

2019 Social Innovation Summit: *What We Learned*

Pathways to Opportunity in Low-Income Neighborhoods

EVENT DETAILS

Date: March 29, 2019

Location: University of Southern California

Keynote Speaker: Ann Owens, Associate Professor of Sociology and Management, USC Dornsife

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A common finding across research examining inequality in opportunity is that opportunity varies from place to place. Different neighborhoods come with different types of opportunities, which means that where people live shapes how they access opportunity.

Like many cities across the U.S., Los Angeles is racially stratified with minimal blending of racial and ethnic groups throughout the city. There is now convincing evidence that the neighborhood that one grows up in matters for a variety of outcomes including educational outcomes, teen parenthood, mental and physical health, incarceration and criminality, economic outcomes in young adulthood, and neighborhood residence in adulthood. These findings show that people living in different neighborhoods face different pathways to opportunity, with lasting consequences into adulthood.



KEY TAKEAWAYS

- In general, the schools that children attend is determined by where they live. Research reveals that low-income neighborhoods are served by schools with more inexperienced and uncertified teachers, and have lower achievement scores and achievement growth, compared with high-income neighborhoods
- Neighborhood violent crime profoundly shapes families and children. Research shows that children face challenges getting to school safely in violent neighborhoods – reducing attendance and achievement.
- Exposure to environmental pollutants varies, depending on where you live. Environmental inequality has consequences for health, which affects many other aspects of life and can fundamentally shape future opportunities.
- Neighborhoods provide more or less opportunities depending on who your neighbors are. In low-income LA neighborhoods, less than 15% of residents have college degrees. Educational attainment is just one neighborhood characteristic that matters for a child's future educational and job opportunities.
- Providing pathways to opportunity for children regardless of where they live requires investing in places, which should include engaging place-based programs to improve housing and infrastructure. Providing pathways also requires investing in people by providing resources to families and young children in need. All strategies to these issues can be developed through a social innovation lens, which uses a dynamic, interactive process of testing and scaling new pilots co-designed in partnership with the community.