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SEEKING BELONGINGNESS

Examining Equity, Capability and Opportunity through existing Index Schemes

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HIFIS: The Haas Institute for a Fair and Inclusive Society at UC Berkeley brings together researchers, stakeholders, policymakers, and communicators to identify and challenge the barriers to an inclusive, just, and sustainable society and to create transformative change. The Institute will serve as a national hub of a vibrant network of researchers and community partners and will take a leadership role in translating, communicating, and facilitating research, policy, and strategic engagement. The Haas Institute advances research and policy related to marginalized people while essentially touching all who benefit from a truly diverse, fair, and inclusive society.

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“Data matters a great deal in assessing the social investment needs of advanced democratic societies. In fact, such metrics, though hardly decipherable or interesting to most people, are vitally important. They operate like a thermometer or a CT scan at the physician’s office. They give us early and important clues about essential interventions that may be required to avoid calamity. Just like at a health clinic, recovery fundamentally requires the patient’s honest acceptance of the problem and a dedicated commitment to healing”²

Henry A.J. Ramos, President & CEO, Insight Center for Community Economic Development.

As the United States works to confront issues of unemployment, socio-economic stratification, and marginalization, data is an essential part of efforts to demonstrate the danger of existing societal arrangements as well as to formulate arguments and prescriptions for change.

Writing in the *Huffington Post* this past July, Ramos leveraged this introduction to kick-start a conversation on equity, opportunity, and well-being in the United States. He identifies a clear disconnect between American politics’ stated dedication to the public concern and its ignorance of the needs of the United States’ most marginalized communities. It’s important to note, though, that his diatribe on the value of metrics is not a proclamation that we ought to quantify all elements of daily life. Far from it, instead, Ramos invokes the power of data as a lobbying and advocacy tool to help our communities leverage their own agency and secure lasting change. Data does not tell the *full* story. Rather, it creaks open the door – allowing for more nuanced and targeted critiques and problem-solving.

His thesis, then, is meaningful and grounded in communities; he encourages a strategic intervention in the way that American policymakers, activists, and communities think about, measure, and act on conceptions of justice. In essence, he proposes a new ‘index’ of sorts to amalgamate information on resource distribution, opportunity, and access. Since community-based indicators are used to allocate funding, design government programs, and enforce geographic or population borders, a revolutionary understanding of data on equity, opportunity, and well-being could translate to a revolution in the way the United States conceptualizes and respects its obligations and duties to the disadvantaged.

It’s quite clear that the status quo of opportunity mapping and measurement is tired, ineffective, and lends its support to consistently problematic outcomes. Our current systems of poverty, education, and opportunity scoring have led the United States to the bottom of the pack in international evaluations. The United States ranks 26 out of the 29 wealthiest nations in child welfare and scores abysmally in the categories of ‘care for elders’ and ‘quality of education’ (Ramos 2013). Within our

² Ramos. “The Measure of a Nation.” 2013.

workforce, we're confronted with staggering inequalities in spending-power and assets. According to Ramos's Insight Center, wealth disparities in the United States are staggering. White families now possess, on average, 22 times the wealth of black families and 15 times that of Latino households (*Insight Center* 2013, 67). It's clear, then, that not only are policies not working, but also neither are the systems we've developed to evaluate those policies.

Given the threats today's levels of income inequality, poverty, and marginalization place on the integrity of the American social contract, many non-government actors – the Insight Center among them – are acting quickly to devise new indicator systems that examine an individual's holistic experience of life – their ability to access quality education, health care services, to secure a living-wage job, and take the reigns of their own destiny. The conceptions of equity, opportunity, and well-being operationalized by these organizations bring new perspectives to indexing work by targeting asset and skill-development, access to affordable health insurance, or the presence of an efficient and well-utilized transit-network as indicators of communities' geographies of opportunity.

These measurement schemes are becoming increasingly necessary tools for social mobility advocates, grassroots nonprofits leveraging funding opportunities, and marginalized communities seeking evidence that accurately represents their lived experience under failed policy regimes. At the same, though, it's becoming hard to differentiate between the host of organizations, theoretical positions, and reports coming from the exploding 'human development space.' Given the differences between these efforts by geographic location, donors, goals, and conceptions of equity, opportunity, or well-being those seeking information often risk buying into a whole set of background institutions and values by accepting data from an organization.

Acknowledging the complexity of this space as well as the diverse needs of on-the-ground actors, we at the Haas Institute are interested in disrupting the existing discourse on economic success, social progress, and well-being in order to order to provide communities with a detailed portrait of the various efforts under way to measure and theorize equity in America (and across the world). We're particularly interested in the ways our own theories of belongingness and membership in society could help structure a new debate on the ways the US approaches issues of equity, opportunity, and measurement regimes. We're confident that this sort of analysis would have an immediate and targeted impact on the work of our partners across the country.

The purpose of this review, then, is to critically analyze existing literatures on indices of well-being, social inclusion, growth, and equity to simplify the myriad of options to the social justice movement. By examining reports prepared by small municipalities, metropolitan centers, states, nations, inter-governmental organizations, and members of the non-profit community, this literature review aims to inventory existing best practices within the scholarly and activist community. Our end goal is to critique existing systems of thought from the perspective of belongingness theory and to chart the road forward for a meta-index that coincides with our theoretical obligations. This project remains loyal Ramos's truism: that well-conceived indicators can help society better understand its current situation vis-à-vis the treatment of marginalized social groups, theorize potential solutions to gaps in the social contract, and strategize potential policy interventions that can not only improve lives, but also strengthen the very fabric of society.

Over the course of the following pages, I will examine several categories of indices, their theoretical underpinnings, and their potential for strategic interventions in order to accomplish these goals. First, I will examine the contemporary discourse on poverty, progress, and growth in order to paint

a backdrop for on-going work to inventory local, national, and international development efforts. Second, I will transition to a discussion of four categories of equity indices, each represented by a case study index. Third, I will offer the Haas Institute's own theoretical perspective on inclusive growth seen through a belongingness lens. Lastly, I will provide several prescriptions for future work on creating holistic and multi-factor indicators that best approximate the myriad of human needs that constitute 'flourishing.' This synthesis of existing scholarly knowledge on the subject will take the form of a 'model index.'

The hope is that as the Haas Institute continues to work on several projects related to opportunity communities, spatial analysis, and the role of inclusivity in measurement schemes, this research on the state of progressive metrics will provide insightful and much needed context for the social justice movement as it pushes the US government to redefine its definition of success with regards to poverty alleviation, social inclusion, and growth.

Introduction: Poverty & Progress

"Our Gross National Product, now, is over \$800 billion dollars a year, but that Gross National Product – if we judge the United States by that – counts air pollution and cigarette advertising, and ambulances to clear our highways of carnage. It counts special locks for our doors and the jails for people who break them. It counts the destruction of the redwood and the loss of our natural wonder in chaotic sprawl. It counts napalm and counts nuclear warheads and armored cars for the police to fight the riots in our cities. It counts Whitman's rifle and Speck's knife, and the television programs which glorify violence in order to sell toys to our children."

Robert F. Kennedy, University of Kansas, March 18, 1968³

Even today, the most widespread metric of social progress is gross domestic product (GDP). Essentially, GDP measures the market activity within a given nation-state. As economic power became the measure of a nation post-WWII, GDP gained prominence as a catch-all indicator of success. Increasing a country's GDP became the singular focus of corporate elites and elected officials interested in climbing the social ladder. As GDP and GDP-growth had always been concentrated in wealthy Western powers, an international fixation on GDP did very little to support lesser-developed countries and their sick, impoverished, and struggling populations.

Academics have long sought an improved, more holistic measure of human progress that moves beyond GDP's shortcomings. In 2008, this topic was the subject of investigation by a group commissioned by French President Nicolas Sarkozy. Under the direction of Nobel laureates Joseph Stiglitz and Amartya Sen, this "Commission on the Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress" was tasked with examining the efficacy and impact of existing measures of economic performance on overall well-being. The commission found that conventional measurements which equated progress with an increase in GDP failed to account for improvements in the living conditions of the most vulnerable – focusing too much on aggregate wealth accumulation and not enough on inequality within a society. The Sarkozy Commission took a pointed tone, noting, "[w]hat we measure affects what we do; and if our measurements are flawed, decisions may be distorted," articulating the same tension expressed by Ramos earlier (Stiglitz, Sen,

^{3 3} Roger, Simon. "Bobby Kennedy on GDP: 'Measures Everything Except That Which is Worthwhile,'" *Datablog: Facts Are Sacred*, 24 May 2012, <http://www.theguardian.com/news/datablog/2012/may/24/robert-kennedy-gdp>

and Fitoussi 2009, 7). Additional or more detailed arguments against GDP-centric metrics of growth with equity include:

1. The most widespread argument against the use of GDP-centric measurements concerns their utilitarian grounding – in other words, a lack of concern of equity. When examining the economic prosperity of a given country, GDP pays no heed to the distribution of that wealth among different social groups, genders, races, ethnicities, sexual orientations, or ability statuses. Indeed, two nations could have identical GDP's even if one's wealth distribution was characterized by absolute equality and the other concentrated its wealth in one family, leaving hundreds of thousands penniless. GDP is essentially a blind aggregate. As international organizations, governments, and corporations examine whether they should invest in a given country, they do not examine the 'aggregate economic activity' in that place; they are also interested in nuanced measurements of societal happiness, productivity, health, education, and income inequality. GDP-centric measurements ignore the backdrop of societal conditions that create, dis-incentivize, or concentrate wealth; it tells only a piece of the story.
2. GDP measurements treat different categories of economic activity the same. As dramatized by Kennedy above, GDP measurements assign no value judgments to different goods and services. At the surface level, this value-neutral approach seems appropriate. After all, it removes an individual's personal judgments from a quantitative measurement process. However, as Kennedy mentions, certain categories within GDP measurements (i.e. cigarette advertising, profits won as the result of environmental degradation) have a clear *negative value added* to society at large. Should they really be equated with economic activities like the construction of a child cancer treatment wing at the local hospital?
3. At the fundamental level, GDP lacks the ability to incorporate 'un-priced' factors. In the field of economics, academics often deal with externalities – forces either positive or negative that exist outside of the supply and demand market for a given good or service. A negative externality of a corporation's waste disposal plan, for example, could be the cost of medical bills in surrounding communities as a result of asthma-inducing toxins that they had released. In the context of GDP, the 'negative' social cost of these bills, surgeries, and the emotional damages of the individuals involved would be disregarded as *a priori* irrelevant. In this way, GDP fails to account for all consequences of economic activities.

A fixation on GDP growth also ignores on-going conversations on the definition and nature of poverty, which we ought to interrogate. Namely, is the United States' contemporary understanding of poverty well-formed, evidence-based, and effective? Subsequently, do existing poverty frameworks sufficiently expose the root causes of economic inequality and oppression?

Indeed, rather than modeling for the rest of the world a holistic, multidimensional poverty metric that engages questions of material and non-material deprivation, the U.S. Federal Poverty Line formula is still based on work done by a Social Security Administration economist some fifty years ago by the name of Molly Orshansky. At the time, Orshansky's calculations were widely accepted. By analyzing the average American's access to food vis-à-vis prices at local markets and grocery stores, she was able to calculate a minimal threshold of income necessary to sufficiently nourish a family of four. For many years, her measurements held pace with the United States' economic growth. However, food no longer forms the largest expenditure for American households and has

been surpassed by rent and mortgage payments. Holding policymakers accountable to Orshansky-era measurements of equity and well-being may no longer be the best course of action.⁴

US politicians have been reluctant to revise the formula for calculating the poverty threshold to reflect current family budgets and costs of living for fear of dramatically increasing the number of households counted in poverty under their administration. This lack of courage has not only rendered poverty metrics less useful, but has made the search for alternative metrics more imperative. While poverty, like GDP, may never be a perfect model of well-being, it is less useful than it might be. It seems logical to pose, then: is it morally justifiable to hold society to a higher standard, asking whether “lifting people out of poverty [is] too low a goal for our nation to set?”⁵ (*Insight Center* 2013, 18). Is it necessary, given the inadequacy of existing measures, to devise new criteria for success and human flourishing?

The answer seems clear. In a land that claims the mantle of full human freedom and equality, alleviating poverty is the *minimum* moral obligation of collective society. It’s worth asking whether or not the real question should surpass Rawl’s ideal theory on social minimums to imagine the *universal* threshold to which society must hold itself. Leaving GDP far in the rear view mirror, we must engage in new debates over values and metrics in order to envision and strategize the next century of American social policy. We have to be adventurous, innovative, and creative. We have to challenge ourselves to advance a social ‘universal’ that makes sense for today’s communities; we must create metrics that match the ambition of the American dream.

Introducing a Belongingness Lens

Conceptualized by John A. Powell, the Executive Director of the Haas Institute, the idea of framing discussions of power, privilege, and social cohesion around ‘belongingness’ is essentially a radical transformation in the way researchers view community. Rather than imagining poverty as synonymous with material deprivation, Powell challenges us to go deeper – to think deeper – about the social conditions that lead to the marginalization of low-income folks and traditionally marginalized social groups. By framing this debate in terms of community social integration, he was able to better understand the role ‘membership’ plays in the defining and enforcing of our ‘collective.’ In this context, then, “[o]ne is poor if one does not have the things needed to be a respected member of society” (Powell 2012, 3). By this understanding of in- and out-group membership, entire social contingents are pushed to the margins of society’s circle of human concern and labeled as “other” – that is, as less significant and lacking traditional agency. Poverty and belonging are then *relative* measures that shift with time and geographical location based on the construction of the majority group. Consequently, in order to keep up with the shifting dynamics of community, belongingness theory demands a more detailed analysis of people and place compared to an absolutist understanding of the income required to feed or house a certain number of bodies.

⁴ Specifically, Orshansky’s model calculated food at 40% of household budget whereas it now accounts for 10% of household budgets. For a detailed nonpartisan report on the consequences of Orshansky’s metrics as well contemporary policy prescriptions to address those shortcomings, see *Measuring Poverty: A New Approach* of the National Research Council.

⁵ Similar doubts have been voiced regarding the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) of the United Nations. While the MDGs have been helpful in re-orienting global energies to targeted issues of important to the social justice movement, it’s also been argued that the MDGs pursued the “low-hanging fruit” of development by failing to target cross-sector and transnational inequalities (Melamed and Samman 2013, 1).

In order to promote belongingness, civil society must drastically re-imagine its moral obligations to its constituents. Rather than simply administering the provision of social benefits through the modern welfare state, civil society must work harder to widen the circle of human concern to encompass more and increasingly diverse communities. Belongingness encourages us to refrain from tokenizing any individual who is a member of a traditionally marginalized group. Instead, it's important to foster a sense of community and participatory democracy where all individuals have a stake in the decision-making process, feel as though their opinion could impact that process, and are in a position to contribute those thoughts (powell 2012, 4).

The road forward is not easy. American history to this point has, at times, stood on the shoulders of an unrecognized cohort of communities of color, low-income people, and queer people. Our socialization as schoolchildren teaches us that certain privileged individuals' welfare is at the center of the public concern whereas concern for these marginalized groups fall somewhere along the periphery of that circle. The consequences of this way of thinking to the future of social inclusion are dire. "To put it differently, out of fear of the other, we withdraw support from public structures that would ameliorate and act as a bridge out of 'poverty,' even if they benefit and bind together the entire society" (powell 2012, 11). In light of these historically enforced divides, it's not enough to simply address single-issue 'fixes' to poverty alleviation efforts. Instead, a more holistic set of poverty alleviation prescriptions is warranted.

According to powell, some of these more visionary prescriptions can be categorized as follows:

1. **Communities of Opportunity:** The notion of Communities of Opportunity came out of work done by researchers at the Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity at The Ohio State University. The Kirwan Institute reasoned that, "[a]ll the entities collected within a region, including people, institutions and environments, share a linked fate embedded in 'structures of opportunity' – the ingredients that add up to well-being in a particular place and success in life." Among these structures are: "schools; grocery stores that stock affordable, healthy food; health care facilities that accept new patients with a variety of insurance plans; labor markets that match willing job-seekers with meaningful, sustainable employment; green space; and much more" (powell 2012, 19). This place-based analysis of poverty as exclusion is essential to the belongingness lens and to re-imagining the landscape of American opportunity.
2. **Targeted Universalism:** Rather than homogenize the personal narratives of each contributor, targeted universalism offers a conceptual framework that acknowledges our shared humanity but with a particular eye towards the needs of traditionally disempowered communities in any space. By emphasizing the situatedness of 'othered' social groups, targeted universalism reminds activists and policymakers alike that coming together under the same roof does not necessitate that we check out particularities at the door (powell 2012, 20). This nuanced approach to the logic of formal equality is essential as we think through ways to communicate the motivations and results of equity indices.
3. **Widening the Circle of Concern:** This element of powell's economic security prescriptions addresses the need to engage in intercultural and diverse conversations with the goal of humanizing and creating bonds across social boundaries. He states, "[i]n considering policies to address poverty, it is important to have a sense where populations are situated within our national imagination and structures" (powell 2012, 10). Too often, an awareness of these technologies of power requires the unpacking of individual and collective privileges that impede authentic conversations among social groups. Working

towards that ‘higher-order love’ that unites across difference is not an easy campaign but, as powell and others maintain, it is an essential one.

Inclusive space (or the lack thereof) is much more than an academic buzzword; it’s evidenced at family dinner tables, on schoolyards, and in the streets. It allows certain members of our society the unearned privilege of ‘default membership’ in majority society and tells others that they are not simply ‘different’ but that they are *outside* the realm of human concern. Examining measures of equity and social capital with the goal of maximizing belongingness confronts this trend. At the most fundamental level, we at the Haas Institute believe that, “[t]he very working society depends on a level of social cohesiveness, caring, and trust that, if lacking, can cause society to break down” (powell 2012, 7). We’re hopeful that this analysis of on-going efforts to define, measure, and promote equity in our communities will bolster existing literature on the role of belongingness in well-being and help others to conceptualize the positive and negative consequences of existing work done in the field.

Applying a Belongingness Lens

For the sake of offering an expansive but sufficiently detailed analysis of on-going equity, social capital, and opportunity mapping schemes, from here on I will concentrate my work into four thematic categories of indices, reports, and article as follows.

Those schemes affiliated with:

1. The Human Development Approach/Capabilities Approach to Human Development
2. The Transit-Oriented Development Model
3. The Growth with Equity Model
4. Topic-Focused and/or Local Indices

For each thematic category I will provide a brief description of the indicators used by a representative index scheme and a summary of their unique conception of equity, opportunity, and well-being. I will then highlight several potential drawbacks to the example index.

After thoroughly discussing these various approaches to the work, I will synthesize their contributions to this debate in a short section on best practices among equity indices as well as a concluding reflection on the role of belongingness in the development of a potential model meta-index.

1. Ethics and Economics at Play in the ‘Capabilities Approach to Human Development’

“The basic purpose of development is to enlarge people’s choices. In principle, these choices can be infinite and can change over time. People often value achievements that do not show up at all, or not immediately, in income or growth figures: greater access to knowledge, better nutrition and health services, more secure livelihoods, security against crime and physical violence, satisfying leisure hours, political and cultural freedoms and sense of participation in community activities. The objective of development is to create an enabling environment for people to enjoy long, healthy, and creative lives.”⁶

United Nations Development Programme

⁶ www.hdr.undp.org/en/humandev/

Despite the multitude of metrics chronicled in this review, one approach to indexing social progress seems to be gaining the most critical support from those actively engaged in the debate. This paradigm, the ‘Capabilities Approach to Human Development’⁷ – builds off of the scholarly work of three individuals: Pakistani economist Mahbub ul Haq; legal, feminist, and ethics scholar Martha Nussbaum; and Indian economist Amartya Sen. This diverse cohort managed to exert considerable pressure on mainstream development thought by strongly condemning the GDP-centric approach to unlocking human potential and pioneering an entirely new field of social and political thought on human flourishing.

The ‘Capabilities Approach’ emerged out of the first Human Development Report issued by the United Nations in 1990. At issue, according to ul Haq, was the GDP-centric system that, “values a gun several hundred times more than a bottle of milk [and] ... raise[s] serious questions about its [GDP’s] relevance for human progress” (Klugman, Rodriguez, and Choi 2011, 1)⁸. Acting on the moral intuition that the system could and should be reformed, ul Haq proposed that the United Nations begin releasing an annual report that examined three quality-of-life indicators: educational attainment, life expectancy, and decent living standards. Sure enough, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) has issued a Human Development Report (HDR) based off of the Human Development Index (HDI) each year since.

Amartya Sen became involved in this work early on through his support and collaboration with ul Haq. After ul Haq’s death, Sen took over as the unofficial ‘Father of Human Development’ and expanded upon his colleague’s work. Sen then worked to expand the UNDP’s indicators and expand the United Nations’ databank of indicators to its expansive current state (including data ranging from infant mortality to income distribution).⁹ Upon entering the field of development theory, Nussbaum drew on this on-going engagement and reached the similar policy proposals as Sen but arguing from moral rather than economic theory. Her major contribution was carving out space for the Capabilities Approach within a larger discussion on what constitutes “living well” per the Greek philosophers.

According to Nussbaum, the Capabilities Approach can be boiled down to treating each human being as an end in and of themselves. The realization of this universal equality of sorts is quite difficult, she notes. In fact, it can only be achieved by negotiating complex issues. She goes as far as to argue that a dedication to the Capabilities Approach includes a critical eye to neoliberalism and the globalization movement. According to Nussbaum, “[t]he purpose of global development, like the purpose of a good domestic national policy, is to enable people to live full and creative lives, developing their potential and fashioning a meaningful existence commensurate with their equal human dignity” (Sen 1999, 185).

⁷ The Capabilities Approach to Human Development is further explicated in Appendix A of this report where each of Nussbaum’s ten central capabilities are listed for the reader.

⁸ It is worth noting, however cautiously, that, “Some critics, however, contend that the growth-centric approach that the HDR was designed to counter is merely a straw man. In an early review, T.N. Srinivasan wrote that, ‘Income was never even the primary, let alone the sole, measure of development, not only in the minds of economists but, more importantly, among policymakers’ (Klugman, Rodriguez, and Choi 2011, 8). Irregardless of who the credit ends up going to, it does seem as though moving beyond a GDR-centric metric has been beneficial not only to the vibrancy of the field of development economics but to the communities impacted from the beginning.

⁹ In fact, the HDI is very clearly billed as the beginning rather than the end of an international conversation on development and capabilities. The UN has constructed a graphic system online that actually allows a lay member of the public the ability to craft their own HDI by manipulating a set of indicators on www.hdr.undp.org/en/data/build. Hopefully, this use of crowd-sourcing will contribute to an on-going revision process of the index.

The conception of equity, opportunity, and well-being operationalized by this thematic category transcends resource allocation and concerns of distributive justice and focuses on a re-imagination of individuals' independent and multidimensional flourishing. The Capabilities Approach maintains that each individual ought to be guaranteed access to specific capabilities in order to make fully free and informed choices regarding their own destinies. These far-reaching needs (including leisure, environmental sustainability, and mutual respect requirements) are of a higher-order than simply focusing on redistributive tax schemes and social benefit programs. Indeed, they hold human society to an exacting universal goal: the recognition of each individual's self-determination, their ability to be autonomous and sovereign over their own affairs.

As inspiring as the Capabilities Approach is to scholars and community organizers, it has yet to be sufficiently transformed into an actionable database or equity index. To some extent, it is impossible to find data points for some of Nussbaum's central capabilities that address more nebulous and introspective processes (i.e. the capacity and freedom to imagine and to 'dream' of one's future). As Nussbaum consistently reminds us, the Capabilities Approach is only a framework for understanding individual freedom within a specific community. In order to fully examine an individual's access to structures of capability, we'd first need to place her central capabilities in the context of the history, tradition, and needs of a specific geographic environment. We'd then need to clarify what an individual in that geographic and social space would require in order to be acknowledged as a fully-function member of society. The difficulties of this place-based work are clear, then. Thankfully, though, hosts of researchers are now working on operationalizing the Capabilities Approach's work in different contexts.

Chief among these indices attempting to draw on the Capabilities Approach is the UN's Human Development Index (HDI). The preeminence of this particular metric is to be expected given the size and funding of its parent body. However, in the twenty years since the advent of the HDI much has been written on its perspective on human freedom. Far more interesting, I posit, would be an analysis of a less well-known index, the American Human Development Project's (AMHDP) *Measure of America*.

The *Measure of America* report follows the general model of the HDRs by focusing its attention on a triad of key indicators: health, education, and income (as a means to decent living conditions).¹⁰ What's more, *Measure of America* breaks down their data by geographic location, gender, and race/ethnicity – thus providing readers with a more thorough understanding of not only the aggregate 'opportunity' of Americans, but also of the allocation of those benefits to privileged or disadvantaged communities.

While the index privileges these three 'key indicators', it is not blind to the social determinants that influence them. For instance, its researchers took pains to examine the 'fatal four' determinants of life expectancy – "smoking, poor diet, physical inactivity, and drinking to excess" – as key negative influences on an individual's life chances (Measure 8). This focus on "the attitudes and environments that undermine health ... [the] senseless risk-taking among men who feel obligated to

¹⁰ For the purposes of this literature review, I will only analyze one principle index per thematic area. However, it's important to note that the AMHDP that coordinated the *Measure of America* index also produced the *Opportunity Index*, a state- and county-level measure of access to social mobility commissioned by the Opportunity Nation coalition, a group of over 200 nonprofit, academic, private sector, and public sector folks united around a bipartisan 'opportunity agenda' to rebuild the American dream. While no 'Capabilities Index' of sufficient quality exists, it appears as though the confluence of these two indices most closely approximates the theoretical underpinning of Nussbaum's work.

conform to masculine norms to environments in which sugary, salty, fatty good are sometimes the only options,” is indicative of *Measure of America’s* desire to place their data within a social context (Measure 8). This holistic lens to human development at all levels – from the emotional, nutritional, and bodily health of people in a given community – is an important dimension of the report.

Measures of America’s most insightful remarks, though, are found in the comparisons of states, cities, and counties at different ends of the capabilities spectrum. The authors use various comparative notes to dramatize the vast discrepancies between their lived experiences and those of others with whom they shared the same political landscape. A few of the most shocking or dramatic observations produced by the report include:

1. “The average American today lives nearly 9 years longer than in 1960, is twice as likely to graduate from high school, four times as likely to earn a bachelor’s degree, and earns nearly twice as much” (Measure of America 2013).
2. “A seventy-five year gap in human development separates the top-and bottom-ranked [Congressional] districts” (Lewis and Burd-Sharps 2011, 48).
3. “Native Americans in five states have life expectancies below 70; they are living shorter lives than people in Azerbaijan or Guatemala” (Lewis and Burd-Sharps 2011, 78).
4. “For every \$1 of white net worth, Latinos have 12 cents, and African Americans have 10 cents” (Lewis and Burd-Sharps 2011, 183).
5. “African-American males today live shorter lives than the average American did in 1970 – four decades ago” (Measure of America 2013).
6. “Young African-American men in Philadelphia and Jefferson Parish, Louisiana face a higher chance of death by homicide than do military personnel in Iraq. In these areas, the death rate for African-American men ages 20-24 is about 5 per 1,000. The death rate of military personnel in Iraq is about 4 per 1 million, 20% lower” (Measure of America 2013).

Underneath these observations emerges a hesitant truth: income does not automatically lead to a longer life (Lewis and Burd-Sharps 2011, 43-44). Rather, it is possible, as the UN HDI has long testified, to live an empowered life with relatively few means. The deciding factor, as both show, is the degree to which society cares for and provides for each individual – to borrow from the belongingness language, whether each individual is afforded full, authentic membership in society. The observations of *Measure of America* set the stage, then, for a discussion of how to focus more on social policies that transform our understanding of the social minimum under which no one ought to fall. If we can problematize *Measure of America* for anything, it is the hesitancy with which its authors endorse policy and community interventions that transcend distributive justice solutions and focus more at the level of individual empowerment – the training of new community health workers, the development of quality, living-wage jobs for families, and the elimination of discriminatory ordinances in employment and housing. After all, not all implicit biases and social problems can be solved by a more progressive system of taxes and allocations. Some require the commitment of society to real thought work on the very concept of membership and moral obligations. The information and rankings presented by *Measure of America*, then, do a good job of illustrating the disparities around access to health care, quality educational opportunities, and empowering jobs, but could do a better job of illuminating the transformative narratives that undergird existing social conditions.

Additional Capabilities Approach to Human Development/Inclusive & Sustainable Development Indices: Opportunity Nation's Opportunity Index, UN HDI, Virginia Performs, Swiss MONET Indicator System, UK Sustainable Development Indicators, Community Indicators (Australian Government).

2. Planning the 'Urban Village' through Transit-Oriented Development (TOD)

"The modern America of obesity, inactivity, depression, and loss of community has not 'happened' to us. We legislated, subsidized, and planned it this way."
Frumkin & Jacson qtd in Mile High Connects 2012, 62.

As American society begins to come to terms with the adverse effects of decades of unimaginative and exclusionary city design, inefficient public transportation networks, and discriminatory lending practices, it is apparent that the answers to questions of quality housing, education, and jobs are one and the same: smarter and 'greener' urban neighborhoods. By focusing on constructing communities with sustainable, networked, and well-situated built environments, transit-oriented development scholars hope to operationalize these observations into actionable progress in specific metro environments. They believe that we can incrementally affect the larger social order of the United States by changing the paradigm of urban and regional political studies to one of transit-focused social and economic development models at the community-level (Mile High Connects 2012).

The conception of equity, opportunity, and well-being operationalized by this thematic category is one which examines capability failure in a particular spatial context with the goal of looking at the potential of transportation systems to exacerbate or mitigate the class, gender, sexuality, ability, and race or ethnicity disparities between populations to access structures of opportunity. By working through pragmatic neighborhood projects and geospatial mapping programs to expand access to efficient and inclusive transportation networks, they argue we will be better able to ensure individuals' access to health care institutions, educational facilities, civic associations, and any number of things which might make the human life that much more livable. In practice, this theory often plays out through local research efforts to better understand or 'map' the implications of building a new transportation system. In other cases, transit-oriented development models appear as outcomes of unrelated strategic planning processes. For the purposes of connecting this project to our indices work, I will present the general rationale for the TOD approach as well as a brief explanation of one particular TOD scheme, the Denver Regional Equity Atlas.

As with many other equity indices, the core of the TOD approach is a dedication to the multi-dimensional human being. TOD researchers understand that the interactions of various transport networks affect individuals' abilities to access the basic needs of life, which, while they may exist, can be inaccessible to the vast majority of the public. Secondly, TOD thinkers tend to consider themselves members of the sustainable development field. They believe that, "[d]istressed communities, displacement, garmented open space, damaged ecosystems, and racial disparities in health, education, and jobs are all challenges that can result from unsustainable development patterns and policies" (Central Puget Sound 2012, 3). It's clear that the opportunity communities they imagine are healthy, green, and innovative structurally.

The goals of TOD articulated by the report, "Geography of Opportunity in the Central Puget Sound Region" of the Growing Transit Communities Project are helpful aides to further conceptualize the causal chain of this equity approach:

1. Actively engaging and empowering people to shape their communities.

2. More transportation choices within neighborhoods, and better connections between neighborhoods.
3. More housing choices for people of all ages, incomes, abilities, races, and ethnicities.
4. Greater economic vitality, achieved by growing existing businesses and attracting new ones, improving resident access to jobs, education, and opportunity, and giving employers access to talent.
5. Sustaining existing communities and cultures through preservation and growth directed to meet diverse needs.
6. Enhancing the return on transit and other public investments by creating complete and vibrant communities that attract growth and transit ridership (Central Puget Sound 2012, 2).

Within this understanding of flourishing lies the fundamental understanding that civil infrastructure is a tangible, immediate tool that cities and towns across the country can use to unite un-like communities, create economic opportunity, and improve the quality of life of their constituencies. While this model is not exhaustive, then, it does offer ‘next steps’ that seem more achievable, local, and actionable than many other theoretical approaches of human development.

This approach to development practice and theorization is not without its high-profile supporters. For instance, the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) committed \$196 million to a Sustainable Communities Initiative that’s explored TOD. Indeed, HUD funds and network support gave the Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity the ability to scale out its Opportunity Mapping program of combining geographic information systems (GIS) technology and multidimensional indicators to evaluate gaps in the opportunity of communities in the same cities across the country. It is against this background of widespread buy-in to the TOD model that I will examine the Denver Regional Equity Atlas project. Building on the Opportunity Mapping framework developed at Kirwan, the researchers behind this project worked to better understand capability deprivation in one particular metro area.

Through the Denver Regional Equity Atlas (DREA), the Center for Transit-Oriented Development contributed technical and policy advice to the efforts of a particular region to better conceptualize its transit scheme. With DREA, the local governments of Denver and surrounding communities attempted to understand the positive and negative consequences of Denver’s FasTracks metro network with an eye towards an eventual \$6.7 billion expansion. Given the size and significance of the project, they were not interested in moving too quickly and jeopardizing the sustainability of the project. Hence, by taking the time to effectively examine community impacts, the DREA came to better understand opportunity (and the lackthereof) in the metro region.

Within the DREA project, the following indicator themes served as the backbones of a thorough analysis of well-being in the Denver metro area:

1. Population and Demographic Characteristics of the Region
2. Access to Affordable, Quality Housing Options
3. Access to Jobs and Economic Development Opportunities
4. Access to Educational Opportunities
5. Access to Health Care, Healthy Foods and Recreational Facilities

What’s interesting about the way that DREA conveyed their data is their utilization of mapping programs to represent the diffusion of various ‘opportunities’ across spatial areas to members of

planning commissions, developers, and the public. Instead of providing community leaders with raw data of advancement or failure rates, they worked intentionally to make accessible a more holistic community scan of Denver's opportunities. When compared to existing rhetoric on the American dream, it's clear that access to basic needs had not panned out as a natural right for Coloradoans.

Instead, what they found was that, for many in Denver, poverty is a regional issue, not simply an isolated one. It is multidimensional in the sense that low-income people do not live near rapid transit, are forced to pay a large percentage of their to transportation fees, are unable to utilize quality school/preschool choice due to prohibitively long distances, and are often forced to live in cheaper housing areas far from their actual jobs. This mismatch between job centers and residential areas (as well as health care providers, food vendors, and civic associations) was one of the strongest trends made clearer by their mapping visualizations.

The process of creating these visualizations also proved useful for the DREA team members through the implications the project had on the suburbanization of poverty. Indeed, throughout the past several decades as 'white-flight' began to bifurcate urban racial dynamics, the American cultural definition of "success" shifted to a suburban, car-supported existence. Per the societal myth, living in the suburbs affords one access to healthier foods, recreational opportunities, quality school districts, and safer neighborhoods. Yet, as the DREA report and other related efforts have demonstrated, poverty and capability failure is increasingly characterizing *suburban* environments.

Whereas many wealthy members of communities are beginning to see the benefits of urban living (i.e. accessible transit, cultural and community opportunities, etc.), the current generation of young families scrambling towards the 'paradise of the subdivision' are finding themselves stranded in spaces devoid or largely devoid of resources for un- or under-employed people and their families during the midst of the Great Recession. Indeed, in the years before 2008, "[m]any of the families who live in these outlying areas 'drove till they qualified' when buying these homes, not taking into account the substantial transportation cost they would incur" (Mile High Connects 2012, 18). In the middle of the worst economic downturn since the Great Depression, these individuals who needed social and community assistance to help them to their feet found themselves in suburbs lacking, for instance, robust job training centers, food banks, and resources for the low-income. In fact, they found themselves in regions of the country traditionally over-looked by larger Foundation grants and nonprofit organizations that had only ever conceived of the poor as synonymous with 'the inner-city.' By visually representing the disparate needs of communities in the Denver region – including the suburban poor – the DREA index, then, does a stellar job of opening up the region for a more substantive conversation on the shifting dynamics of spatial opportunity in the United States.

This is not to say, though, that the TOD schema is without its drawbacks.

For one, transit-oriented development is in many cases profit-driven. Part of the TOD doctrine extends beyond the relatively simple notion that individuals ought to be able to connect with each other and the providers of their basic needs. Alongside this concern for the public good, proponents of TOD also encourage the construction of new transit networks and dense properties located immediately around transit stops in order to create transit-based 'urban villages.' These villages, of course, are not normally public housing. In all actuality, they constitute massive construction projects taken on by contractors, construction companies, and real estate developers. Among these private sector groups, it is impossible – if not illegal – to consider the public good above its own

profit margins. This responsibility to shareholders in many cases leads to problematic if not morally condemnable actions by corporations who take advantage of or in other ways marginalize low-income people and communities of color from these developments or spaces. This is not to say that the very idea of privately-funded development is wrong; rather, it is to clarify that holding for-profit entities accountable within an equity-building project is difficult in a country where corporations have historically served the opposite purpose.

Secondly, we must recognize that the TOD model is limited in scope by its own self-definition as a place-based model. Compared to more extensive models of well-being, TOD puts its energies into one particular element of building inclusivity: the provision of accessible resources to a populace. It never widens its scope of concern to examine how to best address the social conditions which may exist between distanced communities even after their basic needs are met by accessibility to public transport. By this I mean to say that narratives of oppression which characterize or at the very least influence minority social groups are not based solely in the economic standing of their members (i.e. availability of jobs) but also in their lived experiences across time. Understanding access to transport is no doubt important for individuals to be ‘empowered’ to make more authentically independent choices, it’s important to note that those policy interventions do not remove stigmas and implicit bias from relations between folks of different sexualities, races, ethnicities, and class backgrounds. Essentially, the system of power dynamics and privileges does not stop at the gate of a commuter train; it follows that individual throughout their daily lives and must be addressed before a truly equitable social fabric is sewn in Denver or any other community.

Frumkin and Jacson’s remark at the beginning of this section on the legalization, subsidization, and orchestration of our unhealthy, unequal, and unsustainable culture is then a call to intervention – a reminder that the current spatiality of poverty and capability deprivation is the direct fruit of human choices, strategies, and planning. Transit-Oriented Development, despite some questions of scale, offers an insightful look into the roles of people power, local government, and freedom of movement (i.e. bodily integrity à la Nussbaum) in the equity space.

Moving forward, I find hope in the reflection of Puget Sound researchers who noted, “[s]ocial equity also requires that low-income communities, communities of color, and other historically underrepresented populations are active participants in planning and policy making by having the knowledge and other tools required for full participation” (Central Puget Sound 2012, 3-4). In fact, “[e]quity in regional planning is about building capacity at all levels, connecting the ‘tree tops’ with the ‘grass roots’” (Central Puget Sound 2012, 3). It’s clear, then, that TOD offers not only a framework within which we can conceptualize local development but also an avenue to argue for broader community participation in planning and strategic thinking as municipalities chart their own futures.

Additional TOD Indices: “Equity, Opportunity, and Sustainability in the Central Puget Sound Region: Geography of Opportunity in the Central Puget Sound Region”

3. Towards a Moral Capitalism: Growth With Equity

Over the past several decades, development experts have seen a pronounced change in the way corporations and corporate entities approach capabilities-development around the world. While one might think that these groups and the individuals that lead them simply came around to the winning

‘moral side’ – that is, the awareness that all individuals ought to have access to the same opportunities – that would be quite a naive conclusion, indeed. It goes without saying that organizations like the World Bank are well aware of the draw-backs of relying too heavily on GDP measurements as indicators of progress. At the same time, as these organizations continue to examine the criteria of development, it’s clear that their motivations do not come from, as with Nussbaum, an understanding of human flourishing rooted in ancient Greek social and political ethics; rather, they are most interested in growing the number of consumers ready, willing, and able to purchase the products of their partners and members. At some level, one has to value the fact that these organizations are able to work with certain multinational partners to provide comprehensive development data to practitioners and theorists. They continue to take an active and real-time interest in work across the ‘developing world’ and even commit targeted funding that makes a difference for marginalized peoples. Before entering into a substantive conversation of this field of social indicator research, referred to here as “Growth With Equity,”¹¹ I wanted to prominently feature this tension between ostensibly ‘good’ corporate outcomes and the problematic background narrative of those efforts (which I will further examine later in this section).

In essence, this approach attempts to construct a moral capitalism through which individuals and entire economies are able to increase their output and simultaneously develop individual freedoms within their domestic economic policies. The concept of Growth with Equity is set within a series of conversations on inclusive growth that has featured, at least most prominently, the association between gender empowerment and economic growth. The conception of equity, opportunity, and well-being featured in this theme is then one of material success. If other elements of individuals’ lives are treated as vital research questions, they are only pursued as means by which to access questions of economic success and not as ends in and of themselves. The primacy given to resource wealth – and perhaps even more widely distributed resource wealth – in this conception of development misses a larger conversation on flourishing.

Here, I feature the Asian Development Bank (ADB)’s report *Inclusive Growth Criteria and Indicators: An Inclusive Growth Index for Diagnosis of Country Progress* as part of their on-going Sustainable Development Working Paper Series. Released in 2010, this piece describes in detail a social inclusion paradigm that can effectively advance the ADB’s interests as well as conceptually evaluate the social fabric (read: market) of a given society. They are acutely aware that, “[i]n short, ‘unequal power leads to the formation of institutions that perpetuate inequalities in power, status, and wealth – and that typically are also bad for the investment, innovation, and risk-taking that underpin long-term growth’” (Cling, Cogneau, et al. 2006, 456).

The Inclusive Growth Criteria developed by the ADB in this report focuses on “(i) growth, productive employment, and economic infrastructure; (ii) income poverty and equity, including gender equity; (iii) human capabilities; and (iv) social protection” (McKinley 2010, 1). In general, the indicators they suggest are focused on access to economic opportunity. Some of their most interesting data points focus not on these systems of economic success so much as the ability of an individual to *access* those institutions. For that reason, I find their inclusion of data on cell phone use, access to electricity, urban/rural income disparities, and ethnic group income disparities interesting jumping off points for other equity theorists.

¹¹ For reference; see *Balancing Growth with Equity: The View from Development* (Duflo, 2011) or *Growth with Equity* (Musgrave, 1963). When referring to a series of development efforts either orchestrated by or implemented through corporate agents, I will refer to the “Growth with Equity” approach.

The ADB is aware that these indicators can be examined from multiple angles. They note, “[t]he narrow interpretation implies a focus on economic growth, within which expanding human capabilities is regarded as instrumental to improving economic outcomes.” Conversely, “[a] broad interpretation highlights inclusive development ... This approach emphasizes non-income measures of well-being and valuing human capabilities, such as good health and literacy, primarily as human development outcomes, not as instruments to accelerate economic growth” (McKinley 2010, 1). However well-meaning this differentiation is between the finance and “people”-minded approaches laid out in the introduction of this report, I remain weary of accepting their work at face value.

The conceptual drawbacks to this approach were highlighted earlier – namely, a problematic grounding in the myth of the individual agent endowed with near-perfect information and endless opportunities to engage the free market. The rhetoric of (neo) liberal thought is not far from a left-libertarian reading of the Capabilities Approach, after all. If we reduce all individuals to rational actors that rank their priorities and seek only the most efficient allocation of their resources, we lose sight of the larger institutional arrangements into which human beings are inscribed.

In addition, a potential problem with the ABD report, specifically, is its system of weights and aggregates. While the Inclusive Growth Criteria mentioned above encompass a variety of sectors, the weighting of the indicators demonstrates the priorities of the ADB at a values level. In fact, 50 percent of an inclusive growth score is based on economic growth and access to economic infrastructure whereas only 10 percent of weight is afforded to “success in providing basic social protection” and 15 percent to “success in enhancing human capabilities” (McKinley 2010, 13).

This weighting does not address the moral obligations raised earlier by the belongingness approach to membership. Indeed, powell’s scholarship does encourage the integration of all individuals into common systems of dialogue and exchange. This does not indicate, though, an unwavering support for market mechanisms as a way for individuals to ‘liberate themselves.’ What the belongingness approach indicates is a more wholesome understanding of membership as the ability to speak one’s voice, be heard, and have the recognized agency to act on those opinions to affect change. Given the absence of a sufficient multidimensional critique, I submit the ADB system as a step in the right direction for corporate governance but certainly not one that has escaped substantive criticism.

Additional Growth with Equity Indices: World Bank’s DataBank of Indicators

4. Topical and Local Equity Indices: The Lost Sheep

When we talk about the role of equity and opportunity indices on an international scale, we’re often blissfully ignorant of the role smaller, targeted indices play in the landscape of community and public sector work. While the field is dominated by larger indices assembled by the UNDP and other nonprofit or nongovernmental organizations, smaller indices tend to be illuminating in both the topics they treat and their pragmatism.

It’s difficult to specify the conceptions of equity, opportunity, and well-being operationalized by these thematic categories given the range of issues addressed. However, it seems reasonable to assume that a meta-conception would include a focus on the just allocation of particular resources of human, social, and property capital.

Here, I'm going to focus in on two specific examples of this genre of indices: Demos's¹² *Everyday Democracy Index* and the *King County AIMS High Program*. Whereas Demos's report focuses on the extent to which democratic civic culture pervades European nation-states (thus, a topical index), King County's report serves principally as a tool of strategic visioning of a local government seeking to perfect its own social contract. Taken together, these two examples of pioneering work on equity measuring schemes demonstrate the wide range of scholarly work on issues of opportunity and well-being.

For Demos, the goal was to compare UK democratic energies to those of other nation-states in Europe. They were interested by the impact of British democracy on the workplace, family, and public lives of their citizens. Consequently, a national-level of analysis best suited their needs. Conversely, King County, Washington wanted to hold its own programming to a more nuanced evaluative framework that increased transparency and provided locals with ideas of how to engage their municipal government (Skidmore and Bound 2008).

Demos

Demos bills itself as the UK's solution to ineffective and siloed political discourse. “[They] have spent 20 years at the centre of the policy debate, with an overarching mission to bring politics closer to people” (Demos 2013). Demos is quite interested in the role of community building. They focus their work on collaborating with the people they write about and believe that experts tell only one side of a much more complicated story known only to those directly affected by social realities. The *Everyday Democracy* index is just one of many similar reports on British social conditions issued over the past several years.

In this index, Demos looks at the ways in which the democratic ethos of British society permeates various facets of daily life. They divide their analysis into six multi-indicator measures: electoral and procedural democracy, activism and civic participation, aspiration and deliberation, family democracy, workplace democracy, as well as democratic and public services.¹³ By aggregating electoral statistics, social indicators, and intricate values surveys, Demos was able to craft an index that approximated the success of the British democratic project in a way never before matched, to my understanding, in the United States. By examining a variety of access points to democracy traditionally excluded from mainstream political science (i.e. workplace & family democracy), Demos transcended the fatigue of representative democracy and engage questions of *active participation*. Their guiding principal was the observation that, “[t]he cultures and orientations of different, ostensibly disconnected spheres of public and private life can actually be mutually supportive.” In fact, they note, “[i]t is the *interaction* between these different domains that seems to have some kind of a compound effect on our sense of personal and collective agency – and with it, as we have shown, our sense of life satisfaction and commitment to equality” (Skidmore and Bound 2008, 121). Their analysis, then, serves as a call to action for those interested in supporting the people's collective voice and that voice's ability to affect cohesive change.

¹² Here, a think-tank based in the UK and not the American think-tank of the same name located in New York City.

¹³ To see what data points are aggregated into each of these measures see attached excel spreadsheet analysis of 'Selected Indicators.'

King County AIMS High

The King County (named in honor of Martin Luther King, Jr.) index is housed under the department of Performance, Strategy, and Budget. The *Annual Indicators and Measures (AIMS) High* project followed the King County Strategic Plan, “which outlines goals for *what* King County will deliver and *how* King County will deliver” (emphasis theirs, website). In essence, King County uses these indicators as part of a larger service delivery process to engage and inform its residents. The indicator system is broken down into eight categories: Justice & Safety, Health & Potential, Economy & Infrastructure, Environmental Sustainability, Service Excellence, Financial Stewardship, Public Engagement, and Quality Workforce. Under each category, residents are provided with a concrete list of county goals followed by objective indicators and strategy measures, which will be used to measure progress. Additionally, contact information on regional services, local services, and key agencies working on those issues is provided through attached links alongside more detailed explications of each goal. In essence, these various pages make the strategic goals of the county not only accessible but also informative, digestible, and informative. One gets the impression that the system was built not to exclude residents from active participation in their local politics but rather to encourage an active and engaged citizenry that can assist the county where necessary with the implementation of its strategic vision.

King County is certainly unique among American municipalities. Not only did they establish the index system summarized above, they also issue an annual Equity and Social Justice Report from the Office of the County Executive. According to this report, “King County [works] for equity and social justice at three levels: considering equity impacts in all decision making; promoting opportunity and fairness in county practices; and building awareness through communication and engagement with all King County communities and groups” (King County Equity Report 2012, 1).

King County’s administrators are actually particularly adept at operationalizing the tenets of the Capability Approach. Beginning in 2010, they’ve tasked their administrators with upholding 14 determinants of equity under County Ordinance #16948. These annual reports include agency profiles of King County administrative offices from an equity lens including analyses of transit and elections outreach groups. It would appear, from an external perspective, as though this particular municipality is not only ‘talking’ the language of equity, but also ensuring that those values are embodied in consistent and on-going work.

The drawbacks of these reports are quite similar in scope to their advantages: notably, that they cannot be easily extrapolated or scaled out. It would be impossible, for instance, for researchers to design an American ‘everyday democracy index’ solely off of the work done by Demos. I included a reference to this piece here not because I found it singularly useful to an American meta-index via data sources but because their approach to approximating traditionally difficult-to-quantify social conditions is innovative and well thought out. As for drawbacks with the King County Index, the most significant obstacle to widespread replication remains the formatting of the index online. Not only was it difficult to get raw data from the researchers behind the index via online portals, the way that they envisioned the index was more of a community engagement tool that directed interested folks towards participation rather than a scholarly contribution to an on-going debate. In a sense, their formatting perfectly suited their work as a local presence and change-agent. However, as we seek to synthesize larger and smaller scale schemes, it’s important to keep in mind that an index which can be readily revised over time by a wide range of individuals needs to be more accessible to scholars.

All in all, I think that these two indices represent important work that any national meta-index would have to account for. It's impossible, for instance, for researchers to move forward with a "Capabilities Index" without accounting for civic virtue and the extent to which the democratic ethos has not only been codified but has been integrated into the workings of daily life. Similarly, indices that resulted from grassroots strategic planning and community participation activities form the basis of *actionable* research that the Haas Institute and others would like to work in.

Additional Topical/Local Indices: Elections Performance Index (Pew), US Peace Index, Kaiser Family Foundation State Health Facts, USDA Food Security Report, Boston Indicators Project, Cercle Indicateurs (Switzerland), Truckee Meadows Tomorrow Quality of Life Indicators.

Moving Forward: Best Practices for a Future Meta-Index

Now that I've spent a considerable amount of time explaining various elements of the scholarship on equity and development indices, I wanted to provide a small set of best practices that appeared over the course of my research. You'll notice that some of the indices referenced here were not included above. This is not to say that these indices are any less worthy of note but, rather, that they did not epitomize the thematic categories of this scholarship as well. These best practices do not outline a model index. Rather, they simply highlight several ideas I found compelling during my research.¹⁴

- Framing Questions

A routine struggle at the beginning of an ambitious project is understanding the problem at hand. Something that the MONET Indicator System in Switzerland did very well was to integrate into their index a series of questions that not only clarified their direction in completing this work but also helped observers gain a better understanding of how the Swiss live their values. For instance, when designing the MONEY sustainable development system, officials posed the following questions:

1. "Meeting needs – How well do we live?"
2. Fairness – How well are resources distributed?"
3. Preservation of Resources – What are we leaving behind for our children?"
4. Decoupling – How efficiently are we using our natural resources?" (GAO 2011, 16).

This is not to say that these specific questions necessarily exhaust the myriad of potential angles one could take to confront today's social injustices. That said, it does provide a clear example of how one can engage in an open-ended yet defined conversation on specific issues.

- Community Participation

Many academics and organizations are understandably worried how their work will be received by the communities they serve. For that reason, engaging community members and stakeholders at the very first brainstorming meetings for an equity index is essential. In some communities, this paradigm is referred to as "ground-truthing" in the sense that it seeks to build consensus from the grassroots level up. Described eloquently by the US Government Accountability (GAO) researchers,

¹⁴ For more information on how I would outline a potential model meta-index, see Appendix B.

“[b]ecause the selection of indicators is not a value-neutral activity, and different audiences may prefer different indicators, involving a diverse collection of stakeholders in the development process can allow developers to collect input on the priorities, concerns, and preference of a range of potential audiences” (GAO 2011, 26). A fantastic example of this sort of crowd-sourcing in practice is the Truckee Meadows Tomorrow Indicator Project.

In the Truckee Meadows Tomorrow indicator project, “[o]ver 2,000 citizens participated in this [early] phase of the project, using ‘play money’ to vote on what mattered most to their quality of life. The next phase involved several surveys of the community asking respondents to rate the top 100 indicators on a scale of 1 to 5. This effort yielded input from another 1,000 residents and was followed by a random phone survey of 600 residents. All of this input was used to inform the selection of the final set of 66 indicators” (GAO 2011, 26-27).

What this sort of community engagement does is to break through meaningless rhetoric and practice democratic policy-making and social change. By grounding our quantitative and qualitative work in ‘real life,’ we do a better job than most at escaping the Academy’s Ivory Tower. That said, without continued conversations with these community members as various indices evolve over time, it’s possible to make the same egregious mistakes of acting *for* and not *with* a targeted community.

- Mainstreaming Inclusive Values

An element of the belongingness lens that we bring to this work as members of the Haas Institute is a dedication to continuously searching for the impact that any given measurement scheme has on traditionally marginalized communities. We’re focused on combatting exclusion applied to structures of opportunity. Our work on membership and belonging is our way of analyzing and problematizing historically discriminatory arrangements. Whereas some have argued for the use of mainstreaming in development indices before – most notably feminists seeking to institutionalize or render more common gender mainstreaming – we want to hold this scholarly work to a multi-issue standard.¹⁵ In a sense, our use of belongingness theory envisions the mainstreaming of an even more critical critique of exclusion including but also extending beyond structures of sexism and patriarchy. What we’d argue is necessary is a ‘mainstreaming’ of more than just gender but also of race/ethnicity, class, sexuality, ability status, mother language, and any other factor used to divide people from each other and hierarchize them as members of different social groups.

- Political & Logistical Support from Established Institutions

It’s always useful to leverage existing resources and work in the equity research field where possible rather than duplicating efforts. For that reason, it’s often a good idea to work with, rather than against, government officials. For instance, a key reference point for any meta-index development in the future would have to be a report distributed by the US Government Accountability Office (GAO) in 2011 and its subsequent institutionalization of a Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act of 2012 (ACA) well-being indicator system. It is heartening to see the increasing potential, then, for collaboration among private, public, and nonprofit sector entities.¹⁶

¹⁵ For additional information on this subject, consult Atkinson, A.B. and D. Meulders, Indicators and Targets for Social inclusion in the EU. *Journal of Common Market Studies*, vol. 42, No. 1, pp. 47-75.

¹⁶ I will also note that Opportunity 2.0 mapping work underway at the Haas Institute is exploring civic infrastructure and social capital work as additional elements of an idea inclusivity index.

Concluding Remarks

Our dedication to the development of healthy, strong communities demands that our academic research maintains a connection to real world pragmatism that perpetually eludes the Academy's best minds. To put it frankly, if we cannot convey the findings of our research and their significance to the average person, than our work is already compromised, our grand oeuvres destined for the dustbins of history. What keeps our work relevant, what keeps our conclusions grounded, is their applicability to literally life-saving work in neighborhoods, regions, and countries the world over starved for resources.

In 2000, 189 nation-states agreed on eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Ambitious by nature, these thresholds laid the groundwork for a global effort to gradually eradicate poverty and inequality from the face of the Earth. The MDG process was idealistically conceived as the first truly international attempt to collaborate on the meeting of *humanitarian* rather than economic or military targets. Impressive and far-reaching though they were, “[t]he whole MDG framework, goals, targets, and indicators, fits on two sides of A4 paper” (Melamed and Samman 2013, 18). It was not enough to formulate a visionary solution; that solution had to be then rendered accessible to the 7+ billion individuals sharing this planet. It was certainly not an easy battle to win – after all, simplifying the pillars of global progress takes a considerable amount of effort. That said, *they did it*.

At the Haas Institute, we're dedicated to bringing the energy and determination of the UNDP's example to even our most grassroots work. As we seek to better understand the ways in which systems and structures exclude or render meaningless the contributions of certain social groups to society as a whole, we are reminded of the need to remain accountable to those communities in need – even and especially when it is difficult to connect with them. As we continue forth in our work, this literature review will remain relevant for on-going projects affecting foundation-supported consulting work, independent research on opportunity mapping, and the development of a unique project to understand metrics of inclusivity at the local, state, national, and international level. In short, it will have direct impact not only on the Institute's work alongside marginalized communities but also on philanthropic and direct service entities that interact with community leaders daily.

Yet, as we know well, this review of equity indices is only one in an on-going series of scholarly reflections on the matter. It may very well pose more questions than it answers. The Haas Institute, though, is invested in continuing these conversations beyond one review, one project, or one convening. Rather, we seek an on-going dialogue on justice, evaluation, and progress.

Though at times disconnected or rambling, this review is an attempt – albeit an early one – to give form and meaning to that most controversial of topics: equity. The future of a comprehensive equity measure may very well be winding, crooked, and difficult to follow. What is important, though, is that we're advancing – individually, collectively, globally – towards some rudimentary understanding of what we owe each other as a species sharing a finite amount of space and resources but an unlimited amount of potential to build together, to collaborate, and to prosper.

Appendix A: Nussbaum's 10 Central Capabilities

In her primer on the Capabilities Approach to Human Development, Professor Martha Nussbaum describes 10 'central capabilities' that form the core of her outline of a well-lived life. In her scholarship, one's ability to access capabilities then informs one's freedom to flourish. Drawing from a neo-Aristotelian ethical tradition, Nussbaum does not hold back from actively defending an exhaustive list of capabilities necessary for human flourishing. These 10 central capabilities are as follows (excerpted verbatim from pages 33-34 of *Creating Capabilities*):

- 1) *Life*: Being able to live to the end of a human life of normal length; not dying prematurely, or before one's life is so reduced as to not be worth living.
- 2) *Bodily Health*: Being able to have good health, including reproductive health; to be adequately nourished; to have adequate shelter.
- 3) *Bodily Integrity*: Being able to move freely from place to place; to be secure against violent assault, including sexual assault and domestic violence; having opportunities for sexual satisfaction and for choice in matters of reproduction.
- 4) *Senses, Imagination, and Thought*: Being able to use the senses, to imagine, think, and reason – and to do these things in a 'truly human' way, a way informed and cultivated by an adequate education, including, but by no means limited to, literary and basic mathematical and scientific training and producing works and events of one's own choice, religious, literary, musical, and so forth. Being able to use one's mind in ways protected by guarantees of freedom of expression with respect to both political and artistic speech, and freedom of religious exercise. Being able to have pleasurable experiences and to avoid non-beneficial pain.
- 5) *Emotions*: Being able to have attachments to things and people outside ourselves; to love those who love and care for us, to grieve at their absence; in general, to love, to grieve, to experience longing, gratitude, and justified anger. Not having one's emotional development blighted by fear and anxiety. (Supporting this capability means supporting forms of human association that can be shown to be crucial in their development).
- 6) *Practical Reason*: Being able to form a conception of the good and to engage in critical reflection about the planning of one's life. (This entails protection for the liberty of conscience and religious observance).
- 7) *Affiliation*: (A) being able to live with and toward others, to recognize and show concern for other human beings, to engage in various forms of social interaction; to be able to imagine the situation of another. (Protecting this capability means protecting institutions that constitute and nourish such forms of affiliation, and also protecting the freedom of assembly and political speech). (B) Having the social bases of self-respect and nonhumiliation; being able to be treated as a dignified being whose worth is equal to that of others. This entails provisions of nondiscrimination on the basis of race, sex, sexual orientation, ethnicity, caste, religion, and national origin).
- 8) *Other species*: Being able to live with concern for and in relation to animals, plants, and the world of nature.
- 9) *Play*: Being able to laugh, to play, and to enjoy recreational activities.
- 10) *Control over one's environment*: (A) Political. Being able to participate effectively in political choices that govern one's life; having the right of political participation, protections of free speech and association. (B) Material. Being able to hold property (both land and movable goods), and having property rights on an equal basis with others; having the right to seek employment on an equal basis with others; having the freedom from unwarranted search and seizure. In work, being able to work as a human being, exercising practical reason and entering into meaningful relationships of mutual recognition with other workers."

Appendix B: Proposing a Meta-Index

Proposal of a Meta-Index

The myriad of equity indices reviewed in this piece or consulted during its drafting have led me to consolidate the best practices from various sectors of academic and ‘practical’ scholarship to envision a meta-index. Drawing from a variety of home indices, the data points I’ve assembled here reflect a holistic understanding of the human life and its flourishing. Taking its inspiration from the Capabilities Approach to Human Development as well as the concept of belongingness as developed by Powell and others, I propose a multidimensional, multi-indicator system to approximating one’s ability to access structures of opportunity and relish in full membership of a society. While far from perfect, I submit this outline as a jumping-off point for additional study.

My preliminary proposal is an evenly-weighted five-part indicator system. Each of five categories would have multiple contingent sub-indicators drawing on the vast resources of existing equity, social capital, and opportunity mapping efforts. While similar categories have been used elsewhere in the past, I think that some of the individualized data points in this collection are unique and warrant additional attention. Moreover, I think that the assembly of these pieces together here represents that best practices of existing schemes.

- **Healthy Communities:** This category is my attempt to combine elements of health care accessibility data points and issues of environmental justice. I wanted to look at the ability of folks within communities to live safe and healthy lives. Some of the indicators included in this category address access to nutrition, green space, and physical activity. At the same time, I’m looking at life expectancy and individuals’ ability to secure health insurance and a primary care provider so as to extend their life expectancy. Lastly, in what may be considered a bit of an out-of-the-blue move, I’ve included some indicators looking at violence. Inspired by Nussbaum’s writings on bodily integrity, I wanted to think about safety and freedom from violence as an element of a healthy life and, therefore, healthy communities. While the prevalence of violence could be defined solely by data points like the homicide rate, I’ve broadened my understanding of violence to include individual and structural violence by looking at incarceration rates and the number of police employees per 100,000 people. The intent here is not so much to vilify police employees and their civilian counterparts or to ‘sanction’ in some way the actions of incarcerated peoples so much as its to recognize that healthy communities in an ideal situation would resolve disputes peacefully to preserve individual and collective well-being. In that sense, mass incarceration *is a form of violence* within communities

Data points: Primary care providers per 100,000 people, Grocery stores and produce vendors per 10,000 people, life expectancy at birth, homicide rate, violent crime rate, incarceration rate, police employees per 100,000, number of food insecure households, accessibility of green space, regular physical activity, under 5 y/o infant mortality rate, percentage uninsured, greenhouse gas emissions per capita, contraceptive prevalence among woman 15-49 y/o.

- **Education & Social Cohesion:** This category is an attempt to evaluate the social integration in activities that develop their talents and strength. At issue would be the second dimension, ‘social cohesion.’ Truly, the category focuses on the role of education in communities by looking at degree attainment and net enrollment. However, it also looks at disconnected youth who are not employed or on a pathway to education. Additionally, it looks at high-speed internet access and access to banking institutions. By considerations, education serves the principle role of helping individuals’

better understand and develop their talents while also ‘exposing them to the world’ as a matter of speaking. If we look at internet access as a potentially educational tool that continues this process of exposure, we’ll see that many individuals harness the tools of technology to create cross-cultural or cross-sector dialogical spaces or otherwise develop themselves. With regard to the banking, I think that communities’ access to banking institutions falls right in line with their ability to access credit, make choices about housing/entrepreneurial pursuits, and subsequently exercise social mobility.

Data points: Banking Institutions per 1,000 residents, High Speed Internet Connectivity, Preschool Enrollment (3-4 y/o), On-time high school graduation, associate degree or higher, youth not in school and not working (16-24).

• **Housing, Transportation, & Material Wealth:** This category addresses a host of basic needs not housed under the Healthy Communities category. While I’m open to combining the categories, I also didn’t want to overload with indicators and data points in each area. For that reason, I’ve developed this category to look more at household earnings and the relationship, poverty rates, and affordability of housing/transportation costs. Ideally, I think additional indicators are needed in this category but I’m not entirely clear on how to find them. I’ve looked through transit-oriented development projects but an overall efficacy rating of transportation rating seems impossible. I could add a “WalkScore” for specific for specific communities/metropolitan/micropolitan areas but I wasn’t sure your thoughts on the matter. This seems to be the category I’m particularly open to suggestions for improvement.

Data points: Unemployment rate, median household income, percent of the population living below the poverty line, Families burdened by living costs (housing + transportation > 45% of income), number of mobile phone subscribers.

• **Democratic & Civic Virtue:** While not as immediately pressing as fulfilling the basic needs of shelter, nourishment, and health care, a key element of equity is the ability to speak one’s truth and to be heard – in short, to have an impact on their immediate environment through political participation. In order to better understand the ways in which individuals engage their communities, politics, and voluntary associations, I assembled this category. While the indicators cited reflect a multi-dimensional approach to questions of social involvement, I’m drawing heavily on a report issued by the Demos think-tank in the UK (not, as I originally thought, synonymous with the one in New York) and their multi- indicator work. I felt their “Everyday Democracy Index” offered an insightful analysis of democratic virtues operating in UK society. By analyzing different elements of social life, their researchers were able to use a series of values surveys and national/international data sources to approximate individuals’ commitment to the democratic process. I was happy to see that the researchers didn’t stop at, say, average rates of voter registration. While they understood that access to the franchise and the act of voting were important cornerstones of democracy, they were also interested in teasing out individuals’ energies with regard to activism and engaging in deliberation to solve common problems in the workplace or at home. What they’ve done well is to provide a hybrid qualitative/ quantitative approach to measuring the strength of a democratic society. I think that as we think about equitable access to structures of opportunity we need to examine the sorts of democratic processes and infrastructure that regulate those spaces.

Data points: Electoral Performance & Justice, Electoral & Procedural Democracy, Activism & Political Participation, Aspiration & Deliberation, Family Democracy, Workplace Democracy, Democratic Public Services (largely excerpted from the Demos report), voter registration.

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