replaced (Lipsitz 2000:353). More than eighty percent of the land cleared through such programs was used for commercial, industrial, and municipal projects, while less than 20 percent was allocated for replacement housing (Lipsitz 2000:353). The building of high-rise public housing was supposed to address the problem of the housing shortage for the poor, and the space needed for such housing. The use of much of this space for the new commercial enterprises, along with the increase limitation on space increased the monetary "value" of urban space, and thus an increase in rents and mortgages for middle and low-income families. There were also tax increases for these families due to increase in the value of urban space and the loss in tax revenues due to tax abatements granted the new enterprises. (Logan and Molotch 1987:168-69).

Then in 1968, there was the Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Act of 1968, whose purpose supposedly was to provide more public housing for the urban poor, and to end the discrimination in publicly sponsored mortgage lending assistance by authorizing FHA mortgages for low income areas that did not meet the usual eligibility criteria, and by subsidizing interest payments by moderate and low-income families. However, by restricting access to public housing to the most economically disadvantaged, and as a consequence contributed to the continuing segregation of housing by race and class*. While the guidelines of the HUD Act made it possible for non-poor blacks and other minorities to purchase homes in the inner cities, much of the available housing stock was now of substandard quality. Then the FHA allowed some its officials, according to Lipsitz (2000:353, citing the work of Quadagno 1994, and Massey and Denton 1993) to aid:

“...unscrupulous realtors and speculators by arranging purchases of substandard housing by minorities desperate to own their own homes. The resulting sales and mortgage foreclosures brought great profits to lenders (almost all of them white), but their actions led to price fixing and subsequent inflation of housing costs in the 1968 and 1972. Bankers then foreclosed on the mortgages of thousands of these uninspected and substandard homes, ruining many inner-city neighborhoods. In response, the

Department of Housing and Urban Development essentially red-lined inner cities, making them ineligible for future loans, a decision that destroyed the value of inner city for generations to come."

Such practices led to greater deterioration in the available housing stock present in Racialized Urban Ghettos, as well as to a declining investment in and abandonment of such housing, which in turn became spaces used for drugs and other illegal activities. These processes are described by Wilson (1996:44-46):

"...the more rapid the neighborhood deterioration, the greater the institutional disinvestment. In the 1960s and 1970s, neighborhoods plagued by heavy abandonment were frequently "redlined" (identified as areas that should not receive or be recommended for mortgage loans or insurance); this paralyzed the housing market, lowered property values, and further encouraged landlord abandonment... Abandoned buildings increase and often serve as havens for crack use and other illegal enterprises that give criminals footholds in the community."

The increase in drugs and other criminal activities brought increases in violence as indicated by the rises in assaults and homicides during the 1960s and 1970s. These deteriorating environmental features (increases in dilapidated and abandoned housing, criminal and drug activities, and violence) makes it difficult to maintain a sense of community. They also contribute to the continued exodus of the non-poor from these neighborhoods, as suggested by one of Wilson's (1996:6) respondents:

"If you live in an area ...where you have people that don't work, don't have no means of support, you know, don't have no jobs, who're gonna break into your house to steal what you have, to sell to get them some money, then you can't live in a neighborhood and try to concentrate on trying to get ahead, then you get to work and you have to worry if somebody's breaking into your house or not. So, you know, its best to try to move in a decent area, to live in a community with people that works."

These features of environmental deterioration then contributes to further decline in population density, "that makes it even more difficult to sustain or develop a sense of community." (Wilson 1996:46). Crucial to the sense of community are: (1) the support provided by the institutions and organizations that facilitate the survival and quality life of the members of that community; and (2) the participation of community members in those institutions and organizations. The absence of wider societal institutions in racialized urban ghettos, as discussed above, not only lead to a lack of support services, environmental deterioration, and a lower quality of life for the residents of these neighborhoods, but the problem is exacerbated by the lack of resident participation in these institutions. For example, I first began to notice when my children attending an elementary school in the edge community of Reston, Virginia, that on the night of Parent Teacher Association (PTA), and other important school meetings, one could not find a parking place for many blocks adjacent to the school. This was in sharp contrast to the RUG communities in the Baltimore-Washington urban corridor where I carried out research and technical assistance work. There, parents rarely attended elementary school PTA and other school meetings, and in some cases, PTAs were quite inactive, because parents were not holding the schools accountable for many of its practices and policies, as did suburban and edge community parents*. Such parental involvement has been found to play a major role in the fact that the educational performance

among most students who reside in racialized urban ghettos, continue to fall significantly below most of the students living in suburban and edge communities.

Most RUG residents are less likely to participate in the political processes of the wider community and society, which further affects the quality of life goals that they might have. The poor and the little educated, characteristics of many of those who reside in racialized urban ghettos, are much less likely to vote, and to thus elect leaders who do not feel an obligations to respond to their needs. As a consequence, the life conditions of RUG residents are left pretty much to the largess of rather uncaring non-poor, non-ghetto dwellers. The lack of participation in the political institutions of the wider community and society has not only been one contributor to the environmental deterioration of racialized urban ghettos. The lack of political power in RUGs, as well as in other poor minority communities also lead to these communities being used as dumping grounds for public and toxic waste. The neglect given to some of the housing RUGs, and the failure to incriminate some of those renting such properties, the children in these communities have been exposed to increasing levels of lead poison, asbestos, and radon. These neighborhoods have also been more frequently selected as sites for sewer treatment plants, garbage dumps, landfills, incinerators, hazardous waste disposal sites, lead smelters, and other noxious and high risk facilities (See Bullard 1993a; Henderson 1994). For example in one city, Houston, Texas, Logan and Molotch (1987) documented that 75% of the municipal garbage incinerators and 100% of the public garbage dumps are located in black neighborhoods. At the same time, those receiving penalties for polluting sites near white populations receive penalties that were 500 percent higher than penalties imposed placing polluting sites in minority areas, while minority communities have had to wait longer than white communities to be placed on the national priority list for clean ups. (Bullard 1994). Such environmental injustice have led to what Bullard (1990, 1993b) has described as a situation of greater environmental risks for children in low income minority neighborhoods than we find for some animal species that have been labeled as endangered (cited in Henderson 1994).

It is not however, simply the lack of participation in institutions, organizations, and the political processes of the wider society that keep RUG residents from reaching their goals and improving the quality of their lives, but also the lack of participation in significant ethnic, family, and kinship organizations, voluntary associations such as work or fraternal organizations, community action organizations, etc.), and informal networks of friends and acquaintances. It is well documented that such organizations, associations, and networks have been a primary vehicle for the survival of African Americans through their long history of slavery, and the poverty, racism, discrimination, and prejudice that they have had to endure since the end of slavery. Very early in their history, African Americans practiced extended family and kinship structures, including fictive kinship ties, and kinship terminology to assist them survive slavery, and such slave practices as breaking up primary family units (parents, children, and siblings) through sales of family members'. Friendship networks were very important, and fictive kinship systems were structures in which one's friends, or friends of a family member were referred to by a kinship term (e.g., mother, father, brother, sister, etc.), with patterns of rights and obligations associated with such terminology. Such practices continued into the post slave period, and on into the twentieth century, helping blacks to survive in cities after the great migrations from the rural south to the cities of the north and west. Even during the period of slavery, there were free blacks who initiated ethnic associations to serve their peoples, associations that former slaves and/or their descendants joined after emancipation. Included among such voluntary associations was the black church, which became a powerful communal structure in the rural south and the urban north well into the twentieth century.

However, such organizations, associations, and networks began to lose their effectiveness in racialized urban ghettos, as these neighborhoods suffered increasing poverty and environmental deterioration (Mahan 1996:5). It is well documented that the urban poor are less likely to participate in the activities of local organizations than are the non-poor (e.g., see Fernandez and Harris 1991, 1992). For example, in the case of the black church, as stated above the church has long been a base for social action in black communities in its attempts to meet the needs of its communities. However, during the last three decades of the twentieth century, black churches struggled with how to get more youth and young adults who were in needs of their services to participate in their programs. Part of the problem is that for your urban blacks, the narrow religious demands of the church appeared to be anachronistic and irrelevant. Other problems were related to the fact that with increasing rates of poverty in these areas, churches, like the neighborhoods themselves, were left without the fiscal base that they had had in the past to support their community activities.

By the 1970s, in addition to churches, there emerged in RUGs, numerous community based action organizations attempting to meet the needs of RUG residents. While such community based organizations have continued to increase in number, they frequently have continually struggle with how to get community members to participate in and support their activities. Part of the problem goes back to the deterioration of neighborhood environments in terms of crime and violence. Wilson (1996) points out that those who are employed are more likely to be involved in community problem solving problems than those who are not working. But for RUG residents who are working, planning meetings of community action organizations must take place after working hours, and for some there are fears about going out in crime ridden neighborhoods to attend such meetings. And then there are some working residents who must work multiple jobs, leaving little time to attend such meetings.

The processes of social and environmental deterioration that have been discussed thus far in this section lead to an increasing inability of RUG communities to enact measures of social control that are important to the maintenance of security in human communities. The context of declining social control is explained by Wilson (1996:44) as follows:

"As the population drops and the proportion on nonworking adults rises, basic neighborhood institutions are more difficult to maintain: stores, banks, credit institutions, restaurants, dry cleaners, gas stations, medical doctors and so on lose regular and potential patrons. Churches experience dwindling numbers of parishioners and shrinking resources; recreational facilities, block clubs, community groups, and other informal organizations also suffer. As these organizations decline, the means of formal and informal social control in the neighborhood become weaker. Levels of crime and street violence increase as a result, leading to further deterioration of the neighborhood."

Social disorganization in RUGs then are related to structural and environmental factors that make it difficult to maintain a social fabric of institutional and organizational life that we consider to as community. As such, I will refer to RUGs here as socially disorganized urban spaces, in which institutions and organizations are weak, show low levels of interdependence, and thus capable of showing little social support to RUG residents, in their efforts to realize common goals and to maintain some sense of social control. As Wilson comments (1966:20-21) comments:

“Neighborhood social organization depends on the extent of local friendship ties, the degree of social cohesion, the level of resident participation in formal and informal voluntary associations, the density and stability of formal organizations, and the nature of informal social controls. Neighborhoods in which adults are able to interact in terms of obligations, expectations, and relationships are in a better position to supervise and control the activities and behavior of children. In neighborhoods with high levels of social organization, adults are empowered to act to improve the quality of neighborhood life—for example, by breaking up congregations of youths on street corners and by supervising the leisure activities of youngsters.”

Racialized Urban Ghettos are Characterized by Social and Cultural Isolation

As racialized urban ghettos became *physically isolated* by public housing policies and practices, by rental agencies and mortgage lenders, and by the difficulties experienced by their residents taking advantage of employment opportunities elsewhere, they also became *socially isolated*. The problem of social isolation is a component of the larger problem of Wilson’s concept of social disorganization as discussed in the previous section. In fact Peterson and Harrel point out that the social isolation of inner city residents is a constant theme in Wilson’s work (e.g. see Wilson 1987, 1996, and Wacquant and Wilson 1996), which may be defined as “the lack of contact or sustained interaction with the individuals or institutions that represent mainstream society” (Peterson and Harrel 1992:1). Part of this isolation is said to be due to mainstream institutions and organizations, which had provided some interclass contact, having also followed the jobs and more affluent families to the more affluent sections of the larger metropolitan area. Wilson (1996) suggests the possible role of social isolation in the persistent unemployment of black residents of racialized urban ghettos. From his UPFLS data, he points out how other ethnic and class groups use stable working networks to help them find steady employment, networks to which socially isolated blacks seem to have less access. *. At the same time, Wilson points out, the lack of contact of the non-working poor with more the working non-poor, or by stable networks found in employment settings, result in a lack of access to other resources offered by such relationships. (p.65).

The type of social isolation described in the preceding paragraph is a result of a class homogeneity (predominantly poor and non-working residents) found in racialized urban ghettos. Fernandez and Harris used Wilson’s sample of inner city Chicago households to formally test the concept of social isolation. They found that not only were the non-working poor significantly less likely to regularly attend meetings of a wide variety of community, school, social, and church organizations, but they also found that a significant number of the non-poor women in the study suffered extreme social isolation, as indicated by their reporting that they had no friends that they could turn to in an emergency (17.6 percent). For those women who reported having friends, 44.7 percent, forty-five percent of their friends were, similar to themselves, on public assistance and outside the labor force, indicating a tendency towards a closed community by class. (Fernandez and Harris 1992)

The fact that RUGs have predominantly low income, and frequently non-working residents, does not mean that there are no working and middle class residents in these neighborhoods, as there are. But, as pointed out by Fernandez and Harris (1991; 1992), the few middle class families who are left in poor urban communities often do not interact with others in these neighborhoods because of fear (e.g. due to high rates of crime or drug activity), or because of their negative assessments of the neighborhood and/or their neighbors. As suggested by Peterson

and Harrell (1992:1), this lack of interaction in their own communities and its residents contributes to its own social isolation for middle class RUG residents of these communities. Wilson (1996:64) reminds us that when speaking of social isolation, that a distinction should be made between those families who deliberately isolate themselves from other families in dangerous neighborhoods, and those who lack contact or sustained interaction with institutions, families, and individuals that represent mainstream society."

This latter form of social isolation, isolation from mainstream society, in time lead to a sort of cultural isolation, and in fact, to the evolution of RUG sub-cultures with values, or at least behaviors which run counter to mainstream cultural values and behaviors. The idea of the type of non-mainstream culture is perhaps best exemplified in lower income African males, who Elijah Anderson refers to as practicing a "streetwise culture," or what Whitehead (1992) refers to as the Big Man/Little Man Complex (BM/LMC). In these paradigms, young RUG males are said to have a disdain for such mainstream American values as hard work, the pursuit of formal education, legal employment, and legal marriage, obeying authority (the "thug life." In fact, in reading the dissertation of William McKinney (2000), I got the sense that one of his study subjects, a black principal in a Philadelphia RUG, viewed educating the youth in his school in mainstream cultural values as his most important role. And indeed, it may be.

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