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Exclusion of the Majority:
Shrinking College Access and
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by

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Gary Orfield has been a Professor of Political Science, Public Policy, and Education at the University of Chicago since 1982. For more than a decade he has worked actively with federal, state and local agencies, courts and community organizations in the making and evaluation of civil rights policies. Professor Orfield is the author of two books on school desegregation policy (The Reconstruction of Southern Education: The Schools and the 1964 Civil Rights Act, 1969; and, Must We Buss?, 1978) and of two monographs on the coordination of federal and local civil rights policies (Federal Agencies and Urban Segregation, 1979; and Towards a Strategy for Urban Integration: Lessons in School and Housing Policy From Twelve Cities, 1981). He is currently directing the National School Desegregation Research Project, which has commissioned 22 new research reports and a series of analyses of changes in the racial composition and segregation of American public schools in the 1980s. He is also director of the Metropolitan Opportunity Project, a comparative study of the impact of changing federal and state policies on the educational and occupational mobility of Whites, Blacks, and Hispanics in five of the nation's largest metropolitan areas between 1975 and 1985.

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EXCLUSION OF THE MAJORITY:
SHRINKING COLLEGE ACCESS AND PUBLIC POLICY IN METROPOLITAN LOS ANGELES

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The Los Angeles urban complex, spreading out over thousands of square miles in five counties in southern California, is one of the world's largest and most influential communities and one of the most socially and ethnically diverse. One American in twenty lives in the area. It is an economic powerhouse of the first magnitude and a cultural force on a world scale. Its sprawling multi-centered pattern of lower density development which long made it seem like a non-city to those from the East reflected the fact that it was the first world city of the automobile age, an early example of what was to become suburban-dominated pattern of dispersed freeway-centered urban development.

In social terms, metropolitan Los Angeles is the decisive center of Hispanic life in the U.S. with almost a fifth of the nation's Hispanics, the group that will become the nation's largest minority community in the next generation. The White fraction of the population of the southern California region has plummeted. Los Angeles is also the most important center of Black settlement in the West and second only to San Francisco as a center of the Asian population that has mushroomed since the historic end to Asian exclusion in the 1965 immigration reform law. In important respects, Los Angeles is becoming the most racially and ethnically cosmopolitan metropolis in the U.S. It will be an area with a large majority of groups that have been called "minorities" and a shrinking minority of Anglos.¹ This has already happened in the area's schools.

The scale and the diversity of urban Los Angeles make the question of equal opportunity for the non-White populations both an intrinsically important and highly complex issue. If educational and economic mobility are not possible for the non-White groups who are already the clear majority of young people in the region and will be even more dominant in the future, then this raises fundamental issues about race relations, politics, and future economic growth in the region. To the extent that Los Angeles area trends forecast broader national patterns in our increasingly multi-ethnic society, the evidence from the area has fundamental national importance.

This paper focuses on educational mobility, particularly racial or ethnic minority group access to institutions of higher learning in the Los Angeles metropolitan area. In America education determines opportunities for jobs and income, and therefore is the principal avenue through which the tremendous inequalities among groups in the population can be reconciled. If all people have equal access to education, then the present racial or ethnic group based inequalities will not persist. To the extent that inequalities would continue to exist, they would not be based on race or ethnicity but increasingly on actual differences in merit. If, on the other hand, the opposite were true, that is, there was no equal opportunity

¹In this paper the term "White" is used to express non-Hispanic White and the term "Hispanic" is used as if it were a separate category from White. School and college data are collected that way and the use of mutually exclusive categories facilitates analysis.

for schooling and discrimination persisted even when non-Whites dedicated themselves to education, then the idea of equal opportunity would give way to questions about the legitimacy of the entire system. Instead of offering a genuine chance, the educational process would be a part of a self-perpetuating cycle of inequality, all the more damaging because it encouraged people within it to believe that they were being prepared for an equal chance, leaving them to blame themselves when they failed.

Our research in large American metropolitan areas, including Los Angeles, suggests that equal educational opportunity does not exist across racial lines and that most Black and Hispanic students are educated in ways that are much closer to self-perpetuating cycles of inequality than to genuine preparation for mainstream opportunities for college or jobs. If this is true, the full potential of most of the young people in metropolitan Los Angeles is not being developed and the long-term potential for social and political conflict from the groups that are excluded is very severe.

Higher education is a critical aspect of this process but it cannot be understood in isolation, particularly in a state like California, where a highly selective college system is built on top of a highly stratified high school system serving widely dispersed urban neighborhoods and suburbs that are themselves separated by severe racial and economic segregation.

Higher education in California is overwhelmingly in the public sector and the public institutions operate under the state's Master Plan which sorts students by test scores and grades. Students attending the low-income minority high schools which educate most Los Angeles area Blacks and Hispanics do much worse on these measures and the great majority are not eligible for any of the state's public four-year colleges. This paper will examine trends in White and minority experience in the high schools, the community colleges and the universities of the greater Los Angeles area since the mid-1970s.

Data and Method of Analysis

During the past two years, the Metropolitan Opportunity Project has been collecting great quantities of data on schools, colleges, and job training institutions in five large metropolitan areas, for the period since 1975. The data covers all the high schools and colleges in metropolitan Chicago, Houston, Philadelphia, Atlanta, and Los Angeles.² Study data includes all the federal racial enrollment and graduation data collected by the Office for Civil Rights in the U.S. Department of Education. Extensive data from state education and job training officials, and from various institutions and researchers are useful in answering the basic questions of the research. Reports and data from the California State University System, the Los Angeles Community College District, the Post-Secondary Education Commission, and other institutions are used in the Los Angeles area studies.

In each metropolitan area the project is producing reports on dropouts, on high school achievement levels, on college access and retention and on

²For the purpose of this study, the metropolitan area of Los Angeles is defined to cover much more than the traditional SMSA, which is limited to Los Angeles County. It also includes the Orange County and the Riverside-San Bernadino County areas.

the operation of the JTPA job training programs. The project has currently released fourteen detailed working papers and plans to produce at least ten more. This study draws on one released Los Angeles working paper and several draft papers or tables prepared by Christopher Jaeger, Faith Paul, Nancy Loube, William Poinicki, Zadia Feliciano, and John Williams of the project staff. It also draws on the reanalysis of the Los Angeles high school study by PACE. The remaining detailed working papers will be released in the coming weeks as they are completed. This paper offers only a brief summary and does not yet include the federal data for college enrollments for the 1986-87 school year although the Department of Education has promised to supply the tape in the very near future.

Separate and Unequal High Schools

The Los Angeles data shows that Black and Hispanic students attend very different schools from those serving Whites and Asians and that those two disadvantaged groups are highly concentrated in schools with a very poor record of success. Black students are highly segregated and Hispanic students are rapidly becoming more segregated from Whites. Asian students are not segregated. They attend a wide range of schools and are concentrated in predominantly White schools.

Racial and ethnic segregation in Metropolitan Los Angeles is strongly related to economic segregation and both are highly related to all measures of educational inequality among schools. Separate schools are unequal in terms of graduation rates, in terms of numbers of students' flunking grades, in terms of attendance level, and in terms of the test scores of those who survive as many drop out (Jaeger 1987; Espinosa and Ochoa 1986) (see Table 1).

The large-scale segregation of minority students in metropolitan Los Angeles is more recent than in most major cities, particularly for Blacks. Prior to World War II there were few Blacks in the area. The development of the Black community in south central Los Angeles is the most recently developed of the nation's vast urban ghettos and it was profoundly surprising to Los Angeles leaders when it became the site of the first huge urban riot of the 1960s (Sears and McConahay 1973, pg. 60, chapters 3, 9; Bullock 1969). The Los Angeles Mexican community was segregated to some extent almost from the beginning of significant White settlement in the small Mexican community and became severe after the conquest by the U.S. (Pitt, 1966).

For many years, however, it seemed that the vast sprawling city of Los Angeles and the Los Angeles Unified School District, which includes several suburban communities as well within its boundaries, would always be predominantly White. The endless tide of midwesterners and southerners attracted first by the dreams of sunny southern California life and then by the reality of vast economic growth seemed to guarantee the development of a mainstream American metropolis (McWilliams 1946) (see Table 2).

Even as many older central cities developed overwhelmingly non-White and rapidly shrinking school districts in the 1960s, the Los Angeles district was still predominantly White and growing. The pattern changed rapidly in the 1970s (see Table 3).

As the areas of minority residence expanded and the number of Black and Hispanic students grew as White enrollment dropped, there was very little stable integration. Instead there was rapid racial transition and expanding segregation in the schools. A 1978 study of schools with significant White and Black or Hispanic enrollment over the period of 1966-1977 showed that

under the neighborhood school system in effect during this period "virtually all the bi- and tri-racial schools are in transition." All Black-White schools moved toward segregated Black enrollment, some very rapidly, and the White-Hispanic schools were changing in many parts of the city. Some Black schools were changing to Hispanic, under the pressure of an exploding Hispanic population. Once schools became Black or Hispanic they never moved toward increasing White enrollment. The 1978 study projected that by 1988 the school district would have very few White schools, about three hundred predominantly Hispanic schools and eighty Black schools (Gifford 1978, pp. 95-120). The lengthy litigation in the Gifford desegregation case, which stretched from the early 1960s to the early 1980s, was an attempt to deal with these trends and the inequalities that were associated with them.

There was major struggle to break the separation of schooling by race in Los Angeles, over a generation (Caughey and Caughey 1966; Caughey 1973; Wollenberg 1976; Haro 1977). The effort by the Southern California ACLU, with the support of Black and Hispanic and liberal White civil rights organization, employed litigation through the state rather than the federal courts because the state law against segregation was more demanding. Under the California constitution, courts were required to act against segregation whether or not there was proof that it was intentionally caused by school authorities. When this doctrine began to be seriously applied in Los Angeles, however, was defined in an election and when the courts began to act again much later, the state constitution itself was changed. After the largest state court order for desegregation in U.S. history and the threat of involving the suburbs in a desegregation plan, the state constitution was amended in a referendum and the state supreme court, whose members were threatened with recall for a number of liberal decisions, accepted the change and permitted the dismantling of the partial integration plan that had been in effect in Los Angeles. It was the first major dismantling of a desegregation plan in an American city. The U.S. Supreme Court, which had overturned a California state constitutional amendment against fair housing, approved this change (Orfield 1984). The proponents of the return to neighborhood schools said that it would bring back Whites to the district. Advocated of the metropolitan desegregation plan said that the basic demographic trends were so powerfully established that the schools would be neither desegregated nor able to hold a substantial White enrollment unless there were interdistrict desegregation (U.S. House Judiciary Comm. 1981, pp. 98-177). The White enrollment continued to drop. The inequalities between minority and White schools remained untouched.

By the late 1980s there were relatively few Whites left in the Los Angeles schools, only a tenth of the metropolitan White students. Although many minority children also went to school outside the district (often in heavily minority low income suburbs much poorer than the city), the Los Angeles district remained decisively important for large numbers of minority families. Nearly half of all Black children in the metropolitan region were still in the L.A. Unified School District in 1985. (see Table 4).

Shrinkage of the College-Going Pool

Two decisive stages eliminate the great majority of metropolitan Los Angeles Black and Hispanic youth from the path toward a college degree -- dropping out and failing to obtain admission to a four-year college.

Hundreds of thousands of minority students never make it into the college eligible population. The very large numbers who drop out of high school are, of course, almost totally excluded from higher education and access is often considered only as a problem from the much smaller group who receive high school diplomas. This may be reasonable from the colleges' perspective but it tends to radically understate the social and economic problems of limited college training.

Only the top seventh of the state's high school graduates are eligible for the University of California system and most of the rest are ineligible for the only other set of four year, B.A. granting public institutions, the huge California State University system. The rest, including the great majority of the Blacks and Hispanics who make it into college in the state are entitled to nothing but a community college system from which few students earn degrees or certificates and few transfer successfully and eventually win B.A. degrees.

The Loss of the Majority Through Dropouts

Anyone attempting to find out why there is such a large gap between the percent of Hispanics and Blacks among the young people in the metropolitan Los Angeles population and the proportions in college will be struck by the fact that the gap is already extremely apparent in the population of high school graduates. Very large numbers of students, often an absolute majority of those in the Los Angeles district, simply do not complete high school, in a society where high school is a prerequisite not only for college but for virtually any job with a dependable income sufficient to support a family. Black college graduates in 1984, for example, had average monthly incomes nearly three times that of Black dropouts. The difference was partially caused by a drastic difference in levels of employment. The income difference between those without high school diplomas and those who had only high school degrees was smaller but very substantial, 49% (Census Bureau 1987, Series P-70, No. 11, pg. 8) (see Table 5).

The dropout rate (defined here as attrition in a cohort of the school district's students from grade nine to grade twelve), is not only very high but is also directly related to the underlying racial and economic differences among schools. The dropout rate in Los Angeles is probably actually higher than the attrition rate reported here because the school district has been growing and has been experiencing a continuing net immigration of students.

There is a strong statistical relationship between the percent of Black and Hispanic students in a school and its attrition rate and the economic differences seem to have the most powerful linkage with leaving school. This means that low income and minority students tend to be highly concentrated in schools that have very high dropout levels. To the extent that decisions to drop out of school are affected by peer group attitudes, students in these low income, minority schools (there are no low income White high schools in metropolitan Los Angeles) find themselves facing not only the least stimulating competition but the schools where it is a norm to leave without a diploma and where the college-going expectations and connections with colleges are much weaker. Statewide statistics show attrition for Blacks and Hispanic is 43% from grade 10 to grade 12, compared with 25% for Whites and 15% for Asians (California State Department of Education 1986, p. 27).

The very high dropout rate for California's disadvantaged groups mean that all the discussion about equity in college start with a population

that is very different from the state's actual population for that age group. More than two-fifths of the Blacks and Hispanics are not even counted in these discussion.

COMMUNITY COLLEGE AND LOS ANGELES MINORITY OPPORTUNITY

Even as American urban communities and public schools have become more stratified by race and class, so too the system of higher education has become much larger and much more differentiated. California has been the preeminent national leader both in the expansion of public higher education and in the development of a system of institutional specialization and screening of students that has produced extraordinary variation among colleges. Within this system, students with the kind of preparation most metropolitan Los Angeles Black and Hispanic students receive in their high schools are overwhelmingly excluded from all colleges except the community colleges. Thus these colleges become the only path by which most minority students can possibly obtain a college degree. In the 1984-85 academic year, 70% of Black college students and 73% of Hispanic students in metropolitan Los Angeles attended community colleges, as did 63% of Whites and 54% of Asians. Not only were Blacks and Hispanics much less likely to go to college but those who did were also much more likely to end up in a 2-year school.

Community colleges were enrolling a shrinking share of the Black and Hispanic college-eligible population in the 1980s and a declining proportion were getting either degrees for certificates in the Los Angeles area. Enrollment and completion declines were particularly sharp for minority men (see Table 6).

Whites were only modestly overrepresented in the community colleges in 1980 but that overrepresentation increased in 1984. In 1984, Whites were overrepresented (compared to their share of high school graduates) by about a tenth and Asians by about a third. Blacks had been underrepresented by a tenth in 1980 and that increased to a fifth by 1984. Hispanic underrepresentation was most serious, reaching almost a third by 1984.

Between the 1976 and 1985 academic years, as the number of Hispanic high school graduates in metropolitan Los Angeles soared, the number of Hispanics receiving the basic community college degree, the AA, dropped by 29%. The decline for males was 55%. Black men had a similar drop, 47%. Black and Hispanic women dropped by much smaller amounts. During this period, both groups went from clear majorities of men among degree recipients to clear majorities of women. By the 1985-86 school year, only 39% of the AA Black recipients were male.

Community college leaders tend to say contradictory things about the AA degree. When asked about the low transfer rate they praise the AA as a transfer degree and point out that a higher proportion of AA recipients succeed in transferring. When asked about the very small proportion of students receiving AA degrees, however, they point to the technical certificates that the colleges also award. Unfortunately, however, when the data on certificates is added in, it appears that far fewer minority students receive certificates and that the declines are similar to those for the AA degree.

The Los Angeles Community College District is by far the most important institution of higher education for minority students in southern California. The district has had a sharp overall decline in enrollment, which has been particularly bad in lower income communities. Black and Hispanic males getting degrees declined even more rapidly within the city

district. During the 1976 to 1985 period, Hispanic male AA degree graduates dropped by 69% and female graduates declined by 49%. Black male grads fell 40% and females 18%. By 1985, females were receiving two thirds of the AA degrees going to Blacks in the district.

If you do not qualify for one of the four-year colleges at the end of high school, there is little chance that you will obtain a BA in the state. The overall transfer rate from community colleges is very low and Blacks and Hispanics are seriously underrepresented among transfers. Of the 5300 students transferring from California community colleges to the University of California system in 1984, for example, only 3.3% were Black and 9.6% were Hispanic, much less than these groups' share of overall enrollment. A state report concludes that "those Community Colleges with th highest population of Black and Hispanic students often transferred few if any, students to the University of California" (Commission for the Review of the Master Plan 1986, p. 41).

Few minority students obtain access to the public four-year colleges and many of them come in through special admissions that rarely lead to successful graduation. Only a tiny fraction of the minority students admitted as "special admits" to the California State University (CSU) system receive B.A. degrees within five years. Among Black students admitted as special admits in the fall of 1978, for example, only 7% received B.A. degrees within five years and the number was even lower for Mexican-Americans, 3%. Sixty-five percent of all Blacks and 42% of all Mexican-Americans admitted that year to the CSU system were special admits. Among those admitted under the regular standards, only one-seventh of Blacks and Hispanics, compared to a third of Whites, graduated within five years (CSU, Division of Analytical Studies 1985, p. 8).

Declining Black and Hispanic College Enrollment

One of the great accomplishments of social policy in the decade following Lyndon Johnson's Great Society program in the mid-1960s was the tremendous expansion of higher education in the U.S. and in the access of minority and low-income young people to college education. The idea was that anyone who could benefit from it should have the option of going to college. The enactment of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, forbidding discrimination in any institution receiving federal aid, was a central part of the revolution that made the principle of equal opportunity enforceable across the color line for the first time in U.S. history. College recruitment and retention programs began under the 1964 War on Poverty and the expansion of college grants to the poor that developed between the mid-1960s and early 1970s were critical steps.

The provision of the means to go to college together with civil rights pressure on the colleges and the tremendous growth of dreams in the Black community following the civil rights movement all worked together to drastically increase Black access to higher education, making it almost equally likely that Black and White high school graduates would start some kind of college by the mid-1970s. Faculty and administrators in many colleges made special efforts, particularly following the shock of the urban riots and the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr.

During the 1980s, however, the pattern was very different. Enrollment statistics for metropolitan Los Angeles colleges show that the proportion of Black and Hispanic high school graduates going to college has declined sharply since 1980 and that the minority students in the region's colleges were even more concentrated in two-year community colleges (see Table 7).

The extent to which the distribution of students within the four year colleges reflects the changing college eligible population as measured by high school graduates is shown in Table 8, which reports on the degree to which the college enrollment equally represents the various racial and ethnic groups.

The proportion of Black high school graduates going into B.A. granting colleges dropped by 5%, with a drop of 8% at the CSU campuses. At the community colleges the decline was 10%. For Hispanics the direction of the change was equally discouraging. For both groups, the reduction of enrollment has been particularly steep for young men.

The trends for Whites and Asians have been quite different. Given the long-standing educational and economic advantages of Whites, these results are not surprising and can be understood as the impact of long-term discrimination. The extraordinary success of Asian youth, however, many of whom are first generation Americans, tends to call into play a discussion about cultural differences and the role of values in the attainment of educational success. Without diminishing the very high regard for education in many Asian families, it is very important to realize that the 1965 Immigration Act was designed to permit only extraordinary Asian families to immigrate to the U.S. Apart from the second wave of Indochinese refugees admitted after the end of the Vietnam War, the immigrants from Asia have tended to be highly educated and, often, well-to-do. The average Korean immigrants to the Los Angeles area, for example, already had a college degree (Lee and Wagatsuma 1978). Nor did Asians tend to go to the same public schools attended by Blacks and Hispanics. Most were enrolled in suburban schools with many middle-class White students.

POLICIES AND SHRINKING ACCESS

The tremendous expansion of minority access to college in the 1965-75 decade and the shrinkage in the following decade were not accidental. The declines in the 1980s were not the product of either a declining pool of qualified minorities' shifts in the desire to go to college. Nationally, a higher proportion of Black students were graduating from high school in the 1980s and entering the college eligible population in the 1980s and the data from the mid-1980s showed significant gains in the average college entrance examination scores of Black students. The Hispanic data shows similar trends. In the metropolitan Los Angeles area there was a vast increase in the proportion of Hispanic students in the pool of high school graduates. The reversals are much more likely to be the results of policy changes limiting access.

This discussion will focus on policy changes directly related to high schools and colleges by federal, state, and local officials. There are, of course, broader general social and economic policies and trends that are related to broad national policies that affected educational success. Policies that increase poverty, make the poor poorer, create health and housing crises in minority neighborhoods are among those that negatively impact schools. A family unable to pay its rent cannot benefit from a well-run neighborhoods school because they will be forced to move involuntarily. No school can have a powerful effect on a student who must move constantly, who has serious untreated hearing or vision problems, who has no place to study, or not enough to eat. Students coming to college from families without any savings to cover unforeseen expenses and without any coverage for medical disasters are obviously much more at risk than those from families with resources and security.

The educational policy needing close examination include policies that increase high school dropouts, policy changes that increase the burdens on low income families desiring college education, increasingly demanding standards for admission to public universities, excessive reliance on community colleges with incorrect policy assumptions about their role in preparing successful transfer students, reduction and deemphasis on minority recruitment and retention programs, and an end of federal civil rights enforcement. A brief discussion of each of these policies will suggest the range of negative changes that have taken place in the past generation.

Stratification by Admissions Requirements

California state government, under its 1960 Master Plan, has established a huge system of public higher education on the basis of a highly selective system of access to the four-year colleges and rely on the 2-year community colleges for virtually all of the other students. The selective public higher education system is justified by an implicit assumption that all Californians have equal access to preparation for college. If this were true, and selection were simply based on a neutral standard of merit after all students would have had an equal secondary preparation, the idea of taxing everyone in the state to spend much more on those students attending the universities could be legitimated. In fact, however, high school education is unequal and there are tremendous racial differences in eligibility for public higher education. The result is that low-income minority families are paying state taxes that very heavily subsidize the universities which few of their children may attend while their children are only eligible for much lower cost community college education that typically leads to neither a degree nor a transfer to a four-year college.

A 1988 report by the California Postsecondary Education Commission indicated that of the state high school graduates (a group that does not include the huge number of minority high school dropouts) only a seventh (14.1%) were eligible for the University of California campuses and only a fourth (27.5%) were eligible for the campuses of the California State University system. For the most selective component, the University of California, there were striking racial differences. Only one twentieth of Black and Hispanic seniors were eligible, compared to 16% of Whites and 33% of Asians. Asian students were more than seven times more likely than Blacks to be eligible and Whites were 3.6 times as likely (***Education Week*** May 18, 1988, p. 2). An earlier study showed that one-third of White high school graduates and half of Asians were eligible for regular admission to the California State University campuses but only one-sixth (15.3%) of Hispanic graduates and one-tenth (10.1%) of Blacks received similar ratings. The racial implications of this kind of college screening superimposed on a system of highly unequal high schools were unambiguous, particularly in light of evidence that few successfully transferred from the community colleges and trends toward increasing state disinvestment in community college education.

The California Community College system never had a good record of graduations or transfers by minority students. During the past decade, however, there have been some important changes that have made a bad situation worse. The enactment of the Proposition 13 tax reduction amendment to the California State Constitution in 1978 radically reduced the local tax base of the community colleges and made them overwhelmingly dependent upon state funding. The cuts created a general crisis for all

state and local public agencies and produced fierce competition for funding. The reduction in funding produced an immediate loss of classes in the system and led eventually to the imposition of tuition in a system that had always been free. More than that, it set off a long struggle among the branches of higher education for the resources that remained in Sacramento. In that competition, the community colleges, the institution that served the most disadvantaged students were at a decisive disadvantage in a state which had come to accept almost without question the logic of the sorting that goes on in college admission to the various campuses. The California community colleges during the 1984-86 period received a budget increase of only 8%, compared to a U.S. average of 13% for community college systems. In spite of California's wealth and rapid growth, the increase was nearly two-fifths less than the national average. For the 1987-88 period the University of California system received a 15% increase, the California State University system got a 14% increase, while the community colleges received only 7% (Chronicle of Higher Education 1987, May 20, p. 20; 1987, Nov. 4, p. A28).

There were substantial drops in community college enrollment in the state following the shrinkage of programs and the initiation of tuition. Black enrollment dropped particularly sharply once tuition was imposed, even though the level was very low, \$50 a term, and it has never recovered. The enrollment declines were the worst in the colleges serving poor inner-city minority communities.

Tuition and financial aid policy decision in the 1980s made the situation for minority families, whose average income is far lower, much worse. Nationally, tuition rose faster than the cost of living every year in the 1980s. The relative income of Black families remained far below the median and relatively unchanged while the relative income of Hispanic families actually fell substantially.

The basic policy decisions of great importance were the decisions not to raise the federal Pell grants significantly as tuition levels accelerated and the state decision not to create a substantial state scholarship program as the era of free college education came to an end in California. The response of the political system to the rapid increase in the gap between total cost of college and the maximum grant assistance available has been to vastly expand student guaranteed loans, greatly increasing indebtedness. Indebtedness has become very high at institutions serving very low-income students and the inability of those students to repay is now threatening their institutions because the federal government is moving to cut off colleges with high default rates from eligibility for the program, thus completing the circle of shrinking financial access by threatening the continuing operations of the colleges that serve the poorest students, including a number of historically Black campuses (educational **Week** 1988, April 17).

One of the great surprises of our research in California has been the very low level of student financial aid received by students within the Los Angeles community college system, the most important set of institutions for access by urban minorities. In the campus surveys, the students report that 85% receive no financial aid. This is in spite of the fact that many of these students are very poor. In fact, the percent receiving welfare exceeds the percent on financial aid, and as many work full-time, are trying to raise young children, and face other obstacles to school completion. Many of these students work full-time and are only able to carry part-time enrollment. Few of the minority students receive aid from their families. A large proportion say their goal is to obtain a four-year degree although many are enrolled on campuses where that rarely occurs. The

state financial aid system is directed toward the four-year private and public colleges, neglecting the fact that the two-year institutions are the only colleges the state offers to most of the non-White students.

Many features of conventional financial aid programs work in favor of focusing the funds on higher cost institutions serving students from much higher income families. To the extent that funding is built around tuition and fees, there is little eligibility for community college students, although many of their other costs -- books, transportation, child care, living expenses may be just as high as four-year college students. Programs are typically aimed at full-time students who know their plans for the coming year many months in advance; many community college students are part-time students who do not know whether they can enroll or how many courses they can enroll or how many courses they can take until shortly before the school year. Financial aid formulas are often conceived as the way in which public funds are made available to private institutions, allowing choice to the much more costly institutions. Many private institutions, however, have very few Black or Hispanic students (although their minority enrollments have tended to decline more slowly in the 1980s than public universities). The major shift to loan rather than grant assistance requires very low-income families to sign notes for what are vast sums compared to their cash incomes. Many low-income families and students are unwilling to take on such heavy debts. On-campus teaching, research, and federal work-study employment are often allocated on bases other than greatest financial need.

Raising Barriers

Like many other states, California and local school boards and colleges have been actively engaged in increasing the requirements for high school graduation and college entrance during the 1980s. One of the most common and most important responses to the harsh criticisms of the low achievement levels of high school graduates in the late 1970s was the decision to raise achievement levels by forcing students to meet higher standards or to remain behind in their grade or be denied a diploma or the right to enroll in their local college. In California public schools, this took the form of both state-mandated competency tests and the form of local policies or flunking a growing number of students. In the Los Angeles area, the impact of these policies was further increased for a time by the drastic cutback of summer school following Proposition 13, a cutback that appears to be directly related to sharp increases in the dropout rate the next year. Where it had been previously possible to graduate or to avoid another year in school by taking one or two classes during the summer, now a whole year's added work was necessary. Many decided to drop out. The dropout rate rose very sharply following the enactment of Proposition 13. During this period the Los Angeles school district also implemented grade retention policies that resulted in large numbers of high school students being held back in their grades. Research shows that there is a very strong relationship between grade retention and dropping out. Few students remain in high school when they are much older than their classmates. State law required the development of high school competency tests. These tests may be related to the high attrition in Los Angeles during the twelfth grade, normally a grade with relatively small losses.

Like many university systems across the country, the California State University system implemented increased college entrance requirements. The requirements mean that students must have more college prep courses in high

school in order to be eligible for college admission. In California, as in most states, these requirements were adopted without any feasibility study to find out how many students would be negatively affected in the California high schools. Given the inequalities in the high schools and the evidence on the course patterns of students, this change is likely to further reduce Black and Hispanic college access.

The CSU standards were part of a general national movement that is affecting public universities in all of the metropolitan areas we are studying. The impact of the "Excellence Movement" and the conservative political priorities of the 1980s has been to diminish attention to the social responsibilities and impacts of the colleges and to emphasize and legitimize their desires to become more exclusive and more research-oriented. All college faculties are trained as researchers, know best how to teach students interested in research and obtain prestige primarily by conducting research. Without the cross-pressure of civil rights duty and social responsibility standards, they have a natural tendency toward increasingly selective standards that have a totally predictable negative impact on access to college by minority students. Public universities in all five central cities in our national study were undertaking changes of this sort in the 1980s.

The failure of the community colleges and the universities to develop an effective transfer process means that for the great majority of the Black and Hispanic students who enter community colleges as a way to gain a B.A., their struggle to obtain a college education will be futile. The 1960 Master Plan saw preparing students for transfer as an extremely important function, foresaw that most lower division instruction would come in two-year colleges and justified the strict limits on access to the four-year colleges by arguing that "so long as any high school graduate can be admitted to a junior college... it will not reduce the opportunity for students able and willing to meet the requirements for transfer" (Commission for Review of the Master Plan, pp. 38-39, quoting 1960 Master Plan).

The transfer function is working very poorly; for the disadvantaged minorities, the promise of access through transfer is virtually meaningless. The vast majority get neither a degree nor the ability to transfer. Since this transfer problem occurs across the country and is extremely severe for minority students, it calls into question the whole system of stratification and the value of having independent institutions for the first two years of college when they lead to nothing of tangible value for most students, who are many times less likely to complete college than those who start in four-year institutions.

Federal civil rights enforcement was one of the important pressures keeping the issue of minority access and faculty hiring on the agenda of colleges and universities. If colleges could not show that they were taking the needed steps to treat minority students and faculty candidates fairly their federal funds could be jeopardized. Administrators were well aware that statistics showing declining minority access could lead to investigations that could put the institutions under very serious pressure in vital areas of research funding, student aid, and other federal programs. Early in the Reagan Administration, enforcement officials attacked the idea of affirmative action, accepted much lower commitments from state governments under court order, and went into federal court advocating a much more limited reading of the coverage of the law against discrimination in federally assisted college programs. There was no pressure from federal civil rights officials to keep the issues of access

and faculty retention at the top of the colleges' agendas. It became an issue that it was safe to ignore.

THE POLICY AGENDA FOR MINORITY ACCESS

The data show that there are five different kinds of problems leading to loss of minority students on the path to college degrees. None of these has been addressed at more than a symbolic level so far in California, although there have been policy discussions and small programs dealing with a number of approaches. What is necessary is that they be made goals of high priority for the various institutions, that clearly successful programs addressing various dimensions be supported more substantially, and that there be systematic experimentation and evaluation concerning issues on which there is no clear knowledge.

The first problem is the enormously high dropout rate in the high schools, the second is the lack of serious precollegiate preparation in many high schools, the third is the concentration of minority students in community colleges which experience an enormous attrition rate and a minimal transfer rate. The fourth is the lack of functioning transfer mechanisms between the two-year and four-year institutions. The fifth is the absence of need-oriented financial aid in a higher education system that was long assumed to be free but no longer is.

Dropouts

Among the most important policy needs are programs to hold Black and Hispanics students within each set of institutions. Dropout prevention is doubtless as complex and multi-sided a set of issues as compensatory education. Particularly at the high school level, it often involves students who have a variety of educational, personal, and economic problems simultaneously. There are a great many experiments attacking various components of the problem ranging from truancy enforcement, to comprehensive programs for pregnant girls, to much closer ties between high school performance and guaranteed jobs or college access. Many of the promising experiments are so new that long-term consequences are not yet clear. The California Department of Education has published reports summarizing considerable research in the area as have many other scholars and institutions.

Probably the first necessity for both high schools and community colleges is the need to make the competition rate a central means of evaluating the institution's success. The great emphasis on test score gains in the reforms of the Excellence movement. The single-minded focus on test scores can have a negative effect on anti-dropout efforts. If a large low-achieving portion of a school's enrollment drops out or is held back in a lower grade, the school's average test scores will rise. Schools do not get credit if they hold more students and their average test scores are not quite as high. There should be explicit goals for increasing the graduation rate and schools performing well on this measure should receive special recognition.

Closing the gap between high school and success in getting a good job or enrolling in college is very important both in attacking some of the causes of dropping out and increasing the positive consequences of education. The efforts are a reaction to the fact that many young Blacks and Hispanics saw little connection between their schools and any real effect on life after

school. Living in neighborhoods with few successful families, with vast joblessness, and with more visible criminal success and educational triumphs, they need to see clear and tangible connections between school and life chances. The efforts of the Boston Compact and the "I Have a Dream" programs in various cities guaranteeing college scholarships to graduates, are attempts to rekindle aspirations. The early evaluations show no sudden transformations, but efforts to address these problems are doubtless necessary.

Quality High School Preparation

Perhaps the most difficult of the purely educational problems involved in access to college is the concentration of the bulk of the Black and Hispanic students in inferior schools. This means* that they do not experience the level of instruction, the level of expectations, the competition, and the socialization into planning for college that is found in good middle class schools. Since high school curriculum is determined by a market system within the high school, low income high schools tend to offer a much poorer menu of pre-collegiate courses taught at a less demanding level. Since teachers with degrees from the best schools often can find work in richer suburban districts with better prepared students and city teachers with seniority win the right to transfer to the most suburban-like city schools, students in low income schools often have worse teachers. Middle class schools are immersed in information about and connections with four-year colleges; low income schools tend to have much less information about colleges and connections primarily with community colleges. Children growing up in low income ghettos and barrios receive much less out-of-school reinforcement for school success and face much stronger counterpressures.

Some part of these inequalities could be made up, at least for the most motivated students, within the existing schools. To be effective on any significant scale, of course, the effort would have to start in the early grades. It could be done by providing strong grade level instruction using materials and levels of teaching similar to the suburbs for those children ready for it in inner city schools, no matter how small the classes would have to be.

The only alternative would be to permit those students ready for the work to attend more competitive schools. This could be done in one of two ways -- establishing magnet schools with higher standards within the school system or permitting minority students to attend schools with more demanding standards, through either voluntary transfer or mandatory desegregation either to middle class schools within the system or to the large number of such schools in outlying districts. Los Angeles has a small magnet program of varying quality and a small voluntary student transfer program, limited to the rapidly shrinking number of White schools left within the central city district. These programs reach only a very small minority of Black students and a much smaller proportion of Hispanics. In a number of metropolitan areas now there are either mandatory or voluntary plans of city-suburban desegregation or voluntary transfer. None of California's large cities yet has such opportunities.

Community Colleges: Developing the Transfer Function

Community colleges in California and elsewhere have been operated with very little attention to the success of students in graduating or transferring. Typically the colleges are financed and rewarded on the basis of enrollment during a given term, not on their ability to make the transfer function work. Since community colleges pursue a variety of other goals, as well, ranging from recreational courses, to adult education, to specific forms of short-term job training, it is easy for administrators to answer any criticisms by pointing to all the other functions. Data systems and reports typically provide almost no information on how well the transfer function is working for those who enroll because they wish to get a college degree.

Community colleges should be required to keep records showing the level of successful transfers and they should be rewarded for increasing this proportion, particularly for increasing it for groups that have rarely transferred. If they cannot substantially improve the existing transfer rates, serious consideration should be given to a basic reorganization of higher education which would put the transfer education programs under the direct administrative control of the universities, holding them accountable for the outcomes.

Experiments in California and other areas show some of the problems that need to be addressed within the community colleges. Improved counseling and direct transfer advice of the sort provided by the experimental transfer centers is certainly a good idea. The creation of effective remedial programs and their clear separation from honest college level instruction is essential given the extremely diverse background of the student body, particularly in the colleges serving low-income students. It should be made easy for students in community colleges to take a course at a state university as part of their community college program -- at community college tuition, thus familiarizing them with the transfer institution.

Community colleges should be asked to develop plans for each student wishing to transfer. They should set goals for increasing the transfer rate and they should be given concrete incentives and rewards to meeting those goals. Since few students now obtain either degrees or transfers the cost per success within the community college system is now prohibitive, unless one considers that the function is the political one of diverting students from the college population without telling them (the "cooling out" function often discussed in the literature). If the goal is actually college education, additional funds greatly increasing the educational productivity of the colleges would be well spent. This must be the goal if the existing system is to be maintained without very deep racial consequences.

Financial Aid

California is now at a stage in the development of its higher education system where a serious examination of the impact of educational costs on access to college is essential for the development of sensible state and national tuition and aid policies. The survey data from the Los Angeles community colleges shows very severe problems of college finance for low-income students. A good first step would be an analysis of the state subsample of high school and beyond and of state data in the annual ACT-UCLA survey of college freshmen to examine the degree to which money questions are shaping decisions about attending college, decisions about what college to attend and decisions about remaining in college for minority and low-

income students. This, together with new studies of California high school and college students should be used to develop a system that provides a widely publicized and simple guarantee of free tuition to very low-income families and a system that is intended to aid the typical community college minority student. Operating a financial aid system that channels student assistance to non-poor students whose colleges are already heavily subsidized by taxpayers while providing almost nothing to low-income students engaged in a difficult and a normally futile effort to gain a degree through a community college is a system of redistribution of resources and opportunity that compounds rather than attenuates inequality.

The federal, state, and local educational policy changes were not adopted to impede minority college success but their effects add up to a multi-dimensional policy of increasing exclusion. They promise a future of fundamental society and political conflict over educational and economic mobility. If California does not want to become a society where the majority is excluded and where group conflict and widespread lack of training impede the creation of future growth and opportunity, there must be different policies. The data from Los Angeles suggests the need for a coordinated effort to increased minority access to and success within higher education. Such an effort would be expensive, would probably take years to show substantial positive results, and would be controversial in terms of its reordering of institutional priorities. The costs would, however, be much less than those involved in operating a society where the key opportunity institutions work to perpetuate inequality and where the talents of most of the people are not fully developed.

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Table 1
Segregation of Black and Hispanic Students in Metropolitan
Los Angeles Public Schools, 1970-1984

	% Whites in School of Typical Minority Student		
	1970	1980	1984
Black			
Los Angeles County	13.7	16.1	15.7
Riverside & San Bernardino Counties	59.2	57.0	49.8
U.S. Total	32.0	36.2	35.8
Hispanics			
Los Angeles County	44.9	21.8	17.4
Riverside & San Bernardino Counties	63.1	54.5	39.5
Orange County	72.8	48.7	30.7
U.S. Total	43.8	35.5	33.7

Source: U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights Data Tapes (Orfield 1983; Orfield and Monfort 1986).

Table 2
Los Angeles Population by Race, **1950-1980**

	1950	1960	1970	1980
Percent Black	9	14	18	17
Percent Hispanic	8	11	13	33
Percent White	81	73	64	--
Percent Asian	2	3	5	--

Sources: Census data (Farley 1978), Statistical Abstract *of the United States, 1981*.

Table 3
Los Angeles School District Enrollment by
Race and Ethnicity, **1966-1985**

Race/Ethnicity	1966	1970	1976	1980	1985
Percent White	56	50	37	24	19
Black	21	24	24	23	19
Hispanic	19	22	32	45	54
Asian/Pacific	4	4	6	7	8

Source: Los Angeles Unified School District, *Racial and Ethnic Survey, Fa77 1985*

Table 4
Metropolitan Los Angeles Enrollment Proportions
by Race, 1967-1986

Year	Group	LA County	Orange County	Riversd County	San Berndn County	Suburban Counties	LA Metro Area
1967	Black	12.8%	0.7%	5.3%	4.7%	2.6%	9.9%
	Hi spani c	15.6%	8.6%	17.3%	15.3%	11.9%	14.6%
	Whi te	68.8%	89.4%	76.1%	79.3%	84.4%	73.2%
1986	Bl ack	14.8%	1.8%	6.6%	8.1%	4.7%	11.3%
	Hi spani c	44.3%	22.4%	29.0%	24.5%	24.4%	37.4%
	Whi te	31.1%	64.4%	61.0%	63.5%	63.4%	42.4%

Source: California State Department of Education Data adapted from Jaegar, 1987.

Table 5
High School Attrition Rates in Los Angeles Unified School District,
Classes Graduating in 1976-1985

1976	33.7%
1978	40.2%
1981	50.9%
1982	46.2%
1983	44.2%
1984	53.2%
1985	51.0%

Source: Los Angeles Unified School District Enrollment data analyzed by Zadia Feliciano in draft working paper for Metropolitan Opportunity Project, 1987.

Table 6

Relationship between Black and Hispanic Proportions of High School Graduates and Community College Enrollments

	% High School Graduates		% Community College Students	
	1980	1984	1980	1984
Blacks	12.3	11.2	11.1	8.9
Hispanics	17.2	22.6	13.4	15.8
Asians	4.7	7.7	5.8	10.1
Whites	65.8	58.5	69.8	65.2

Sources: California State Department of Education; U.S. Dept. of Education, OCR tapes, analyzed by William Ponicki and Faith Paul

Table 7

Percent 4 Year College Enrollment Compared to Changing Proportions of Metro LA High School Graduates, 1980-1984

	High School		4 Year College	
	1980	1984	1980	1984
Whites	65.8	58.5	71.1	67.5
Blacks	12.3	11.2	8.1	6.8
Hispanics	17.2	22.6	10.0	10.4
Asians	4.7	7.7	10.8	15.3

Table 8

Proportional Representation of Whites, Blacks, Hispanics and Asians
in Metro LA Four Year College Enrollment, 1980-1984

	1980	1984	Change
Whites	+8%	+15%	+7%
Black	-34%	-39%	-5%
Hispanics	-31	-54%	-23
Asians	+130	+99	-31