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Meghan A. Burke, *Illinois Wesleyan University*



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Diversity and Its Discontents: Ambivalence in Neighborhood Policy and Racial Attitudes in the Obama Era

Meghan A. Burke
Illinois Wesleyan University

This article examines the ways that members of three adjoining stably racially diverse urban communities conceptualize and engage diversity, and the ways in which their discourse and actions are cohesive with federal policies. Making use of interviews with 41 active residents in these communities, I argue that even in liberal, pro-Obama, racially diverse communities, a considerable amount of ambivalence exists in both thought and action connected to diversity, an ambivalence which is cohesive with Obama's own federal policies that impact neighborhoods like these. The community members define diversity broadly beyond race, are ambivalent about its presence in their community, and do not undertake significant steps as a community to maintain it. Similarly, while Obama's federal urban and housing policies speak broadly to underserved businesses, equity, and inclusiveness, the strongest and most concrete thrust to these policies is geared toward development. In the absence of stronger policy to support racial diversity in local urban communities, such development efforts are likely to sustain segregation and gentrification; this is all the more likely when local communities are themselves ambivalent about racial diversity and fail to enact intentional measures to sustain it.

INTRODUCTION

Racial diversity in the United States is increasing. While whites are currently about 75% of the U.S. population, estimates show not only that the nation will have no racial majority by the middle of this century, but also that racial diversity is developing much more rapidly than previously thought (U.S. Census Bureau, 2008). This estimate will likely mean that more and more Americans will be traversing the color line in their schools, communities, and daily interactions. While there is a long history of segregation in the United States, scholars estimate that as many as 20% of communities are already racially integrated (Ellen, 2000). Further, there are a small number of communities around the nation whose racial integration has been relatively stable, either by design or by circumstance. There has been a call in recent years to better understand communities like these (Krysan, 2002; Maly, 2006; Charles, 2003; Nyden, et al., 1998). Many believe that the dynamics of these places will reveal much about our nation's future as we become more diverse.

These communities take on added significance in the Obama era. The election of Barack Obama represented many things to many people. For some, it was the advent of a new era, a post-racial United States where the color line had been eliminated in the highest public office. For others, it was a sure sign of regression, liberal hegemony, and a break from all that has been considered American, as evidenced by the "birthers" movement (those who insist that Obama is disqualified from holding the presidency by virtue of not being born in the United States), fears and alarms about his religious identity, and growing concerns about an expanding federal government.

Reality, as is often the case, sides with neither party. Obama's early approval ratings are thought to be the result of moderate and bipartisan coalitions, and the bulk of his early policy decisions have shown little drastic altering of the status quo. His base remains cautiously optimistic, but major disruptions like the inherited economic crisis and the organized attack on his health care agenda continue to threaten his presidency. While Obama has made a significant shift in his office's approach to urban policies by creating the White House Office of Urban Affairs, critics charge that this has meant little actual change (Adler, 2009). Conversations are only beginning about dramatic changes to the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)

and where funds will actually land for the community-based urban development programs promised in his campaign.

This leaves racially diverse urban communities in a bind, as it does the residents who occupy them. Straddling economic fault lines and a desire to see their communities improved, these communities face a unique challenge in policy formation and planning. This study examines three racially diverse communities, which adjoin one another on Chicago's northeast side. Based on interviews with these communities' most active members, I examine both the forms of community involvement as well as the racial discourse found in these communities. The pairing of an examination of community action with the discussion of matters surrounding race and diversity in these communities is necessary for understanding the dynamics and likely future of racial integration in the United States. In particular, these communities share much with Obama's enthusiastic base, and are comprised of members who actively campaigned on his behalf. They continued to wear pins and display signs months after the election had been won, and actively claim both racial diversity and liberal politics as a core element of their community's identity. As such, they offer a unique vantage point from which to establish correlations between appreciation for Obama and diversity in relation to concrete policy and community decisions.

While the findings in this study reveal an encouraging appreciation for diversity in these integrated communities, and creative and thoughtful community work within, there does not seem to be a significant break from the ideologies of color-blindness or a meaningful way to discuss and maintain racial diversity in these communities. As is the case nationally, I demonstrate how color-blindness in these communities limits residents' ability to discuss race-specific realities and thereby actively sustain these communities' racial diversity. The findings in this study emphasize the broader conversation we need to be having about race in the United States if communities like these, and an increasing number of communities around the nation, are to thrive. That broader conversation, further, needs to be connected to concrete policy decisions around racial justice and maintaining diversity, both in these communities and in the nation as a whole. Unfortunately, to date, Obama's related federal policies have been just as ambivalent and resource-weak as these diverse communities and their members.

RACIAL INTEGRATION

Most studies examining urban communities have been concerned with racial attitudes and interracial contact as a means to explore the dynamics of segregation and community change, and have found that race continues to matter when making residential choices (Charles, 2003; Bobo and Zubrinsky, 1996). However, most competing theoretical perspectives highlight the role of contact and interaction as vital in changing race-based attitudes and residential choices. As Bonilla-Silva, Embrick, and Goar note: "People who do not significantly interact in school, on the job, or in their neighborhood with members of out-groups come to believe such interaction is normal" (2006, 248). This idea has been tested among urban scholars for many years, namely through what has been called the contact hypothesis, which claims that interracial contact promotes harmonious racial relations and tolerant racial attitudes (see Amir, 1976).

The results of such tests are mixed, and most indicate that an appreciation for the type of interaction (Yancey, 1999) or the presence of not only interracial contact but also the influence of those in positions of power as key (Taylor, 1998; Barnard and Benn, 1988). Further, it has been suggested that segregation can in fact be more pronounced in areas with higher diversity (Farley and Frey, 1994), and there is a question as to which geographical and analytical space is most significant for measuring the levels of contact and proximity and their impact on racial attitudes (Marschall and Stolle, 2004; Baybeck, 2006). While living in racially diverse communities has been shown to increase interactions and direct contact between racial groups (Stein et al., 2000), the impact on racial attitudes differs by race. In general, blacks tend to favor social interaction and demonstrate increased trust toward whites in a diverse environment, but whites often do not reciprocate such trust (Marschall and Stolle, 2004). Instead, many studies have shown that higher

concentrations of blacks living nearby have a negative impact on whites' general racial attitudes (Taylor, 1998).

All of the above preferences have been tested by the use of survey research. More challenging are the explanations for such preferences, the role of race in such calculations, and the impact that these determinations have on neighborhood and urban policy. Much research has been conducted toward this end, particularly around the extent to which social class functions as a proxy for race. The vast majority of data (Bobo and Zubrinsky, 2006; Krysan and Farley, 2002; Charles, 2000; Timberlake, 2000) suggests, "racial stereotypes are the most powerful predictors of [residential] preferences" (Charles, 2003, 186). Charles (2000, 395) has also found that "perceived social class differences have no significant effect on preferences for particular out-group neighbors Social class concerns — whether real or perceived — do not influence preferences for out-group neighbors in any meaningful way. Recently, Krysan, Farley, and Couper (2008, 5) argued, "Counter to the racial proxy hypothesis... race, per se, continues to be influential when whites make housing decisions". Mary Pattillo, reviewing Ellen's (2000) book on racially integrated communities, questions the utility of making the distinction between racial stereotyping and race-based neighborhood stereotyping (Pattillo-McCoy 2001, 1818). And Krysan (2002, 693) states: "The distinction between negative stereotypes of African Americans and of African American neighborhoods may be entirely semantic."

That analytical stance, combined with continued segregation in the housing market (Massey and Denton, 1993; Meyer, 2000; Yinger, 1995; Barlow, 2003; Massey and Lundy, 2001), makes Bobo and Zubrinsky's (1996) claim that there is a "well-defined racial rank order with respect to housing" in the United States that is difficult to deny. Further, "the images people form of particular neighborhoods, or types of community, impact on their decisions about relocation, their expectations about standards of provision of local amenities and services, and their hopes for the availability of social care and support. The impact can be particularly dramatic when such ideas get into the minds of authoritative agencies, like the police or local government officials" (Day, 2006, 180). Given the impact of such calculations, it is critical to consider the influence of national ideas and discourse on individual choices and actions.

IMPACT OF IDEOLOGY

In recent years, scholars of race and ethnicity in the United States have moved away from the racial attitudes model many urban scholars used in the literature of residential preferences cited above. Many scholars of race and ethnicity now find a "race relations" paradigm limited (see Steinberg, 2001), as this framework does not adequately analyze power, institutions, and ideologies. Instead, it conceptualizes racial relations as natural or entirely psychological, rather than seeing the role of domination and subordination in shaping patterns of "race relations," the construction of race, the significance of ideology, and the perpetuation of institutionalized racial inequalities (Mills, 1997).

The foundational modern approach to the study of race and racism is Michael Omi and Howard Winant's *Racial Formations in the United States* (1994). The racial formations theory is fundamentally a theory of hegemony. Given that race is not biologically real but rather a shared social categorization of human phenotypes into crude groupings, those groupings are themselves essentially ideologies which are historically created and re-created by our society's institutions. These categories, and the meanings associated with them, become hegemonic in that they are taken to be common sense among the U.S. population. The categories and the stereotypes, as well as discourses around race, are learned and come to be shared. Through socialization, these ideas are maintained by our society's institutions and individuals. The justifications for racial inequalities become hegemonic and controlling (Hill Collins, 2000), working their way into policies, practices, laws, ideas, and activities at all levels of our society. Their approach — and mine in this article — can be summarized as follows: "Ideological beliefs have structural consequences, and ... social structures give rise to beliefs" (Omi and Winant, 1994, 74).

It is within the context of racial formations that we can appreciate the significance of color-blind ideologies in real-life applications. There has been much academic interest in the ideologies and justifications surrounding racism after the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s, when it is widely accepted that a shift took place in racialized ideologies and discourse (see Sears and Kinder, 1971; McConahay, 1986; Smith, 1995). In essence, these theories argue that racial ideologies have shifted from overt and racially-bigoted to covert, subtle forms that uphold a strong belief in the existence of a meritocratic system in the United States. Currently the best known and most influential of these sociological examinations of modern racism is Eduardo Bonilla-Silva's *White Supremacy & Racism in the Post-Civil Rights Era* (2001), which laid out in clear terms the significance of ideology in maintaining racism as well as the core themes of this paradigm. As Bonilla-Silva writes: "Although ideologies do not provide individuals, as group members, with an explicit road map of how to act, what to believe, and what to say, they furnish the basic principles individuals use to sift through contested and often contradictory information in order to make sense of social reality" (2001, 63). This is a central point for the study of ideologies — for while they are certainly flourishing in ways that are multiple and in many contexts benign, they are also always happening within very real contexts: individual lives, communities, neighborhoods, etc.

Bonilla-Silva's (2003) book *Racism Without Racists: Color-Blind Racism and the Persistence of Racial Inequality in the United States* looked in depth at the color-blind ideologies present in much racial discourse in the U.S., highlighting the common frames for subsuming racial outcomes into race-neutral explanations. Bonilla-Silva conducted interviews in connection with a national survey of college students' attitudes on a range of social issues and extended interviews with a random sampling of those students, coupled with a similar study of adults in the Detroit metropolitan area.

Following Bonilla-Silva's identification of these racial frames and his analysis of their role in perpetuating racism, there has been recognition that there is a need for situated, local studies rather than broad, national projects, as the decades of research have left little doubt that this new racism shares many common features and plays a role in upholding racial inequalities. Rodriguez (2006, 663) notes that "Racial ideology is experienced in distinct locations, even as it is shaped by discourses circulating at a national level and spiraling out of a racialized social system. Specifying the distinctly local manifestations of the dominant racial ideology extends our knowledge of how ideology operates in the everyday lives of individuals." Examining the local manifestations of the dominant racial ideology in a racially diverse community has the potential to test the limits of such an ideology, and determine its fault lines. Doing so in a racially diverse, pro-Obama community can provide key insights into how well-intentioned, mostly white community members seek to put their principles into practice, in the context of local and federal urban policies.

METHODS

There has been a growing appreciation of the limits of survey research in urban communities and of the need to focus on the processes and complexities within particular communities as opposed to abstracted hypothetical sites or geographical areas (Charles, 2000; Krysan, 2002; Logan et al., 2002). Questions about residential preferences and analyses of census data cannot reveal the nuances and negotiations that residents immersed in a diverse environment actually encounter. For example, despite widespread and enthusiastic support for Obama in the three communities I studied, the local pro-diversity discourses produced both adhered to color-blind ideologies and, at times, were ambivalent about the presence of racial diversity and its perceived impact on their communities. Analysis of the dynamics of this complex, and at times contradictory, relationship reveals even more about the genuine struggles around diversity, in both talk and action, than the national interviews and statistical surveys conducted to date. They reveal how policy is experienced and negotiated in everyday urban life.

For this project, I conducted open-ended interviews with 41 active residents in the adjoining neighborhoods of Rogers Park, Edgewater, and Uptown on Chicago's northeast side. All three of these communities have had a racial demographic that mirrors that of the city of Chicago for at least three decades, and are recognized nationally and locally for their stable racial diversity (Nyden et al., 1998). Despite

this racial mix, 30 out of the 41 active residents I interviewed were white. This mirrors what most residents acknowledged as a vast over-representation of whites among the active community members, something participants in this study lamented. It should be noted that I allowed residents to define what ‘active’ meant— their awareness of my interest in talking to ‘active’ residents continued to define and eventually mirror the range of community involvement in these neighborhoods. Not one resident questioned this term or asked for its definition — there is a core group of active members of these communities who are relatively well networked with one another through block clubs, neighborhood councils, and other types of grass-roots organizations. They knew who was active much better than I could have by abstract design. This process allowed me to tap into the extensive networks of active residents in these communities. However, in some cases I did contact residents through organizational affiliations, particularly when I noticed a geographical or topical gap in my sample.

I also did not ask residents about their definition of diversity, nor did I ask them to call up specific experiences with “diversity.” Rather, I asked them concretely about their housing history, their choice to move into these neighborhoods, their impression of the community before making the choice to move there, and how they first became involved with the community. We then discussed their community involvement in detail, often discussing community issues of particular importance to them along the way. It was in this context that issues of diversity, either as a value or as a site of negotiation, emerged. I asked primarily open-ended questions, and asked as many follow-up questions as necessary to get the richness and detail I desired out of their responses.

The interviews were all conducted in person, at the time and location of the participants’ choosing. Most often we were one white person speaking with another in the participant’s home. Interviews lasted anywhere from 40 minutes to over two hours, with the average interview length being approximately one hour. Participants were assured that their name and any identifying information would be protected in this study. Accordingly, names and any identifiable information have been changed in this article. Participants in this study are identified only by race and a gendered pseudonym. While there are cultural and structural differences between the three communities, these cultural and structural differences did not significantly influence the analysis I put forth here: that color-blindness and racial ambivalence shape community action around race, which reveals congruence with Obama’s federal urban policies.

My study revealed three central themes related to integration and policy in these racially diverse communities. The first is that residents roundly appreciate diversity but concurrently hold color-blind views. This seeming contradiction is manifest in broad definitions of diversity, coded talk about race, and adherence to color-blind explanations for racial dynamics in their neighborhoods. Indeed, most residents are ambivalent about the diversity in their communities, particularly around safety and blight, and the community work done in these neighborhoods is just as racially ambivalent, lacking any overt directive to maintain the community’s racial diversity. Further, the community work supports private development and broadly used public resources, rather than benchmarks of community development for low- to moderate-income families, many of whom are nonwhite. As such, the likelihood of diversity being maintained in these lively, pro-diversity, pro-Obama neighborhoods is uncertain. As a community, and from a policy standpoint, they are much weaker than the market forces that receive broader community support as well as sanctioning by Obama’s uneven urban policies. In the end, the racial ambivalence expressed by residents, their local policies and actions, and federal policy under Obama are highly congruent. Taken together they are unlikely to sustain racial diversity, and will likely continue to disproportionately privilege property-owning whites unless concrete action is taken.

PRO-DIVERSITY COLOR-BLINDNESS

The residents in these communities manage conflicting discourses around race and diversity in the United States, each in ways that preserve race-neutral hegemonies. That is, like most of the

nation (see Bell and Hartman, 2007), they are positive toward diversity in universal terms, but they simultaneously assert that race does not influence community dynamics in meaningful ways. To illustrate, here is an exchange with Denise, a white resident, speaking about why she had chosen to move into the community:

Denise: The folk who live here are of all colors, all creeds, all political persuasions, uh, all sexual persuasions. It's a very, very diverse community.

Author: And why was that a draw for you?

Denise: Well, because it's, uh...I don't even know how to answer that. I feel comfortable in that kind of environment, living with that kind of diversity.

Her answer demonstrates the knowledge of the community as diverse, the positive value attached to it, and also the challenges residents find in attaching concrete meaning to that positive talk. As such, residents tend to emphasize the positivity rather than their own personal interpretations.

Denise went on to define her neighborhood's identity as quite literally color-blind:

Denise: I mean, we are really color blind. We are, you know, there just — there isn't the ... you don't hear about the hatred and the unfortunate remarks that are made elsewhere because it's a family here. It's a family here.

Author: And why do you think that is?

Denise: Because we're — we tolerate. We tolerate. Our differences are acute, but we tolerate each other. And it doesn't matter to us that you're a gay man or a black woman. It doesn't matter to us. You're a person. And that's who you have living here.

This claim is made despite other places in our interview where she discussed efforts she was undertaking to increase police monitoring of black male teenagers in the community, whom she referred to as “hooligans.” What's significant is that Denise does seem to mean what she says about tolerance in her community. However, she draws very clear and specific lines around her community, explaining that the teens she is mobilizing around “are not our kids” and drawing a strong discursive boundary around the problem area in the neighborhood she's referencing.

Laurie, a white resident, had been discussing her involvement with a local political campaign and said:

Through my involvement in that [campaign], I learned more about different challenges in the area, and learned just really what a valuable jewel [this community] is in terms of being known nationally as one of the most diverse congressional districts or communities in the country. And that made me feel even better about living here, so...

While Laurie is clearly appreciative of the diversity in the community, the articulation of its meaning for her remains glowingly universal rather than concrete, again mirroring national trends (Bell and Hartman, 2007).

One strategy for navigating a simultaneous color-blind and pro-diversity stance among residents was to define diversity broadly, beyond race. Shannon, another white resident, had been talking about her comfort in the community and emphasized:

Yeah, and I think it's diverse in a lot of ways. Not just race. I mean the age thing makes a huge — the generational thing is huge, or your agenda in

life, having a family or not having a family. There's a lot of people who do have kids or don't and that's a huge experience for those people that have very different interests.

Expansive lists naming what diversity looks like in these neighborhoods were common among residents in this study, reminding me of racial diversity lists that eventually incorporate green and blue. Such list-making serves a peculiar ideological function, as it accurately understands that diversity is not just about race, while at the same time listing so many elements that the racial component, which initially defined the community for them, is easily lost.

The all-but-race theme was also present in residents' understandings of racial disparities in the community. This is perhaps most vivid when participants make use of what has been called the "cultural racism" frame of color-blind ideologies (Bonilla-Silva, 2003). This frame incorporates the widespread belief in pronounced cultural differences among racial groups, particularly as a causal factor for continued inequalities. While I often explain this frame to my students as the one that can sound the most traditionally racist for its categorical descriptions of any race's imagined "culture," Bonilla-Silva notes how this frame can also be used in apologetic, sympathetic ways.

I heard this line of reasoning several times among participants in this study, and always in the sympathetic rather than accusatory form that Bonilla-Silva identifies in his national study. Here Patty, a white resident, does so in a story she was telling me about her perceptions of Chicago's public schools:

One thing, and I hope this doesn't sound racist, it's not meant to be. One thing you *never* hear, is the schools that are struggling so much, I know a lot of the teachers in those schools, and they are giving their all to their job.

But there are students coming that are not ... first of all there's all kinds of nonsense goes on at home. They don't have proper meals, there might be, god knows what they do all night, the kids fall asleep in class. The news was on the other night about closing those schools and making them small schools. A freshman student from [a local public school] was interviewed, and he was black. And they said, "Well what do you think the problem is?" And this little boy said, in terms of the students that weren't doing well, he said, "*It's because they families don't care.*"

But you can't say that. And you never see it and you never hear it. *He* said it. But he was a student and he was black. And he could say it. But nobody else could say it... I know what some of this stuff is that happens, but nobody says it, but he said "*They families don't care.*" And that's—that's really what it's all about... So it's very sad.

In this story Patty worked to emphasize the poor grammar of this young black man on the news, and bemoans how she is unable to critique what she imagines to be true about home environments of black public school students in Chicago because she is white and could be perceived as racist. Her cultural explanations, while relying heavily on racial stereotypes about black families, are cast as sympathetic, as evidenced in her statement that "it's very sad" and her celebration of the teachers' efforts. Her explanation differs significantly from Anthony, a black male, who provided a racially conscious explanation for public schools in Chicago:

So the people who can afford to send their kids to private schools or have the savvy or clout to send them to some magnet school will do that, and those that don't go to the noncompetitive local schools.

And then their kids don't — and it really strikes a sore note for me, because most of those kids are black. And it's not a black-white thing, it's more of a class

issue. But still, most of those kids are African American, and they have for years – maybe it's getting better – not received a competitive education, generation after generation after generation after generation. [Even] the housing. So those issues really ring ... I mean, it's just kind of all there.

While Anthony's assessment of the schools is more race cognizant than Patty's, it should be noted that it still de-emphasizes race in favor of class, another benchmark of color-blind ideologies. It favors the kind of racial ambivalence in both residents' discourses and their community policy formation, discussed in a later section.

DIVERSITY AND AMBIVALENCE

As the discursive contradictions above may reveal, residents' detailed descriptions of community events as well as their candid responses demonstrate a strong level of ambivalence around matters of race in their diverse communities. As Bell and Hartmann (2007, 905) note: "Respondents typically define diversity in broad and inclusive terms, but when asked to describe personal experiences with difference, their responses are almost exclusively tied to race... . Therefore, although 'diversity' may sound race-neutral ... the discourse of diversity is deeply racialized."

Walter, a white male, had been talking about community efforts to fight crime and said,

Well, I think people that live in the area, in general, I think there's a lot of the people that enjoy the diversity of [this community], and celebrate that. But there's other people that moved here and still have racial fears and fear of the...somebody different. And that's always gonna be around. The only way...the best way is if you can have a diverse society, you find that well, he looks different, but jeez, he's not any different. He's not so frightening. And, uh, so that helps.

Residents like Walter acknowledged that crime, or more often perceptions thereof, are an element of these neighborhoods' identities, and worked to construct a narrative around diversity that is simultaneously positive and realistic.

Coupled with direct talk of the ambivalence surrounding the ideal versus the reality of diversity in these communities, there is also talk that praises the "good" kind of diversity and laments its opposite. While residents spoke about diversity cautiously, and were almost always complicit with color-blind discourses, they also spoke about what they considered to be the downsides of diversity. The tone of each type of talk was distinct. Good diversity seemed to glow, and in every case was most specific in relationship to gay homeownership. Here Patty, a white female, speaks about a trend of gay men buying homes from each other in recent decades on her street:

But every house that's changed hands on the block has — the house is always better because of the new tenants. They have always made improvements. And it's nicer now than when we bought it, so... . I mean I could just go on and rave and rave.

Other residents spoke of the "wonderful things [gay homeowners] do with their properties," and worked actively to construct this as a piece of diversity in the neighborhood. Lucy, a Latina, said:

Gentrification was just starting. And, you know, uh, it was perfectly all right with me. Yes, I know what's happening in the neighborhood, and that's why I want to live here. Uh, I want to live with gentrification. I want to live with the yuppies. And yes, the neighborhood is going gay. Hallelujah! (Laughs)

Gay residents often are aware of this, and some talked about it somewhat dubiously. Tom, a white male, told me about some gay friends who had recently moved to the neighborhood:

They bought a little house and they were very concerned about moving over there. The day after they moved in, like, 20 people from the neighborhood showed up with potluck, and they were very excited a gay couple had moved into the neighborhood, because the property values were now going to start going up.

Tom's friends' gamble is not, at its core, different than Franklin's, a white male, who expressed ambivalence:

You know, it's just, gosh, it would be so much easier if we just went out to the suburbs. And [my wife's] brother lives in [a northern suburb], and they've got a nice park district system, and they've got a nice pool that they can go to, and they've got a huge back yard, you know, where [with] the city lots you don't have much outdoor space. So it's constantly in the back of our minds, you know, if we're doing the right thing, if we made the right decisions, if life could be easier.

The residents' candid talk about the personal struggles associated with choosing to live in a diverse neighborhood affects their community efforts, which represent the same ambivalence and allegiance to color-blind ideologies.

COMMUNITY EFFORTS

Given the ambivalence that exists around matters of race within these diverse communities, there existed only peripheral efforts to engage or maintain racial diversity in community policies and actions. Community efforts that residents in this study detailed for me can be categorized into four types: social, safety, development, and justice. While racial diversity often emerged as variously significant in each of these four types of development, none of them contained overt commitments and policy decisions that would nurture and sustain the racial diversity of the communities. As such, the limited community efforts remain weak, particularly when confronted with market forces.

This is perhaps most clear with respect to development. More than three quarters of residents want to see a more vibrant dining, retail, and bar scene to both boost local business infrastructure and invite more interest and capital investment into these communities. Indeed, this has proven vital in sustaining neighborhoods' diversity (Nyden et al., 1998; Ellen, 2000). They want to be able to patronize local businesses and in some cases even make use of national chains that are to their liking. Edgewater residents, for example, were excited at the prospect of a *Whole Foods* or a *Trader Joe's* in the bottom floor of a new 12-story development in the community, and most were disappointed about the selection of *Aldi* as the final occupant. Similarly, rumors and excitement about the *Target* at Wilson Yard have spread far beyond Uptown, whose residents have likewise celebrated a recent establishment of upscale bars along Broadway in the old theater district.

At the same time, residents are most often wary of two elements that have often accompanied such development — affordable housing and increased density. Residents typically do not oppose affordable housing outright. Instead, they worry about the percentage of affordable housing relative to market rate housing, either within a particular new development or within a given locale.

It's what people are talking about they tried to do with Cabrini-Green, which was to tear down the hundred percent very low income high-rises and build a mixed income community. And that, I think, is very sensible. And in the 1990 census, Uptown was close to 40 percent low income, and that's too much. —Clark, (white male)

The central concern I heard was that a concentration of low-income housing or “Section 8” housing has been proven ineffective and unsafe (see Popkin et al., 2000; Mitchell, 1971).

However, community responses to housing and safety concerns may also work to subvert the racial diversity in these communities. Residents have both walked together as a community to create a physical presence that they feel has effectively diminished gang activity in their locale, as well as coordinated a schedule among dog-walkers to ensure that people were out regularly throughout most of the day and night to keep watch and sustain this presence. Walter, a white male, explained this strategy as follows;

And, uh, so we set up a watch, and get involved with the [block], which has been very successful. Actually, we were out there for about six days. A lotta activity. Uh, gang members out on the other side of [the street]. You could see drug deals. Call 911. It was busy, and we were out there from 10:00 to 11:00. Seventh day, and then I got another block club down, so we have [the blocks] covered with the groups standing at the end. It just went dead. And it's held that way now, and we're only out once a week. Uh, and it's a good example where, if people stand up, the bad guys'll move away.

While their efforts have undoubtedly contributed to their own safety and sense of security in these communities, the “moving away” has the potential to impact the maintenance of the neighborhood's diversity that is simultaneously so celebrated.

Justice efforts would seemingly mediate such efforts in the development and safety spheres. But during my time in the field these efforts were not only minimal, they were also met with considerable resistance. Matthew, a white male, was one of the few residents I interviewed to discuss outright efforts to maintain diversity and inscribe it into neighborhood policy and organizations. He also discussed the resistance he encountered in doing so, which was coupled with an unwillingness to raise or push the issue:

And we've continued to try to work on issues around diversity and get people to think about what does it mean. We say we like diversity, we're in favor of it, what does that really mean? And what are we doing to defend that? ... So, I mean, those types of questions I don't think were really being — I'm not aware of those questions being asked in any kind of a systematic fashion. Because no one else is really — I don't hear anyone else really talking about these issues.

No one “really talking about these issues” is related to the way that diversity has been defined in explicitly non-racial terms; there is a preference for some types of diversity over others, or diversity spread so broadly as to not significantly designate one form, like racial diversity.

One perhaps underappreciated sphere of diversity maintenance is the social sphere. It is in the context of parties and “getting to know one's neighbor” that residents spoke most deliberately about traversing the color line in their communities and in their personal networks. Susan, a white female, challenged the discourse of diversity in formal venues as follows:

So instead of hiding behind the words, instead of saying, well, yeah, we're diverse. Well, are we diverse in the way that we are commingling and sharing our lives together? Do we enjoy one another's cultures?

Music and food are the two common bonds of culture. Those are the things that will bring you out in a way that no community meeting will. When I'm sharing food with you, when I'm listening to your music or dancing or watching theatre or performance, I'm sharing something with you. I'm sitting by you and we're talking....

Um, like one of my neighbors, we — we were chatting, and she has an outdoor

grill. And she's African American. And we've talked about we should have a cookout and have, you know, people bring their — 'cause we always talk about, well, what barbecue sauce do you use? Do you make your own? Well, do you do the rib tips or do you do the, you know, and I only do baby back. And she goes, well, I do baby back, but I do — so that's the kind of stuff that would — would energize. That would energize our neighborhood.

As Susan's passage illustrates, far from being somehow superficial or ineffective, social events and social interactions provide one important element of community engagement among active residents of these communities. While the bulk of their time may be spent working on other projects, social events serve the function of networking among neighbors, building trust and community, and fostering involvement in other projects of importance to the community. These informal, non-organizational associations have been identified as central to such trust (Lowndes, 2000; Putnam, 2000), although, again, the density of these interactions have been shown to increase intergroup trust more so among blacks than among whites (Marschall and Stolle, 2004). Further, on a basic level, knowing one's neighbor weaves the community members into one another's lives, adding an extra layer of protection, trust, and responsibility to the otherwise institutional protections of policing, governance, and committees. However, this was also unevenly applied, and likely insufficiently strong in countering market forces toward gentrification and re-segregation. After all, the ability to socialize across the color line implies the existence of an interracial community in the first place.

OBAMA'S POLICY AMBIVALENCE

The significant ambivalence about race in these communities, and in particular the tensions between the maintenance of diversity alongside appreciation for development and free market forces, is equally present in Obama's federal policies. Obama's 2008 presidential campaign was not heavily focused toward urban policy. Early issues of importance for Obama were health care and national security, and as the financial markets collapsed in the final months of his campaign, focus developed on issues of economic stability and the use of federal monies to rebuild the economy and to offset further catastrophe. Urban politics rarely emerged in the national debates, and housing policies in urban environments were not a central feature of either his campaign or national debates. This trend persists into the second year of his presidency.

This is not to say that Obama's urban and poverty-focused initiatives do not contain elements that would help to sustain diversity. Namely, Obama supports the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program that is designed to provide housing and create jobs in low- and moderate-income communities. Economically and racially diverse neighborhoods like the ones in this study would certainly benefit from such programs, as they would elevate the economic base for the populations most vulnerable to development and gentrification efforts. Advocating for racially diverse communities at the national and federal level has been identified as a key element for maintaining communities like these (Ellen, 2000; Nyden, et al., 1998; Maly, 2006). Ellen (2000) suggests that modest governmental intervention, significantly at the federal level, is justified in these communities. She argues that such intervention has both an economic and a moral legitimacy that most Americans could accept. Obama's commitment to CDBG grants is certainly a step in the right direction, for they would provide a critical legitimacy and commitment to maintaining the diversity of the neighborhoods by targeting the needs of its most vulnerable residents.

Obama's platform has also included plans to increase access to capital for underserved businesses, specifically naming minority-owned businesses as potential benefactors. Plans such as these would help to ensure the maintenance of racial diversity in these communities by meeting with community members' desires to see a diverse business pool as well as a stable economic base. This backing would also help to offset the impact of development and gentrification efforts by making underserved and minority-owned businesses more competitive in the real estate and

consumer markets.

Finally, Obama's urban platform contains the promise of efforts to support teachers in urban schools, expand early childhood education, and reduce the high school dropout rate. Participants in this study demonstrated significant concern about the quality of public schools, with varying degrees of appreciation for the economic and structural forces that shape them. Elevating the public schools in diverse communities would not only continue to make them attractive places to live for whites who desire racial diversity, but more importantly, provide a key resource for low-income and minority populations who disproportionately attend them. While the school-focused community organizations were defunct at the time I conducted this research, the mechanism and history of community concern is present, and especially with the help of federal dollars and initiatives, provide one ready mechanism for sustaining racial diversity and quality of life for all residents. Juliet Saltman (1990) has argued that money and programming aimed toward minority populations in integrated communities can sustain diversity even when there is an undesired racial gap in leadership and few white parents sending their children into the public schools.

Unfortunately, these initiatives are not yet fully implemented, nor are they alone enough. While the above are promising leads, the bulk of Obama's federal urban policy is geared toward development. Further, to date, the only action in this arena are select funds allocated through the *American Recovery and Reinvestment Act*. While much of this puts needed monies toward some of the efforts named above, the broader principles of the White House Office of Urban Affairs emphasizes growth and competition through green and high wage jobs. While inclusiveness and equity are stated as vital toward these efforts, without a break in the free market principles that have so often perpetuated segregation and gentrification to the benefit of whites and homeowners, or a stated commitment to economic and racial diversity, the results are likely to sustain the status quo. As Grigsby (1994, 240) has suggested, "There is no such thing as a race-neutral policy." Policies like those forged in these communities and at the federal level are fundamentally ambivalent, and likely to produce tensions and contradictions.

While there is no doubt that a boost to the local economy is sorely needed in many urban communities, this has too often come with a rise in property values that is untenable for affordable housing, which is key to the preservation of a diverse community like the one in this study. Further, local pro-Obama residents like the ones in this study indicate a strong preference for market strength over affordable housing in these communities, and demonstrate their own ambivalence on matters related to diversity. As in Obama's urban policies, they demonstrate a broad appreciation for diversity, inclusiveness, and equity, and a desire to see safety and schooling concerns addressed. However, without an overt, funded, and institutionally strong commitment to maintaining this diversity in the face of economic development and competition, the benefits are likely to continue to aggregate to the white homeowners whose real estate investments will increase, while potentially marginalizing or displacing low-income and racial minority populations.

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Meghan A. Burke, Ph.D. is assistant professor of sociology at Illinois Wesleyan University.