

## Making the Case



This story provides an overview of the 5-part *tpt* series on race, class, and place disparities by laying out the thesis, themes, research findings, and urgency of the issues. It introduces the Itasca Project, profiling its inception and its involvement in maintaining the economic vitality of the Twin Cities. Described as a “CEO-led civic endeavor that exposes the stark disparities facing the Twin Cities’ future,” the Project identifies and seeks to address these disparities in the interest of the Twin Cities’ continued economic competitiveness. Those involved in the Project include the CEOs of many of the largest employers in the metro area, the mayors of Minneapolis and St. Paul, the state governor, the presidents of the University of Minnesota and the Minnesota State College and University System, and the head of the Metropolitan Council.

The Itasca Project had commissioned the Brookings Institution to research disparities in the Twin Cities. The *Mind the Gap* report has identified race, class, and place as factors of key importance to the vitality of the Minneapolis/St. Paul metropolitan area. In many ways, these three issues are very interrelated, yet each is a distinct means of classification that has enormous impact on lives and communities. After identifying these as major areas of inequality within the Twin Cities, the Project established its Taskforce on Disparities to come up with ways in which the business community can address them.

One of the most striking aspects of the Brookings and Itasca studies indicates that, in spite of the Twin Cities’ reputation as highly stable and largely flourishing economically, place plays a disproportionately high role in the economic strength of the metro area, as compared to other cities. For example, the poverty rate of the core cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul is four times that of suburban areas. This ratio is greater than that of Detroit, Philadelphia, Baltimore, or Cleveland, cities commonly known for their highly concentrated spaces of poverty and wealth.

Driven by the need for broader business involvement in these critical arenas, the Itasca Project has sought to bring to the table business as well as community leaders. In encouraging increased voice from the community and local residents, the Project is able to be innovative in its approach to Minnesota’s future competitiveness, both from an economical, as well as an overall human rights perspective.

## Key Terms/Concepts

Competitiveness  
Infrastructure  
Public, Private, and Nonprofit Sectors  
Race, Class, and Place Disparities  
Viability

## FACT SHEET: RACE, CLASS, AND PLACE DISPARITIES IN THE TWIN CITIES

Three stark growing socio-economic disparities in the Twin Cities: Race, Class and Place. The table below highlights some of the *Mind the Gap: Reducing Disparities to Improve Regional Competitiveness in the Twin Cities* report findings related to these disparities. To read the full report, go to:

[http://www.brookings.edu/~media/Files/rc/reports/2005/10cities\\_sohmer/20051027\\_mindthegap.pdf](http://www.brookings.edu/~media/Files/rc/reports/2005/10cities_sohmer/20051027_mindthegap.pdf).

**Race disparities:** Differences among race and ethnic groups

**Class disparities:** Differences among income groups

**Place Disparities:** Differences between cities and suburbs (and among suburbs)

| RACE  | CLASS  | PLACE  |
|---|--|--|
| <p>The average black Twin Cities resident is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Earning 48% less*</li><li>• 73% less likely to own a home.</li></ul>  | <p>Between 1989 and 1999 the average household income of the wealthiest 1/5 of Twin Cities households rose 24 % and of the poorest 1/5 rose only 16%.</p>  | <p>In the 1980, the suburban population of the TC metro was 1.5 million. By 2000, it reached 2.3 million. This trend continues to this day.</p>  |
| <p>The average Latino Twin Cities resident is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 4 times more likely to be uninsured.</li><li>• 5 times more likely to be a teen mother.</li></ul>                                      | <p>97% of TC residents earning between \$35,000 and \$79,000 have a high school degree; only 81% of low-income people do.</p>  | <p>While just 1/5 of the region's population lives with the two central cities, the majority of the region's poor live there.</p>  |
| <p>The average Native American Twin Cities resident is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 2.5 times less likely to have access to a car.</li><li>• 5.5 times more likely to receive inadequate prenatal care.</li></ul> | <p>About 30% of households earning less than \$25,000 a year lack checking or savings account. There are approximately 63,000 unbanked low-income households in the Minneapolis-St. Paul area.</p> | <p>The TC has the second starkest differential between city poverty rates and suburban poverty rates in the country. The central cities' poverty rate is 4.5 higher than the suburban rate, which is higher rate than the Baltimore, Detroit, Cleveland, and Philadelphia metro areas.</p> |

33% of Hmong are in poverty compared to 4% of Whites.

An unbanked worker earning \$12,000 a year spends \$250 just cashing paychecks.

Although the central cities have only 23% of the metro's total population, they have 54% of the metro's minority population.

55% of Hmong (25 years old and older) do not have a high school degree, compared to 7% of Whites.

Among households earning less than \$35,000, 17% of school age children are "not yet" prepared in language and literacy and 15% in mathematical thinking, compared to 8% for children in households earning \$55,000 and more.

Almost 80% of the region's jobs are located outside a five-mile radius of the area's central business district.

Between 1990 and 2000 the metro added 200,000 minority residents- a 110% increase.

\* All comparatives given are in relation to white residents' averages.

### Before Viewing

Have you ever heard of the Itasca Project?

In what ways does race affect your life and the lives of your family and friends? Class? Place (in this case meaning whether one lives in the core cities or suburbs and where within each of these)?

Think about the private, public, and non-profit sectors and the roles they typically take in working on "social issues."

### After Viewing

1. Why do you think the Itasca Project includes leaders primarily from the business community and government?
2. Historically, what has been the level of involvement in community building and engagement from the business community/private sector? Public sector/government? Non-profit sector?
3. How does the Project mirror the model of business involvement that Jim Campbell described from his small home town?
4. How do voices from within each community impact the research of the Project? (Think particularly of the North Point clinic interview.) Does the input of local voices strengthen the work of the Project?
5. When Bruce Katz from the Brookings Institution says "this is not just the right thing to do, this is the competitive thing to do," what does he mean? What is the right thing to do and how does it relate to the economic competitiveness of the region?
6. Is it important for all Minnesotans to address issues of race, class, and place, or only those directly affected by them?
7. Why and how do we address these disparities?
8. Based on the film, what is the role of the business community now in shaping the future of the Twin Cities? What about the public and non-profit sectors?
9. How can we capitalize on Minnesota successes and ensure that everyone benefits from them?

10. How is the Itasca Project's approach to business leadership and involvement unique?
11. The film begins with images of the Interstate 35W bridge collapse. How is this event symbolic of what the Itasca Project is trying to ameliorate? In what ways are Minnesota jobs, education, healthcare, and transportation like the bridge before its collapse?

### Suggested Activity

Break students into three groups: Race, Class and Place and distribute copies of the Fact Sheet above. Have each group look at and discuss the data. If time allows, provide full copies of the *Mind the Gap* report.

Discussion Questions:

1. What information surprised you? Why?
2. What information relates to what you already know about the disparities in the Twin Cities? Give examples of people living in your community.
3. What kind of overlaps have you noticed between race, place, and class disparities?
4. What do you think should be done to address these disparities?
5. Who should be involved?
6. What can you do?