

The Emergence of Stable Racially and Ethnically Diverse Urban Communities: A Case Study of Nine U.S. Cities

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Abstract

We examine the characteristics of 14 stable racially and ethnically diverse urban communities in 9 U.S. cities and point to policies that could strengthen these communities and encourage the growth of more diverse neighborhoods in American cities. The cities examined are Chicago; Denver; Houston; Memphis, TN; Milwaukee; New York; Oakland, CA; Philadelphia; and Seattle. University researchers and community leaders in each city collaborated on the research for this project.

We identify two types of stable diverse communities, “self-conscious” and “laissez-faire,” which have evolved for different reasons and with different characteristics. Stable diverse communities will not just happen, but they can be influenced by a number of policy recommendations stemming from our research. These include helping individuals and organizations take leadership roles in their communities, strengthening and enforcing fair housing and antidiscrimination laws, earmarking economic resources to encourage neighborhood diversity, and creating community safety and jobs programs.

Keywords: Neighborhood; Minorities; Policy

Introduction

The existence of stable racially and ethnically diverse urban communities¹ is one of the best-kept secrets of our nation. The media regularly report about the continued legacy of racial and ethnic tensions in the United States. As demographers make projections about the increased diversity of the American population in the 21st century, crystal ball gazers envision a patchwork of segregated neighborhoods in our cities. While the words

¹ We use “community” to describe identifiable geographic areas of the cities studied. These communities, whose populations may range from 7,000 to 70,000, are recognized by residents and other city residents as identifiable areas. “Neighborhoods” are subareas of these communities.

“diversity” and “multiculturalism” are in vogue, in private conversations out of earshot of public scrutiny, skepticism about the practicality of diversity—particularly diverse residential neighborhoods—is apparent. The politics of race remain such a tinderbox that many dare not suggest a variation from “business as usual” for fear of igniting caustic and emotional debate over this country’s history of racism and ethnocentrism and over what our future could look like. To some, the civil rights movement has been relegated to the halls of history—it is viewed as a movement of days past to be recognized and celebrated once a year.

This study challenges skeptics and policy pessimists. It documents successful stable racially and ethnically diverse neighborhoods in our cities. We recognize that such multiracial or multiethnic communities are the exception rather than the rule. At the same time, we assert that these neighborhoods are alternative models of living and interacting—models valuable to a nation fast becoming more diverse. A recent analysis of U.S. demographic trends notes that “by the middle of the 21st century, today’s minorities will comprise nearly one-half of all Americans” (O’Hare 1992, 2). This begs the question: Will we become a nation of coexisting, cooperating groups sharing our nation’s resources? Or will we become an even more segregated society, with heightened tensions between racial and ethnic groups battling over “our” piece of the pie?

We present here a picture of the glass half full. We examine communities where racial and ethnic diversity has been maintained for as long as 30 years. This nontraditional research project involved the collaboration of university researchers and community-based leaders. This research incorporates the academics’ analytic skills and knowledge of past research, anchoring it with the experience and practical wisdom of community leaders who lived and worked in the diverse communities under study.

Diverse urban communities represent the exception in America. They are the exception to what sociologists Douglas Massey and Nancy Denton refer to as “American apartheid”—a present-day “hypersegregation” that marginalizes African Americans and Latinos in housing and job markets (Massey and Denton 1993). Massey and Denton correctly identify these segregated communities “as an institutional tool for isolating the by-products of racial oppression: crime, drugs, violence, illiteracy, poverty, despair and their growing social and economic costs” (p. 217).

Their analyses, along with those of many others, clearly indicate a pattern of housing discrimination and segregation.²

At the same time, the existence of stable diverse communities represents a hopeful sign, indicating cracks in the wall of segregation. Reynolds Farley and William Frey, two demographers who have long tracked American segregation patterns, have detected trends toward reduced segregation. They document modest declines in segregation in metropolitan areas—particularly in the West and South (Farley and Frey 1994). Farley and Frey also emphasize that white residents' resistance to integration has declined, stating that "by 1990 whites almost universally supported the *principle* of equal opportunities in the housing market and a majority of whites reported a willingness to live in integrated situations" (Farley and Frey 1994, 28). Consistent with this finding is a national poll that indicates a stronger demand for diverse neighborhoods than there are diverse neighborhoods to meet that demand (Ellis 1988).

Then why is a national trend toward more diversity not more apparent? One answer is the persistence of common misperceptions that economically, racially, and ethnically mixed neighborhoods are inherently unstable and not viable (Nyden et al. 1987; Saltman 1990). For middle-income white homeowners and renters, racial or economic diversity is interpreted as a signal of neighborhood decline and imminent declines in housing values. For lower-income groups, such diversity often flags the possibility of gentrification, increasing housing costs, and the concomitant displacement of low-income renters.

Without farsighted leadership from local government, local institutions, or networks of community organizations, these perceptions and fears have become a reality when homeowners move out of diverse neighborhoods. The point at which these perceptions and fears produce movement out of a neighborhood has been "measured" in various discussions of a "tipping point"—the moment at which residents flee a changing neighborhood

² This apartheid goes beyond issues of race. Our nation has also been marked by significant economic segregation, which has become increasingly problematic for residents of urban settings in the past decade. The out-migration of the middle class to the suburbs, coupled with the shift from a manufacturing-based to a service-based economy, gentrification, low-income resident displacement, and the economic downturn of the 1970s and 1980s, seriously affected lower-income inner-city neighborhoods. Dwindling tax bases and a large percentage of residents without competitive employment skills and opportunities increase the marginalization that minority residents experience. This article focuses on issues of race and ethnicity while recognizing the underlying social class dimension to this issue.

(Ottensmann 1995; Taeuber and Taeuber 1965; Wolfe 1963).³ However, tipping points are, as much as anything, a product of government assurances (or lack thereof), the strength of a community organization's voice in defending the image of the neighborhood, and the extent to which positive perceptions about the community by residents are well established.

Another reason why the trend toward diversity is less apparent is the lack of documentation of successful diverse communities and how they function. An unwillingness of elected officials and institutional leaders—from bank presidents to producers of the evening news—to recognize and use what positive information exists does little to dispel negative perceptions. There have been some studies of stable diverse communities—particularly suburban communities (Keating 1994; Saltman 1990; Smith 1993). However, in policy and research circles, these studies have been buried in discussions of the persistence of segregation. The present study is an effort to document the social, political, and economic forces that create stable diverse neighborhoods. Given the very limited knowledge of how these forces work in city neighborhoods, selected urban communities are the exclusive focus of this study.⁴ Although we will look at the half-full glass and examine models of diversity that represent credible challenges to historic patterns of segregation, it is important first to recognize the forces and practices that diverse neighborhoods are challenging.

There is substantial documentation of the forces outside the neighborhood that influence who lives in what neighborhood. In a *Wall Street Journal* column, writer Hugh Pearson (1996,10) observes:

The pervasive practice of discrimination in the real estate industry ... is the major reason there are predominantly black neighborhoods, Hispanic neighborhoods, Asian neighborhoods and white ones, which tend to contain the best housing stock of all. And it is a major reason racial misunderstanding continues, since it lessens opportunities for interaction across our artificial racial barriers.

³ This literature does not always take into consideration different acceptance rates of other racial or ethnic groups by current residents (i.e., some people are more tolerant of diversity than others) and the role of communities and local government in shaping attitudes toward diversity.

⁴ This need was also stated by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development when it funded the research project upon which this article is based.

Racial discrimination and segregation, and its causes and ill effects, have been extensively substantiated. Massey and Denton's *American Apartheid* (1993) and John Yinger's *Closed Doors, Opportunities Lost* (1995) represent recent comprehensive examples. The Fannie Mae Annual Housing Conferences in 1992 and 1994 heard presentations of 19 studies documenting discrimination in lending, homeownership, and federal rental programs (see, for example, Chandler 1992; Schill and Wachter 1995; Turner 1992; Wachter and Megbolugbe 1992). A 1990 Urban Institute study of discriminatory housing practices in 25 metropolitan areas found that most African-American and Latino home seekers experienced discriminatory practices. In the housing sales market, African Americans and Latinos experienced discrimination 59 and 56 percent of the time, respectively; in the rental market, they experienced discrimination 56 and 50 percent of the time (Urban Institute 1991; see also Turner et al. 1991 for a related analysis). Minorities were frequently steered to different neighborhoods, told units they wanted to see were not available, or given less information than whites about sources of financing (Galster 1990).

Historically, once minority home buyers identified homes for purchase, they confronted even more racial barriers. According to Stephen Dane (1991), as late as the 1970s, "public statements by lenders and even federal regulatory agencies continued to express the view that lenders must take the race of a potential borrower or the racial composition of a neighborhood into account in order to assure the security of the lender's investment" (p. 5). More recently, commenting on the dual lending market, noted community lending expert Calvin Bradford (1991,5) stated

Lenders have been allowed to continue to allocate their resources toward the building and maintenance of white communities while withholding their credit from minority communities and transitional communities. Lacking access to conventional lending, minority communities and transitional communities are left to be served by the federally insured and guaranteed markets of FHA [Federal Housing Administration] and VA [Department of Veterans Affairs] lending programs ... [which] left unregulated and overprescribed ... are extremely ... lethal to entire communities.

Federal financial regulatory agencies continue to log significantly higher mortgage loan denial rates for African Americans and Latinos than for whites. As observed in a publication by Fannie Mae, reviews of Home Mortgage Disclosure Act data

have consistently “revealed disparities in mortgage credit flows by neighborhood racial, ethnic, and income characteristics ... and data have pointed to glaring disparities in mortgage application rejection rates by the applicant’s race, income, and neighborhood choice” (Fannie Mae Office of Housing Research 1993, 1). The report goes on to state that a study by the Boston Federal Reserve “lends strong support to the conclusion that racial and ethnic discrimination is taking place in mortgage lending” (p. 1). At the same time, reports found some modest progress in affirmative lending practices in recent years, indicating that there are some cracks in the wall of segregation.

And finally, in another real estate–related field essential to equal housing opportunity, recent investigations of homeowner insurance practices by the National Fair Housing Alliance found pervasive patterns of redlining and discrimination against Latinos and African Americans by major insurers. The 1994 study found that in Chicago, 95 percent of all Latino insurance shoppers experienced discrimination. African-American testers encountered discrimination 60 percent of the time in Atlanta and Milwaukee and nearly 50 percent of the time in Louisville, KY. Discrimination took the form of calls not being returned, lower-quality coverage, and higher premiums quoted when compared with the experiences of white testers (National Fair Housing Alliance 1994).

These discriminatory housing practices have undermined development of minority communities as well as racially and ethnically diverse communities. As Harvard University political scientist Gary Orfield (1985) stated, “residential segregation is a key contemporary institution for creating and maintaining inequality, not only for individuals and racial groups, but also for neighborhoods and entire municipalities” (p. 161). He further observes that the related historic problem of rapid racial change of neighborhoods “has shattered entire neighborhoods, uprooted thousands of black and white families, dramatically diminished ... cities’ resources, irreparably damaged ... cities’ commercial and social infrastructures, and increased the cost of running our cities while eroding the tax base and ability to pay for these costs” (“Ghettoization Goes On” 1982, 3).

Indisputably, racial discrimination and segregation remain prominent features of American life and of our housing markets. We are paying immeasurable costs—individually and collectively, socially and economically—for this discrimination and the assumption that racial and socioeconomic homogeneity are

positive benchmarks for growth and stability in housing markets. With the projected increase in diversity in this nation—particularly in this nation’s cities—we need to examine alternatives to racially and ethnically segregated neighborhoods. As former U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Secretary Henry Cisneros remarked, “We risk societal collapse by the first decade of the next century if we tolerate racism and economic isolation of millions of people” (“Old Demons” 1993, 1).

Progress in reducing segregation has been made. Enforcement of fair housing laws by government agencies has been an effective antidote to housing discrimination and segregation (Lauber 1991). Private fair housing groups—which the courts have referred to as “private attorneys general”—provide legal action services, which are an essential part of the counter to housing discrimination (*Trafficante v. Metropolitan Life Insurance Co.* 1972). In addition to intervention by external agencies, some communities have developed resources and practices *within* their boundaries to sustain stable diversity over multiple decades. By looking at how these communities on the leading edge of change have established resources and policies that run against the stream of American discrimination and segregation, we can find promising grassroots initiatives. These initiatives can complement government and fair housing group activities by creating and maintaining diverse urban communities.

In this article, we examine external and internal factors that contribute to the creation and maintenance of 14 stable diverse neighborhoods in 9 U.S. cities—the positive alternative to business as usual. Much research has focused on the roadblocks to diversity, but we concentrate on policies and strategies that brought and can bring about greater diversity and equity in our nation’s cities. Past research on residential racial integration concentrated heavily on suburbs, particularly on the integration of African Americans into predominantly white, middle-class suburbs (Keating 1994; Saltman 1990; Smith 1993). However, the present research focuses on central cities that have seen significant changes in their racial, ethnic, and class makeup. It is here that we seek models for successful diversity. We look to *urban* neighborhoods in particular because, as noted by American Assembly’s Daniel Sharp in his preface to *Interwoven Destinies: Cities and the Nation* (Cisneros 1993), “cities are critical to America’s economic, political and social future. It is in our cities that the interactions must occur that will determine if the nation functions as an integrated, civil society, or if class rigidities and racial and social disorder will characterize our future” (p. 9).

The present research endeavors to contribute to our knowledge of what produces stable diverse urban neighborhoods by studying success stories—by studying neighborhoods that sustained racial or ethnic diversity or both over the past 10 to 20 years. In a society all too familiar with the factors discouraging diversity, these neighborhoods contain the building blocks that provide the foundation for stable diversity in urban communities.

A collaborative university/community project

The impetus for this research was discussion at two Chicago citywide forums sponsored by the Policy Research Action Group (PRAG)—a university/community research network—and the Leadership Council for Metropolitan Open Communities—a comprehensive Chicago-based fair housing organization. PRAG, a network of four Chicago universities and more than 20 community-based organizations and citywide civic organizations, supports collaborative university/community research activity. By drawing experience and expertise from both academic and community spheres, PRAG can more efficiently glean the significant resources and knowledge that exist in the metropolitan area. At a time when universities are increasingly under fire for not contributing to the community and not doing research directly relevant to the community outside the college walls, PRAG works to strengthen ties between researchers and community organizations. PRAG succeeds through harnessing the tensions between community organizations and universities for constructive purposes (Nyden and Wiewel 1992).

PRAG distinguishes itself from the traditional university/community research relationship by being consciously community driven. All funded research activity must be community based, and funded activities must involve a collaborative process—researchers and community-based organizations must work together in identifying research issues and methodologies, doing data analysis, and preparing reports and action plans.

PRAG has created a proactive forum in which activists from the community move into the research office and become equal partners in the selection of research issues and the development of methodologies. PRAG is sometimes referred to as a university/community-based think tank where ideas are exchanged freely and where both sides feel comfortable enough to criticize each other's ideas. Each side listens to the other, recognizing that more accurate, useful, relevant, and powerful research can come out of such a collaborative process. By more actively bringing the

community into the research process and not treating community merely as a place to do research, as a source of data, or as a variable to be manipulated, the PRAG model is an alternative to much of the traditional academic, discipline-based research. PRAG has supported more than 130 collaborative research projects in the Chicago metropolitan area in a broad range of policy areas.

The present project goes beyond Chicago and works with collaborative research teams in other cities to examine key policy issues as an alternative to traditional national policy research projects. Research findings are not the result of a distant analysis of national databases. We linked community-based teams in nine cities; community organizations worked with academic researchers to collect and analyze information. This collaborative, community-based research model complements more traditional research processes.⁵

Research goals and methods

The project seeks to develop a “tool kit” of policies, community-based strategies, and government interventions that can keep existing diverse neighborhoods stable and can be used to develop similar neighborhoods.⁶ The research has two stages. First, we completed a general quantitative analysis of 22 U.S. cities to identify areas that demonstrated stable diversity. This list included the 10 largest U.S. cities and 12 mid-size or smaller cities representative of various regions of the country. We then interviewed more than 130 community leaders, researchers, and government officials in the various cities to get a more detailed understanding of the neighborhoods that appeared to be stably

⁵ For more information on PRAG, contact Dr. Philip Nyden, Director, Center for Urban Research and Learning, Loyola University Chicago, 820 North Michigan Avenue, Chicago, IL 60611; (312) 915-7761 (voice); (312) 915-7770 (fax); pnyden@luc.edu (e-mail). Information on PRAG is also available on the World Wide Web at <http://www.luc.edu/depts/curl/prag>.

⁶ We define diverse neighborhoods as areas with a racial and ethnic mix that approaches the average mix for the city as a whole. Most neighborhoods do not reflect this “statistical” city average. We analyzed census tract data in the cities studied and concentrated on the 10 percent of census tracts that came closest to the percentages of the city’s racial and ethnic composition. Because we recognize that a segregated housing project on one isolated corner of a census tract could produce the statistical appearance of a “diverse” neighborhood, we also talked with local informants to get a better sense of whether the diversity we were seeing in the numbers was recognized as diversity among community leaders. We defined diversity as stable if it existed in both 1980 and 1990; most communities studied have been diverse for more than 10 years.

diverse when we looked at the census data. Based on this quantitative and qualitative data, we selected 14 communities in 9 of the cities for closer analysis. Each case study reflects different types of diverse neighborhoods to ensure the inclusion of a range of city, neighborhood, and racial/ethnic types. Research teams consisting of local academic researchers and community leaders were commissioned to complete the study (see table A.1).

The case studies examined ways in which broader aspects of the social, political, and economic environment facilitated or hindered the development and maintenance of stable diverse neighborhoods. The issues analyzed included (1) the role of community organizations; (2) the impact of government programs; (3) the effect of community revitalization efforts; (4) the influence of existing social institutions (e.g., churches, schools, and businesses); (5) the manipulation of public perceptions about “good” neighborhoods; (6) the role of local banks and real estate agents; and (7) community safety. The information used in this report represents the preliminary findings from each of the research teams.

Description of the 14 communities examined

Oakland, CA

Fruitvale. Fruitvale, a growing community of approximately 32,000 residents (see table A.2), is located in the flatland area southeast of Lake Merritt and contiguous to the San Antonio community. The area historically has been a center of Latino community and culture. At present, the district consists of four main commercial strips, but the exodus of middle-class homeowners and businesses to the suburbs has had a detrimental effect on both the residential and commercial areas. In Fruitvale, Latinos constitute one-third of the population, African Americans represent one-quarter, and the Asian population continues to expand. (The Asian population increased 142 percent between 1980 and 1990.) While the median income (\$25,834) ranks as average, a high percentage (27 percent) of Fruitvale’s residents make under \$10,000 annually. This and other research suggest that a significant number of Fruitvale’s residents live below the poverty line. Fruitvale, however, is differentiated from neighboring communities (e.g., San Antonio) by vigorous and extensive community-initiated activity.

San Antonio. San Antonio, lying southeast of the city center and across Lake Merritt, is a residential community of approximately

56,000 people. The area is well endowed with turn-of-the-century homes and interspersed with apartment complexes in various stages of repair. The quality of the housing improves as one moves from the bay closer to the hills—areas of predominantly white residents. San Antonio's proximity to the central business district and the lake has made its northern sections likely targets for gentrification. The two largest populations in the area are African American and Asian, each accounting for a third of the population. Currently, however, San Antonio's racial and ethnic composition is changing as Asians from Chinatown and Latinos from Fruitvale have begun to migrate into the community. (The Asian population increased 156 percent between 1980 and 1990.) Again, like Fruitvale, San Antonio sustains an economically diverse population, with a full third of its population earning less than \$10,000 annually (see table A.2).

Denver

Park Hill. The Greater Park Hill neighborhood, adjacent to the recently closed Denver Stapleton Airport, is a community of approximately 25,000 people in the central north section of Denver and is primarily residential. Park Hill, with a household median income 46 percent greater than that of the city, is middle class (median income \$31,462; see table A.2). Park Hill's demographics reveal an almost even split between African-American and white residents. These percentages have remained stable for more than two decades. Internally, the community splits into three sections, each marked by racial homogeneity. However, an integrated community effort exists to maintain the diversity of the overall neighborhood through a variety of local organizations. For 34 years, a multiracial community organization, dedicated to promoting inclusivity of all people, has served the community with the particular goal of promoting racial and ethnic diversity.

Chicago

Chicago Lawn. Chicago's southwest side supports the diverse community of Chicago Lawn (also known as Marquette Park), an area of approximately 51,000 residents in what is referred to as the "Bungalow Belt." A middle- to working-class neighborhood, Chicago Lawn averages a median income nearly 17 percent higher than that of the city and contains a moderately priced single-family housing stock. Chicago Lawn, reputed to have been one of the strongest centers of white resistance to black

“infiltration,” became the focus of national media in the 1960s when Martin Luther King, Jr., attempted to confront Chicago’s segregationist housing practices. Although retaining its dramatic contrast to the very poor, virtually all-black community to the east, Chicago Lawn has grown into a diverse community of nearly one-third blacks, one-third whites, and one-third Latinos in recent years. Chicago Lawn manages to survive in a city of changing racial and ethnic composition and in the middle of an old industrial area that has experienced a significant shift from an industrial to a service employment base.

Rogers Park. Rogers Park, a neighborhood of 60,000 residents, is located along the lakefront at the northern boundary of Chicago. This neighborhood carries a dense population, with 85 percent of the residents living in rental units. With almost a third of its population foreign born, Rogers Park houses a variety of racial and ethnic groups. In addition to a more established white, ethnic, older population, in-migrants over the past 20 years include Russian Jews, Pakistanis, and Asian Indians. Younger African Americans as well as Latinos have moved in from other Chicago communities. (Between 1980 and 1990, the African-American population increased 212 percent, while the Latino population increased 81 percent.) Large increases in the size of these two latter groups have emerged, with a concomitant loss of whites (a decrease of 26 percent between 1980 and 1990). Rogers Park shares a boundary with Evanston, a diverse Chicago suburb with a strong residential and commercial economic base. Loyola University’s main campus is located in Rogers Park.

Edgewater and Uptown. Edgewater and Uptown, community areas just south of Rogers Park, are also established diverse communities. The public high school serving this area reports that its students come from families speaking 65 different languages and dialects. As of 1990, close to a third of the 125,000 residents in these two community areas were identified as foreign born, compared with a 17 percent foreign-born population in the entire city. Ethnicities range from older Irish and Swedish homeowners to more recent Nigerian, Ethiopian, Vietnamese, Chinese, Cambodian, Romanian, and Mexican residents, among others. A significant number of African-American residents live here. Uptown contains a relatively high concentration of government-subsidized affordable housing (Nyden and Adams 1996). In both communities, neighborhoods of single-family homes are close to denser high-rise developments with both affordable and middle-income units. Both Edgewater and Uptown have significant community-based and social service

organizations serving their communities, often playing an active role in promoting and maintaining their diverse populations and interests.

New York City

Jackson Heights. Jackson Heights is located directly across from midtown Manhattan, between Astoria and Elmhurst, Queens, and has approximately 93,000 residents, mostly renters (67 percent). With a foreign-born population hovering around 50 percent, the area boasts an extremely mixed community with nearly every nationality represented. However, as whites move out (and older whites pass away), the Asian and Latino populations rapidly replace them. The neighborhood supports two viable commercial strips, one dubbed “Little Bombay” by the *New York Times*. One section of the community was recently designated a historic district on the basis of its turn-of-the-century architecture and lavish Garden City apartment designs.

Fort Greene. Fort Greene, a neighborhood of approximately 58,000 people in Brooklyn, remained a largely African-American, lower-working-class neighborhood during the 1980s. Fort Greene’s population stabilized at around 68 percent African American through the decade, with increases in the number of whites, Latinos, and Asians (see table A.2). The area’s income distribution leans toward the lower end, and the community reports a median income below that of the city. The community, however, splits between one section that classifies as middle class and another containing a large public housing project. Commercial strips in the community are the seams where these diverse populations come together.

Philadelphia

West Mount Airy. West Mount Airy, a neighborhood of approximately 14,000 residents in the northwest section of Philadelphia, achieved national acclaim as a model of stable racial diversity. During the 1980s, the racial composition remained almost equally split between whites and African Americans. This middle-class community contains 58 percent owner-occupied housing and 42 percent rental properties. While the community is economically mixed, its median household income (\$45,276) is higher than the city’s. The neighborhood houses a variety of local organizations that make conscious efforts to promote and channel racial and social inclusivity.

Memphis, TN

Vollintine-Evergreen. Vollintine-Evergreen, a neighborhood of 11,000 residents situated 20 minutes from downtown Memphis, began developing a history of racial and ethnic diversity in the 1960s. The community supports a mix of approximately 55 percent African-American and 45 percent white residents. The community is economically diverse, with a median income higher than that of the city. Between 1970 and 1972, ministers and churches, together with neighborhood organizations, took an active role in challenging real estate practices that would undermine diversity. The churches also helped found the neighborhood organizations. The Vollintine-Evergreen Community Association (VECA) emerged over time as the primary player in maintaining the racial inclusivity and diversity of the community. Those involved in the community refer to VECA as the glue that holds the diverse neighborhood together. Rhodes College, located within Vollintine-Evergreen's boundaries, also performs an active role in the neighborhood, primarily through faculty involvement with VECA.

Milwaukee

Sherman Park. Sherman Park, located on Milwaukee's northwest side, houses approximately 61,000 residents with a stable African-American majority. Sherman Park documents a strong history of promoting diversity within the community. The Sherman Park Community Association was formed, in part, in response to the expansion of a low-income African-American "ghetto" at its boundary. Alarmed Sherman Park residents witnessed the disinvestment and deterioration of community institutions from churches to schools and took action. At the same time residents recognized the present, significant strengths of their community: attractive homes on tree-lined streets; easy access to jobs, shopping, and cultural attractions and events; public transportation; and much more, including a mix of both middle-income and affordable housing.

Houston

Houston Heights. Houston Heights survives as one of Texas's oldest planned communities. As of 1990, Houston Heights comprised approximately 16,000 residents. Some of Houston's founding and wealthiest industrial families built and settled in the area. However, in a slow process that took place throughout the

20th century but accelerated after mid-century, the community diminished in attractiveness, lost significant population, and watched its stores close while new shopping malls cropped up in expanding outlying communities. Currently, the Heights' population includes mostly Latinos (52 percent) and whites (42 percent). The community experienced some revitalization in the early 1970s, which later halted as Houston's economy declined drastically. Recently, Houston Heights has experienced a revival, fueling speculation that gentrification may occur.

Seattle

Southeast Seattle. Southeast Seattle accumulated a significant population of Asians (36 percent), many of whom are recent immigrants. The city government nurtures diversity and supports a local community organization working for economic development in this neighborhood while sustaining diversity. The views of Mount Rainier provide a stunning backdrop to this community of Vietnamese, Japanese, Filipinos, Ethiopians, African Americans, Eastern Europeans, and other white ethnic groups. Recent major investments by businesses—particularly large chain hardware “box” stores and supermarkets—have proven successful and provide evidence of the profitability of new retail investments in diverse communities.

Analyses of findings

We found common institutional forces and local responses in all the areas we studied (at least in general terms). In this section, we first outline some of the social forces active in all the cities we studied. Then, after examining the research team reports, we describe the common ground shared by the 14 neighborhoods and the variations in the nature of their diversity. Finally, we outline what we believe to be two models of diverse communities in U.S. urban areas. These models can provide policy makers with significant tools for understanding how stable racial and ethnic diversity is maintained in some neighborhoods and could be sustained in other urban communities.

Common social and institutional forces

In almost all the cities we examined, we found the following social and institutional forces at work:

Periods of economic decline. Neighborhood diversity evolved during a period of economic decline in the overall city. In fact, most cities were experiencing serious economic decline. This decline has some common roots, including (1) conversion from a manufacturing-based to a service-based economy, (2) competition between central cities and burgeoning suburbs, (3) loss of middle-class residents to surrounding suburbs, and (4) decreasing investment in infrastructure and education. For example, Oakland went from the fastest-growing industrial city in the West at mid-century to major decline in recent decades. Milwaukee, long one of the nation's leading industrial centers and home to an ethnically diverse population, experienced deindustrialization and hypersegregation. Houston, which boomed in the 1970s, later endured a significant period of economic stagnation. Chicago, once the Midwest's leading manufacturing center, continues to lose manufacturing jobs to the suburbs.

Large "minority" populations. The proportions of each racial and ethnic group in all cities were well above national averages. In fact, almost all the cities were "majority-minority" cities (i.e., cities where minority members make up the majority of the population). In several cases, this multiethnic character is flaunted locally as one of the city's biggest assets in terms of the expanding array of ethnic restaurants and tourist dollars that these areas attract. (See figure A.1 and table A.3.)

"White flight." White flight from urban communities as a whole has been significant. However, the rate of the exodus has typically been slower in the communities studied. (See figure A.1 and table A.3.)

Proximity to downtown. Neighborhoods studied were not directly adjacent to downtown business districts (except one community area in Oakland). Residential densities varied from high to low density.

Racism, discrimination, and segregation. A history of racism and discrimination existed. While true in all cities, these forces have been more prominent in some we studied. For example, Chicago continues to be one of the nation's most segregated cities, partly due to a pattern of competition between population groups over jobs and residences. On the other hand, examination of indices of dissimilarity for the cities shows that all except Seattle display high levels of segregation. (See figure A.1.)

Involved city governments. The city government serves an important role in promoting positive social relations within many

ethnically and racially diverse communities. In Oakland's case, the city adopted a community policing plan to improve police/community relations. In Milwaukee, citywide school desegregation played a role in maintaining the diversity of the Sherman Park neighborhood because it eliminated fears of reduced educational resources if African Americans moved into the neighborhood.

Characteristics common to stable diverse communities

After analyzing the findings of the research teams in the nine cities, we compiled a list of characteristics contributing to diversity maintenance in the communities studied. These characteristics were shared by all communities to varying degrees.

“Attractive” physical characteristics. All communities contained distinctive physical characteristics or environmental assets that made the communities desirable to outsiders. Although hard to quantify, these characteristics made the communities more attractive than the average city neighborhood. Attractive characteristics might include a good location (proximity to the city's central business district or ease of access to other parts of the city by roads or public transportation); architecturally “interesting” homes (older historic homes or a history as a planned community); and an attractive environment (a location on the lakefront in Chicago or a view of Mount Rainier in Seattle, for example).

Mixture of two diversity types. We found a mixture of two types of diversity within communities: (1) racial/ethnic diversity within blocks, and (2) small pockets—two or three blocks—of racial homogeneity within a larger diverse community.

Presence of “social seams.” “Social seams” are those points in the community where interaction between different ethnic and racial groups is “sewn” together in some way—a concept used by Jane Jacobs in *The Life and Death of Great American Cities* (1961, 267).⁷ The most common seam is a grocery store or a strip of stores. Even where people of different races and ethnicities may be living within small clusters of blocks, these seams can bring them together. In some cases, the seams may be schools where children of different races and ethnicities come together on a daily basis and where parents interact in the course of parent-teacher association activities and regular school events. Parks,

⁷ A similar concept is used by Elijah Anderson in *Streetwise* (1990).

special community-wide events, and neighborhood festivals can also serve as seams.

Residents' awareness of the community's stable diversity. Residents are aware that the racial and ethnic diversity within the community is relatively stable when compared with other urban neighborhoods.

Active community-based organizations and social institutions. Community-based organizations and social institutions help maintain diversity in direct and indirect ways. In some communities, local organizations emerged that specifically promote diversity or integration, a direct approach to achieving stable diversity.

In other communities, organizations promoted stability indirectly by addressing community-wide service issues. In the course of addressing some community need—for example, through developing recreational programs to serve youth, revitalizing a local business district, enhancing community safety, or developing a focus for a magnet school within the community—organizations brought various parts of the community together. While these efforts and these organizations were inclusive and effectively encouraged diversity, they did not always set diversity as a primary goal.

Still other organizations worked indirectly through the development of ethnic or racial “interest” groups. Organizations representing specific groups—for example, churches with membership from a particular class, ethnic, or racial group; Asian businesspeople; Latino youth; low-income tenants; or owners of historic homes—advance their interests in community-wide debates. These debates may take place in the press, at zoning board hearings, or in less formal gatherings. The special interest groups have the opportunity to engage in debate and dialogue to resolve differences. There is no dominant racial, ethnic, or class group in the communities studied because a pluralism and accommodation process not commonly seen in urban communities is produced.

Moral or value-oriented component to community organization / institution involvement. While economic self-interest (e.g., the value of residents' homes) permeated discussions on promoting diversity, explicit debate on “values”—what makes for a “good” community—occurred more than in most communities. Churches and temples also perform a crucial role. Because churches tend to be segregated at the same time that they

promote “brotherhood” and “sisterhood,” they often get involved in ecumenical efforts to bridge racial boundaries. While churches are involved in both types of diverse neighborhoods described below, their function varies in the two types of neighborhoods.

Efforts to spur economic development. Investment in neighborhood shopping infrastructure emerged as a key issue for many neighborhoods. Although some communities successfully attracted malls and superstores, most found ways to carve out a distinctive niche through development of small shopping districts, craft shops, ethnic restaurants, or antique stores.

Common challenges

Leaders in all the diverse communities noted challenges to the future stability of their communities. While these challenges could be seen as “threats” to stable diversity, they were usually seen as issues that needed to be addressed—and issues that unified the community in sustaining diversity.

Transition from older residents to younger residents. Typically, the white/Anglo populations in the communities were “empty nesters,” while the African-American, Latino, Asian, and immigrant populations were younger with families. This makeup raised two issues: (1) how to attract younger white/Anglo families to the community to maintain that dimension of the diversity, and (2) how to bring together young and old to avoid social divisions in the community (e.g., over support for public school expenditures, money for youth recreation programs, or support for senior services).

Need to address “blight” within the community or on the boundaries. A common concern voiced among all racial and ethnic groups in all the communities was the need for more community reinvestment. Specifically, reinvestment was targeted to eliminate patterns of checkerboard blight (residential and retail) and poorly maintained rental properties. Implicit in this concern was an ongoing debate in some settings over how much gentrification is “good” for the community and whether wholesale gentrification could eliminate neighborhood diversity.

Community safety. Community safety is a central issue in diverse communities, as it is in most urban and many suburban neighborhoods. However, because of commonly held perceptions in the broader society (fed by long-standing racism) that the

presence of minorities translates into crime, diverse communities are particularly sensitive to this issue.

Schools. The need for quality school systems is felt strongly in diverse urban neighborhoods. The challenge of attracting a new diverse population relates to the challenge of attracting young families to a neighborhood. Without high-quality schools, it can be difficult to “market” the community to target populations. The presence of magnet schools and private or parochial schools frequently serves as an anchor for diverse communities.

Differences in the nature of diversity

Although the diverse neighborhoods studied did have common traits and concerns, the mix of what they saw as pressing problems and intervention strategies varied.

Economic homogeneity/heterogeneity. Most of the communities studied were economically diverse. Living in the communities were middle-class homeowners with college educations and professional jobs as well as low-income families with wage earners in entry-level service sector jobs. This economic diversity was typically a product of diverse housing opportunities, namely, a mix of single-family homes, market-rate rental units, and subsidized housing units. The economically diverse neighborhoods included Chicago’s Rogers Park, Edgewater, Uptown, and Chicago Lawn; Southeast Seattle; Houston Heights; New York City’s Jackson Heights and Fort Greene; and Oakland’s Fruitvale and San Antonio.

Communities with a larger portion of middle-class residents included Philadelphia’s West Mount Airy, Milwaukee’s Sherman Park, Denver’s Park Hill, and Memphis’s Vollintine-Evergreen. This is not to say that no economic diversity existed in these latter communities, but relative to the other communities studied, they were more middle class.

How a neighborhood experiences or sustains social diversity is related to the extent of the economic diversity. On one hand, in West Mount Airy the high proportion of professionals and academics settling in the area has promoted social interaction among racially diverse residents. On the other hand, neighborhoods such as New York’s Jackson Heights and Chicago’s Uptown form pockets of higher-income residents four or five blocks away from low-income blocks. The glue that holds these various types of diverse communities together differs. The common class

bonds are more likely to be cited in middle-income neighborhoods. Location, access to public transportation and jobs, affordable housing, and diversity of stores and restaurants are more likely to be the attraction in the economically diverse communities.

Immigrant/non-immigrant composition. Neighborhoods vary in the proportion of immigrants who live there. In several neighborhoods, diversity was produced in large part because the community acted as a “port of entry” for new immigrant groups. In these “new diversity” communities, statistical diversity has been a constant, but the particular pattern of ethnic groups producing the diversity may have varied over time. In some cases, the list of ethnic groups (i.e., the recent immigrant groups) changed completely in as little as 10 years. The newness of the populations in port-of-entry communities and the absence of any long-standing history of relations with other ethnic groups have left the door open to innovative accommodations between groups. For example, Jackson Heights markets its many ethnic restaurants and stores by offering subway tours on the line that has become known as the “International Express.”

Other communities studied are best described as examples of “traditional diversity.” In such cases, neighborhoods are characterized by white/African-American diversity—a diversity that has a deeper history in American society. The more established histories of African-American/white race relations afford avenues for resolving intergroup tensions or finding institutions that can mediate between the different racial groups. For example, churches and ecumenical groups have been able to draw on decades of racial dialogue and play a lead role in mapping and sustaining stable diversity in these communities. Not surprisingly, the civil rights movement of the 1960s was a key watershed for these communities. Community groups in Philadelphia, Denver, Milwaukee, and Memphis can trace their prodiversity work back to the early civil rights movement. The political struggles of that era laid the foundation for these stable diverse communities.

It is interesting to note that in the nine cities studied, when diversity was characterized by a more traditional African-American/white dimension, community organizing efforts were more likely to explicitly address issues of discrimination and broader issues of racism. Some of these issues included redlining, racial overtones in investment or disinvestment practices by businesses, and even social interactions between residents themselves. In communities characterized by multiracial or

multiethnic “new diversity,” less time was spent on the specific issues of racial relations. More time was spent on what were seen as practical issues, such as community safety, improvement of city services, and business investment. The community’s diverse character was seen as an important issue in how it was viewed by the outside world. Yet the multidimensional or crisscrossing aspects of many racial and ethnic groups made discussing intergroup relations more complex than in the one-dimensional African-American/white communities. This is not to say that racism and ethnocentrism were not discussed—rather they were not as effective as points of common discussion as the “practical” issues were.

Racial and ethnic mix. Some communities’ populations were evenly divided among Asian, Latino, white, and African-American residents. Others were primarily made up of whites and African Americans. Still others were Latino and white or Asian and white. The social dynamics of a multiethnic, multiracial community differed from those of a two-race/ethnic community. Two-race/ethnic communities tended to more specifically address bridging traditional tensions between the two groups, while multiethnic communities were more likely to refer to the general mixture without any discussion of an overarching need to address specific tensions between two groups. As a Chicago resident observed, “What we have in common are our differences.”

Extent of housing stock variety. The availability of a variety of housing types contributed to diversity in the majority of communities studied. We define variety in a number of ways: (1) owners versus renters, (2) housing costs, and (3) rent levels. Although some communities retained higher homeownership rates than others, in no community did rental housing drop below 25 percent. In 9 of the 14 neighborhoods studied, rental housing represented more than 50 percent of the occupied housing units. Community leaders typically reported a broad range of costs in rental housing.

Models of urban diversity

In analyzing descriptions and data from the 14 diverse communities studied, we found two types of diverse communities in these U.S. cities. First is a community characterized by self-conscious diversity that not only is very aware of its diversity but has developed an array of community organizations, social networks, and institutional accommodations to sustain this diversity. The

self-consciously diverse community actively markets itself as a diverse community. Over the years it brings in new residents who are attracted to the positive characteristics of the community (e.g., proximity to jobs, housing values, and appealing physical characteristics such as a lakefront vista) and who are attracted to or at least tolerant of the community's racial or ethnic diversity.

The *laissez-faire* diverse community has not worked to develop and sustain its diversity. Rather, the diversity occurred as a result of economic and social processes indirectly related to resident or community organization actions. Such processes include (1) gentrification stalled by a poor real estate market; (2) transition resulting from the aging of a community, with older residents moving out or dying and new residents moving into the neighborhood; (3) revitalization of areas adjacent to the community and increased investment in the community; (4) establishment of the community as an immigrant port of entry; (5) development of affordable housing projects; and (6) a standoff between affordable housing advocates and developers promoting middle-income housing projects.⁸

Communities characterized by *laissez-faire* diversity are more stable than those urban neighborhoods where the racial compositions changed in less than five years because of blockbusting and the resulting homeowner panic and flight. However, they are not as stable as self-consciously diverse communities. But if individual community leaders and community organizations emerge to promote diversity, *laissez-faire* diversity can be organized into a self-consciously diverse community. In fact, all the self-consciously diverse communities we studied had once been characterized by a degree of *laissez-faire* diversity.

The premise that diverse communities contain resources that can be developed as a way of making them stable and preserving diversity is consistent with the view that "social capital" is something to be developed, just as financial capital is developed in the course of building an economy. As Robert Putnam (1993)

⁸ If the present visible structure and processes of any social setting or organization are seen as a "truce line" between competing interests, the mix of lower- and middle-income housing in a given community can also be seen as resulting from an accommodation or truce line between competing housing interests. This does not necessarily mean that the housing market is unstable; it is merely a recognition that no one set of actors or institution controls a community. What we see in front of us—particularly in diverse communities with more than the average complement of social groupings—is the result of competing interests.

explains, social capital “refers to features of social organization, such as networks, norms, and trust, that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit” (p. 1). While not ignoring individual behavior or the broader societal context within which communities function, this approach focuses on social networks and institutions that are central to human communities (Hawley 1950; Hunter 1974; Sampson 1988). In the case of self-consciously diverse communities, community organizations are very much aware of the need to develop and nurture the institutional basis for promoting stable diversity. In some cases, the existence of a common enemy—banks that discriminate in lending practices, local media that have pegged the community as in decline, or a society in general that thinks that diverse neighborhoods cannot work—is the foil around which such leaders can organize.⁹

Whether or not they have always framed it in the current language of social capital enhancement, activists in self-consciously diverse communities tap the knowledge and expertise of residents (e.g., lawyers, reporters, businesspeople, and university professors) and institutions (e.g., schools, churches, block clubs, and even historical societies) to build up the social networks and positive cultural views of their community. Self-consciously diverse communities are more likely to have a higher proportion of middle-class residents. Not only do they have the residents’ expertise implied by the examples of occupations listed above, but the ease with which they function within and interact with established organizational settings—local government, businesses, and the media—as well as join, modify, or form community organizations is an asset related to social class. This is not to say that the less middle-class *laissez-faire* community is less likely to develop effective organizations. But it is to say that given the “middle-class culture” of most American organizations and institutions, having a class-based understanding of the workings of such organizations—from their politics to their protocols—gives middle-class activists an advantage.

Laissez-faire communities are developing their social capital in a different way. Rather than bringing the entire community together to fight a common enemy, such communities are more likely to establish a coalition around specific issues. Instead of

⁹ The fact that conflict with forces outside a group, community, or society helps to strengthen internal social solidarity is well established in classic sociological writing. Georg Simmel (1964) observes that in times of conflict with outside forces, a group sees a “tightening” of internal “relations among its members and the intensification of its unity, in consciousness and in action” (p. 91). Lewis Coser (1965) also elaborates on this point.

creating centralized organizations to foster a stable diverse community, such communities build links among the wide array of smaller, tightly knit social networks (e.g., ethnic mutual aid societies, informal networks of new immigrant groups, or ethnic businessperson associations). Although these limited-scope coalitions may each focus on a particular issue (e.g., community safety, graffiti, or city services), they create a social patchwork quilt that stitches the many groups into a common interest group for the issue at hand.

The organizational culture in laissez-faire communities typically differs from that in self-consciously diverse communities. Strategies aimed at “empowerment” of lower-income residents or new immigrant groups are more apparent. Confrontational or “direct action” tactics, while used in both types of communities, are more commonplace in these laissez-faire communities as they challenge established institutional forces. Issues may also differ. The more middle-class self-consciously diverse communities established in the 1960s may be battling issues of mortgage or insurance redlining. Meanwhile the newer, less middle-class laissez-faire communities may be more explicitly battling to preserve affordable housing, Section 8 rent subsidies, local Head Start early child education programs for low-income residents, and protection of immigrant residents from social welfare cutoffs. At the same time, the desire for quality schools and preservation of community safety are common themes in both communities.

By their very nature, issues of race and ethnicity are social, not individual, issues. It is society as a whole, through its complex history, that has made racial and ethnic distinctions important in our lives. Therefore, it should not be surprising that the grassroots policies that emerge out of successful stable diverse communities emphasize the development of social capital, and not individual opportunity, as a way of resisting resegregation. As Putnam (1993) points out, “classic liberal social policy is designed to enhance the opportunities of *individuals*, but if social capital is important, this emphasis is misplaced. Instead we must focus on community development” (p. 6). The two models that follow are different methods of developing social capital in different kinds of diverse communities.

The self-consciously diverse community

Milwaukee’s Sherman Park, Memphis’s Vollintine-Evergreen, Denver’s Park Hill, and Philadelphia’s West Mount Airy fit the

model of the self-consciously diverse community. They represent the most stable of diverse communities, because they have developed the institutional structures, social arrangements, and political and social environments needed to sustain their diversity. The institutional structures can include community organizations specifically developed to promote the community as racially and ethnically diverse.

Because of the view in American society that diversity means instability, diverse communities must make extraordinary efforts to market themselves and maintain their stability. The communities themselves, as well as institutions that typically exist within urban communities (e.g., parent-teacher associations, church groups, ecumenical groups, chambers of commerce, youth recreational leagues, political parties, and block clubs), work to both promote the neighborhood and develop positive intergroup relations.

This more organized element of self-consciously diverse communities produces an environment that promotes more positive social relationships within individual blocks and within various civic associations. For example, a more self-conscious community is also more likely to recognize the need for membership diversity in important community-wide decision-making bodies in these political and social environments. Positive intergroup relations are valued and celebrated. The community also becomes conscious of its distinction from the average American urban community. In addition to the characteristics of all diverse urban communities listed previously, characteristics specific to self-consciously diverse communities that we studied include the following:

Active community-based organizations (CBOs). CBOs are developed with express concern for sustaining and promoting the racial diversity of the neighborhood. CBOs intervene in the following ways:

1. Active intervention in promoting positive perceptions of the neighborhood in the eyes of those outside the community as well as in the eyes of community residents. CBOs recognize that the “desirability” of any neighborhood and the related demand for housing (rental and owner occupied) is strongly linked to the image of the community. Intervention takes the form of direct marketing and promotional efforts touting the positive aspects of the community, pressure on local media to report positively on the community, and monitoring media and public officials’ statements or comments

about the neighborhood and responding to such statements when they appear damaging to the community.

2. Development of affirmative marketing programs that consciously seek to encourage inclusiveness. These programs differ in scope and success, but they all represent a commitment to encourage prointegrative moves.
3. Active promotion of fair housing goals by assisting residents and prospective residents in ensuring that federal, state, and local fair housing laws are being enforced. These measures would include cooperation in citywide testing for discrimination and the development of metropolitan-wide strategies to combat discrimination, thus promoting greater awareness of fair housing law and opportunities for sustained diversity in some neighborhoods.
4. Engaging in research that provides data on housing quality and sales, changing racial composition in the neighborhood, bank loan practices, and real estate sales practices. These data may be useful in encouraging public and private agencies to support racial diversity in the community.
5. Support for loan programs to provide property owners with home repair funds. Because diverse neighborhoods are typically older neighborhoods, housing stock rehabilitation becomes an important issue in maintaining the community's quality of life. In some cases, community organizations have conducted "windshield" surveys of neighborhood blocks and then contacted owners to suggest repairs. Related to this is organized pressure on local government officials to assist in maintaining housing stock quality by making sure they are vigilantly enforcing building codes. (Typical codes are those that require that visible exterior problems such as peeling paint or broken windows be repaired or those that prohibit subdivision of single-family dwellings into multifamily buildings in neighborhoods unable to support such density.)

Developed community organizations. Community organizations are developed to address and improve local quality-of-life concerns. Unlike the CBOs noted above, these organizations do not explicitly address racial and ethnic diversity issues. Efforts include programs providing crime watch patrols and graffiti cleanup, housing surveys, and investment in infrastructure improvements.

Prodiversity religious institutions. Churches and temples play a prominent role in promoting prodiversity values. Ecumenical networks link the different racial or ethnic groups that tend to dominate the individual institutions.

Visible social seams. Places where different groups in the community come together on a regular basis are more prevalent and developed in self-consciously diverse communities than they are in laissez-faire diverse communities. Seams include shopping areas, schools, parks, regular ecumenical religious services, and other neighborhood events.

Political and financial resources. Compared with laissez-faire diverse communities, self-consciously diverse communities garner more political and financial resources. Their median income is higher, and their professional resources—expertise that can be easily translated into political influence—are greater. Three of the four self-consciously diverse communities had median incomes substantially higher than the city average in 1990 (at least 40 percent higher).

Relationships with banks and real estate agents. Establishment of working relationships with banks and real estate agents is key in marketing the community. In the early stages of development of self-consciously diverse communities, this relationship often begins as confrontational—for example, through Community Reinvestment Act challenges and picketing. Generally it develops into more positive working relationships with particular banks and real estate agents.

Strong leadership. All of the community organizations in self-consciously diverse communities were established and sustained through the efforts of key leaders. While the organizations have been able to attract the necessary support from within the communities at critical times, the existence of this long-term, skilled, dedicated leadership has been a necessary element of these communities.

Biracial or biethnic character. Rather than having a multiracial or multiethnic character, two racial groups dominate the neighborhood population. In all cases this involves white and African-American populations. Leaders in these communities trace their development to prointegration activities emerging with the civil rights movement in the 1960s. These communities participated in National Neighbors, a national organization created in 1969 as an outgrowth of the civil rights movement to promote racial diversity in residential areas.

The laissez-faire diverse community

New York City's Jackson Heights and Fort Greene; Chicago's Rogers Park, Edgewater, Uptown, and Chicago Lawn; Oakland's San Antonio and Fruitvale; Houston Heights; and Southeast Seattle are laissez-faire diverse communities. While stable for the past 10 to 20 years, diversity in laissez-faire diverse communities is less the product of neighborhood organization intervention than the product of the outcomes of social and economic forces initially beyond the residents' control. Such forces include (1) an influx of immigrant groups; (2) transition of neighborhood composition as an aging white population moves out or dies and new residents move in; and (3) reinvestment in formerly run-down neighborhoods that brings a modest increase in white, Anglo, middle-income residents, but where a sluggish real estate market inhibits wholesale gentrification and resegregation.

These areas represent a new type of community that may or may not mature into a more self-consciously diverse community. The current stable diversity—and even continued future diversity—flows from the complex mixture of racial and ethnic groups, as well as the congruent variety of organizations representing the interests of those groups (e.g., ethnic mutual aid societies, ethnic-based religious groups, and racially based recreational groups). Laissez-faire communities experience the development of organizations and networks intended to improve the quality of life in the neighborhoods (e.g., community policing programs, collective marketing efforts for small businesses, affordable housing preservation programs, and community-wide economic development efforts).

These communities may represent a new wave of diverse communities that we will increasingly see in U.S. cities. More conscious intervention efforts—which have emerged in some of these communities—should make them more stable. However, because the stable diversity is produced from social, political, and economic forces not actively controlled by these communities, it is unclear whether these communities will be able to sustain themselves without more conscious guidance and intervention. In some of the neighborhoods studied, interventions are taking place in this new type of laissez-faire community. In Houston, the Interethnic Forum promotes citywide dialogues around race and ethnic relations. The Forum is particularly interested in the future of Houston Heights, the most prominent diverse community in the city. In Chicago's Uptown and Edgewater communities, the Organization of the NorthEast—an umbrella organization of churches, universities, ethnic mutual aid

societies, and banks—has been involved in a collaborative research project with Loyola University to create organizing strategies to produce greater interracial and interethnic cooperation. In addition to the characteristics common to all diverse communities, *laissez-faire* diverse communities have the following specific traits.

Multiracial and multiethnic diversity. These communities are composites of more than two—often many more than two—racial and ethnic groups. The relatively peaceful coexistence in these communities largely results from the lack of numerical (and political and social) dominance of any one group. Typical of this kind of community are the Edgewater and Uptown community areas, where the local public high school draws students who speak 65 different languages. Another example is the Jackson Heights section of Queens in New York City, where community groups give tours by subway. Participants on the “International Express” get off at different stops to sample the offerings of the many ethnic stores and restaurants in the area.¹⁰

Special interest groups. The community organization network generally consists of a number of organizations representing a variety of ethnic group interests (e.g., ethnic mutual aid societies). While larger organizations are present, their activity usually centers on maintaining coalitions among the various ethnic groups.

Multiethnic churches. Churches build bridges between groups, and—more than is apparent in self-conscious neighborhoods—churches open their doors to multiple ethnic groups. It is common to see churches that either have services in different languages or provide space to multiple congregations.

Less visible social seams. The social seams are not as visible or strong in *laissez-faire* communities as they are in self-consciously diverse communities. While diversity is apparent “by the numbers,” there are fewer social institutions or social accommodations that have developed to weave together the diversity.

¹⁰ This ethnic and racial pluralism can develop in different ways. In some cases the creation of affordable housing can provide an attraction to new immigrant groups looking for appropriate housing. The development of ethnic mutual aid societies and pockets of ethnic business can also provide an attraction to new immigrants who are seeking social support networks. This process in turn contributes to the growth of a particular ethnic group within the community. A community’s past tolerance for new immigrant groups can also make such communities desirable locations for entirely new immigrant groups and their supporting social service agencies or businesses.

Diversity in retail developments (i.e., the availability of a broad range of ethnic restaurants or a variety of ethnic shops) does bring together various residential groups, but intergroup relations is not a central focus of most community organizations.

Multicultural challenges. Developing efforts to patch together various ethnic and racial groups to protect community interests and promote interethnic and interracial harmony are under way. Because the multiple-group character of diversity in laissez-faire communities has not been commonplace in American society, organizations addressing these issues find themselves in new social and political territory. The past experiences (positive and negative) of white/African-American or white/Latino relations cannot always serve as guides to more complex relationships, like white/Vietnamese/new Latino immigrant/established Latino/African-American residential mixes. Although most diversity present in the United States tends to be bi-group, laissez-faire diverse communities represent greater challenges to organization by virtue of their multicultural character.

Limited financial resources. Because of the large number of recent immigrants in most of these neighborhoods—immigrants who also have limited financial resources—these communities tend to have a lower median income. Unlike the self-consciously diverse neighborhoods, which generally had median incomes higher than the city average, the majority of laissez-faire diverse communities had incomes closer to or below the city average (see figure A.2).

Affordable housing. Although all diverse communities have a broader-than-average range of housing options, laissez-faire diverse communities are more likely to have substantial stocks of affordable housing. The availability of relatively good-quality affordable housing—particularly affordable rental housing—is a factor that attracts new immigrant groups to these communities.

Conclusions

What are the implications of our research for the future of stable racially and ethnically diverse neighborhoods in the United States? First, stable diverse communities are not a figment of the progressive policy researcher's imagination; they do exist. More than 600,000 people live in our select sample of stable diverse urban communities, and there are scores of other urban communities with similar characteristics. With the proper supportive policies, forward-looking leadership, and strong

community-based organizational networks, American cities can see these communities grow and multiply. They represent tangible alternatives to the decades of residential segregation that have plagued our nation.

Of course, even for the communities studied, there are challenges ahead. As residents of the self-consciously diverse communities established in the 1960s age, new residents are moving into these neighborhoods. The ability of their prodiversity vision to sustain itself is influenced by both the strength of the established community organizations in these neighborhoods and support that these communities receive from local government and other influential institutions. Similarly, the likelihood that *laissez-faire* communities will transform themselves into more self-consciously diverse communities is uncertain. Such transformation is dependent on collective recognition that, for a broad range of racial, ethnic, and social class groups, diverse communities open up opportunities for improved quality of life in housing, education, and economic development. Victories of multiracial and multiethnic coalitions go a long way toward transforming *laissez-faire* communities into self-consciously diverse communities. In many of the *laissez-faire* communities studied, diverse schools are held up as badges of honor. The ability to attract retail development and sustain viable commercial strips is celebrated by business leaders. Neighborhood ethnic festivals become regularly scheduled advertisements of the community's commitment to diversity. As the identity of *laissez-faire* communities becomes more regularly associated with their diversity, new self-conscious communities are developing. While these are more multiracial, multiethnic, and multiclass than the self-conscious communities created in the 1960s, they are nevertheless becoming increasingly self-conscious.

As our nation's population becomes more diverse, these are the communities that represent positive alternatives to segregated communities. However, stable diverse neighborhoods will not just happen. They require active intervention to counter the misconceptions about diversity and lack of institutional support for diversity. If more support for diverse neighborhoods can be forthcoming—from government as well as the private sector—we can create communities that accommodate or embrace the increased diversity that will exist in the future. On the other hand, if more support is not provided, we may see a society increasingly hiding behind walled communities in the city or in exclusive communities outside the city.

Based on our study, we have made the following recommendations for strengthening diverse communities in all cities in our country. Our recommendations recognize a need for elected officials and other government leaders to take a more proactive role in promoting diversity. At the same time, we recognize that leaders in existing diverse communities need to continue to pressure elected officials and hold them accountable for enforcing existing laws and promoting improved race and ethnic relations in their city neighborhoods.

Government agencies and government leaders should be accountable to specific diversity goals and be more proactive in promoting the idea that diverse neighborhoods are viable. Elected officials need to provide leadership in promoting stable diverse communities to satisfy the unmet demand for such neighborhoods. Similarly, urban planners need to carefully examine the consequences of their actions (e.g., zoning policies, retail development plans, and school districting) that may either destabilize existing diverse neighborhoods or thwart the development of new diverse neighborhoods.

Existing fair housing laws, federal antidiscrimination laws, the Community Reinvestment Act, and other state and local laws supporting equal housing opportunities should be maintained and strengthened. The laws represent tools that can be used by local groups in sustaining diversity. The laws alone cannot create diversity, but in the hands of local activists they can be effective.

Economic resources specifically earmarked to encourage neighborhood diversity—particularly in mixed-income diverse communities—should be provided by public and private sources. Our study indicates that middle-class diverse communities are more stable, partly because of financial and political resources available to residents. This indicates that resources flowing to diverse communities will be money well invested in producing stability.

Information on strategies to strengthen CBOs and CBO networks in diverse communities should be developed and disseminated. CBOs play an important role in stabilizing both laissez-faire diverse and self-consciously diverse communities. In the case of self-conscious diversity, community organizations are formed to promote diversity. In the case of laissez-faire diversity, community organizations develop to represent different interests that recognize the value of coming together to determine common interests. Without this proactive local resource, diverse

communities are more likely to be threatened by outside forces that have not been supportive of diversity.

Citywide and regional organizations or networks of diverse community organizations should be established. These organizations (1) provide technical assistance for communities seeking to maintain stable diversity and (2) increase the visibility of stable diverse communities in metropolitan areas and in the nation. Public and private support for such networks can contribute to the strength of existing diverse communities and the numbers of future diverse communities. Key to the success of such assistance is the ability to enlist the broad range of existing agencies and organizations—from schools, churches, and businesses to block clubs and youth groups—in these efforts.

Leadership training institutes for residents of diverse communities should be developed. Stable diverse communities do not just happen; they are usually sustained by a small number of local leaders. If efforts were made to provide training to residents in other communities—particularly in the laissez-faire communities with their new, complex multiracial and multiethnic relationships—the country's capacity to develop and sustain these communities would be increased.

Public and private programs that support mixed-income developments should be encouraged. Diversity—particularly in the new diverse urban communities—is related to the presence of a broad range of housing options: namely, affordable housing and middle-income housing as well as rental opportunities and home purchase opportunities. Some of the newer stable diverse communities have been created by community economic development corporations improving or developing affordable housing when the neighborhood is still “down” prior to, or in the early stages of, neighborhood gentrification. These efforts have helped to “lock in” or guarantee quality housing for low-income individuals as reinvestment dollars flow into the community at a more rapid pace.

Quality schools—public and private—are important to the health of diverse communities. Education and community safety are the two indicators of community vitality most frequently mentioned by residents, community leaders, and business leaders during interviews. Good schools help attract residents of all income groups to a community. Schools are visible symbols of the community and its quality of life: Communities and schools frequently share the same name. Schools are also used as a measure of investment in the future of the community.

Community safety programs need to be developed and strengthened. Safety is a particularly important issue in diverse communities because of the myth that “minority equals crime.” Not only do diverse communities have to demonstrate that they can be safe communities, but in doing so they can help break down this myth.

Local chambers of commerce, business schools, and other business associations need to look carefully at diverse communities as potentially strong markets—areas where business investments will produce strong returns. Diverse neighborhoods are often markets overlooked by businesses. Opportunities for new retail development in diverse communities are significant and can produce attractive returns on investment. In some of the cities studied, retailers—including large chains—have discovered that diverse communities can be very profitable locations. Some of this development may be related to the “newly” discovered markets in inner-city neighborhoods (Porter 1995). However, the overlay of diversity suggests that new tools may be necessary to develop the two-pronged marketing plan aimed at a specific ethnic market and the needed customers from the general market—often required for sustained profitability.

The media need to take an active role in telling the positive stories of diverse community successes. City newspapers, particularly, have a good track record in doing feature stories on such neighborhoods. This initiative needs to be reinforced.

Local community organizations, existing institutions, and local governments need to be receptive to new groups and be willing to work with them on common community issues. It is unclear at this point how much ownership the new immigrants will take over their current communities. Are their present homes seen as stepping-stones to other homes, or is there a desire to invest—financially and socially—in their present community? If there is to be investment, new immigrants need avenues for participation in the future of their communities.

Job creation programs and improved access to employment in nearby communities need to be established. As in other communities, access to jobs is important for diverse community survival.

There needs to be public discussion on the extent to which the practice of maintaining ethnic- and race-based political constituencies undermines efforts to create and sustain diverse communities. Are there alternatives to residential-based political constituencies as a way of maintaining ethnic and racial voices in city political decision making?

Our country and our urban communities are at a crossroads. Whether the path we take is one of continued segregation or one of greater accommodation and understanding of differences has yet to be decided. The fears of community transition, racial change, gentrification, and economic decline can be effectively addressed by creating communities that embrace diversity rather than building the inevitably fragile wall of racial, ethnic, or economic exclusion. The challenge to these fears already exists in the form of those few diverse communities that are present in our cities today. The question is whether the models presented here will be used by other urban communities and city planners to end the wasteful cycle of investment/disinvestment/reinvestment, which also has its social costs in the related cycles of social displacement. These working models for stable racial and ethnic diversity stand ready to serve as guides into the next century as America's overall population becomes more diverse.

Appendix

Table A.1. Case Study Locations and Research Teams

City	Community	Research Team
New York	Jackson Heights, Queens	Phil Kasinitz, Hunter College
	Fort Greene, Brooklyn	Local community leaders
Chicago	Edgewater	Michael Maly, Loyola
	Uptown	James Wilson, Leadership Council
	Chicago Lawn Rogers Park	
Philadelphia	West Mount Airy	Barbara Ferman, Temple University
		Theresa Singleton, Temple University
		Don DeMarco, Open Fund for the Future of Philadelphia
Milwaukee	Sherman Park	Greg Squires, University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee
		Ed Valent, Sherman Park Neighborhood Association

Table A.1. Case Study Locations and Research Teams (continued)

City	Community	Research Team
Memphis, TN	Vollintine-Evergreen	Michael Kirby, Rhodes College Mary Wilder, VECA
Houston	Houston Heights	Jacqueline Hagan, Karl Eschbach, Nestor Rodriguez, Iain C. Evans, and Anna Zakos, University of Houston and the Interethnic Forum
Denver	Park Hill	Katherine Woods, GPHC, Inc. Mike Cortez, University of Colorado, Denver Cecil Glenn, University of Colorado, Denver
Oakland, CA	Fruitvale San Antonio	Mona Younis, University of California, Berkeley People United for a Better Oakland (PUEBLO)
Seattle	Southeast Seattle	Andy Gordon, University of Washington

Table A.2. Socioeconomic and Demographic Indicators for Communities in Study

Variable	Jackson Heights, Queens, NYC	Fort Greene, Brooklyn, NYC	West Mt. Airy, Phila- delphia	Vollintine- Ever- green, Memphis	Chicago Lawn, Chicago	Edge- water, Chicago	Uptown, Chicago	Rogers Park, Chicago	Sherman Park, Mil- waukee	Houston Heights, Houston	Park Hill, Denver	Fruitvale, Oakland	San Antonio, Oakland	South- east Seattle
1990 population	92,523	57,807	13,858	11,000	51,243	60,703	63,839	60,378	60,783	15,564	24,822	32,315	55,966	68,643
Change 1980-90 (%)	4	7	-7	1	-37	4	-1	9	18	9	-15	21	20	7
Racial change														
1980-90 (%)														
White change	-29	17	-5	-14	-14	-13	-24	-26	-32	-12	-17	-37	-40	-20
African-American change	1	4	-8	40	181	83	61	212	76	51	-19	9	-2	6
Latino change	40	9	-2	46	195	35	-4	81	98	36	2	61	47	—
Asian change	101	41	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	142	156	57
Income (%)														
< \$10,000	20	32	17	22	27	28	41	30	33	37	25	27	33	29
\$15,000-29,999	25	23	21	28	29	31	27	31	29	29	24	30	30	27
\$30,000-49,999	29	21	25	28	25	22	18	24	24	20	24	27	22	24
> \$50,000	26	24	36	22	18	19	14	14	13	14	28	16	15	20
Median income														
1990	\$32,735	\$23,421	\$45,276	\$30,510	\$30,765	\$32,150	\$19,711	\$27,330	\$22,019	\$20,949	\$31,462	\$25,834	\$24,156	\$26,955
Foreign born (%)	54	14	3	1	22	30	33	29	3	23	2	33	37	27
Owner occupied (%)	33	21	58	69	54	27	15	15	46	46	72	36	23	57
Renter occupied (%)	67	79	42	31	46	73	85	85	54	54	28	64	77	43

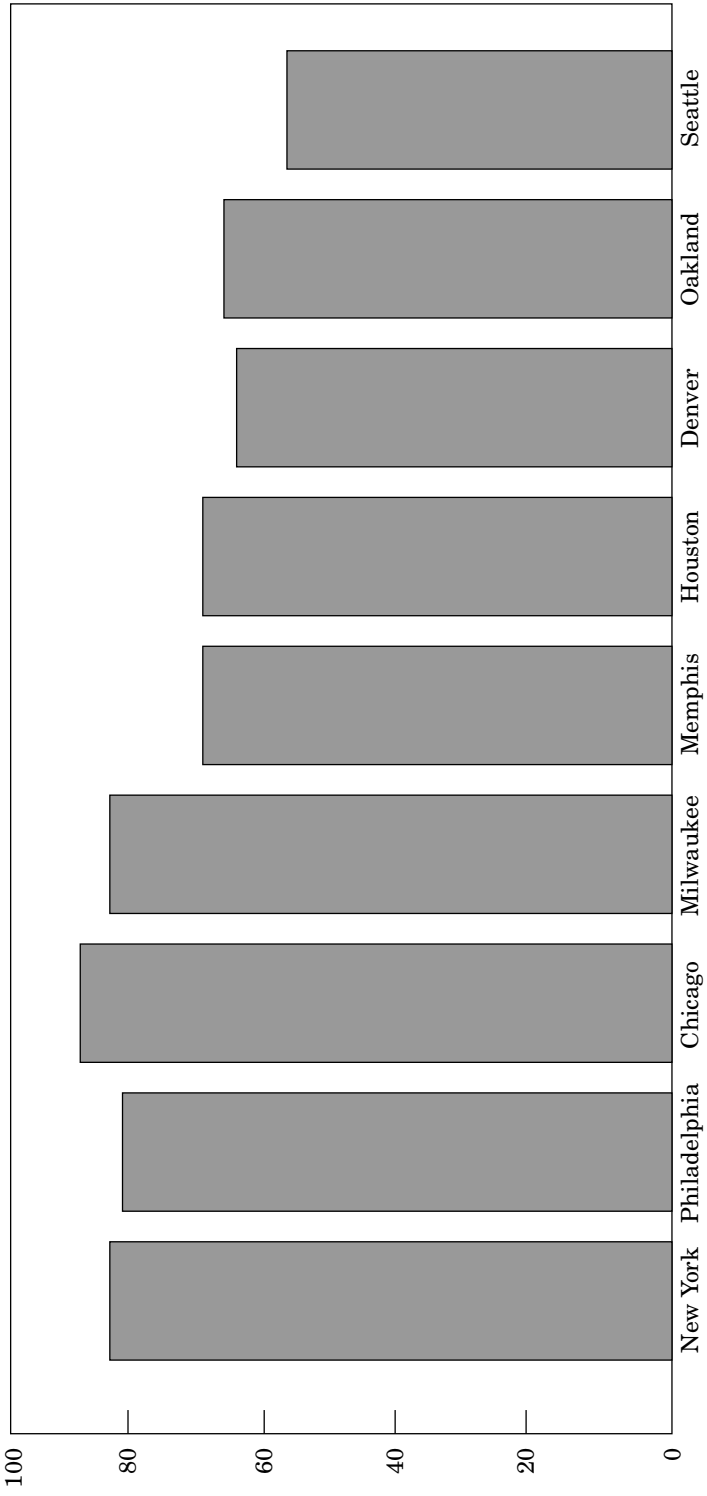
Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census (1990).

Table A.3. HUD Racial, Ethnic, and Economic Diversity Project: Citywide Socioeconomic and Demographic Indicators

Variable	New York	Phila- delphia	Memphis	Chicago	Mil- waukee	Houston	Denver	Oakland	Seattle
1990 population	7,322,564	1,585,577	610,337	2,783,726	628,088	1,630,553	467,610	372,242	516,259
Change 1980-90 (%)	4	6	-6	-7	-1	2	-5	10	5
Racial change 1980-90 (%)									
White change	-14	-14	19	-19	-18	-12	-22	-11	-2
African-American change	11	1	9	-10	30	4	-3	1	10
Latino change	24	32	-51	29	43	60	16	59	—
Asian change	105	—	—	43	—	93	—	111	64
Income (%)									
< \$10,000	28	33	34	30	32	28	30	19	24
\$15,000-29,999	22	26	28	26	29	28	29	17	27
\$30,000-49,999	23	24	22	24	25	23	23	48	25
> \$50,000	27	18	16	20	14	21	19	16	24
Median income 1990	\$30,751	\$25,176	\$21,823	\$26,301	\$22,834	\$24,157	\$21,540	\$27,095	\$27,394
Foreign born (%)	28	7	1	17	5	18	7	20	13
Owner occupied (%)	29	62	55	41	45	45	49	42	49
Renter occupied (%)	71	38	45	59	55	55	51	58	51

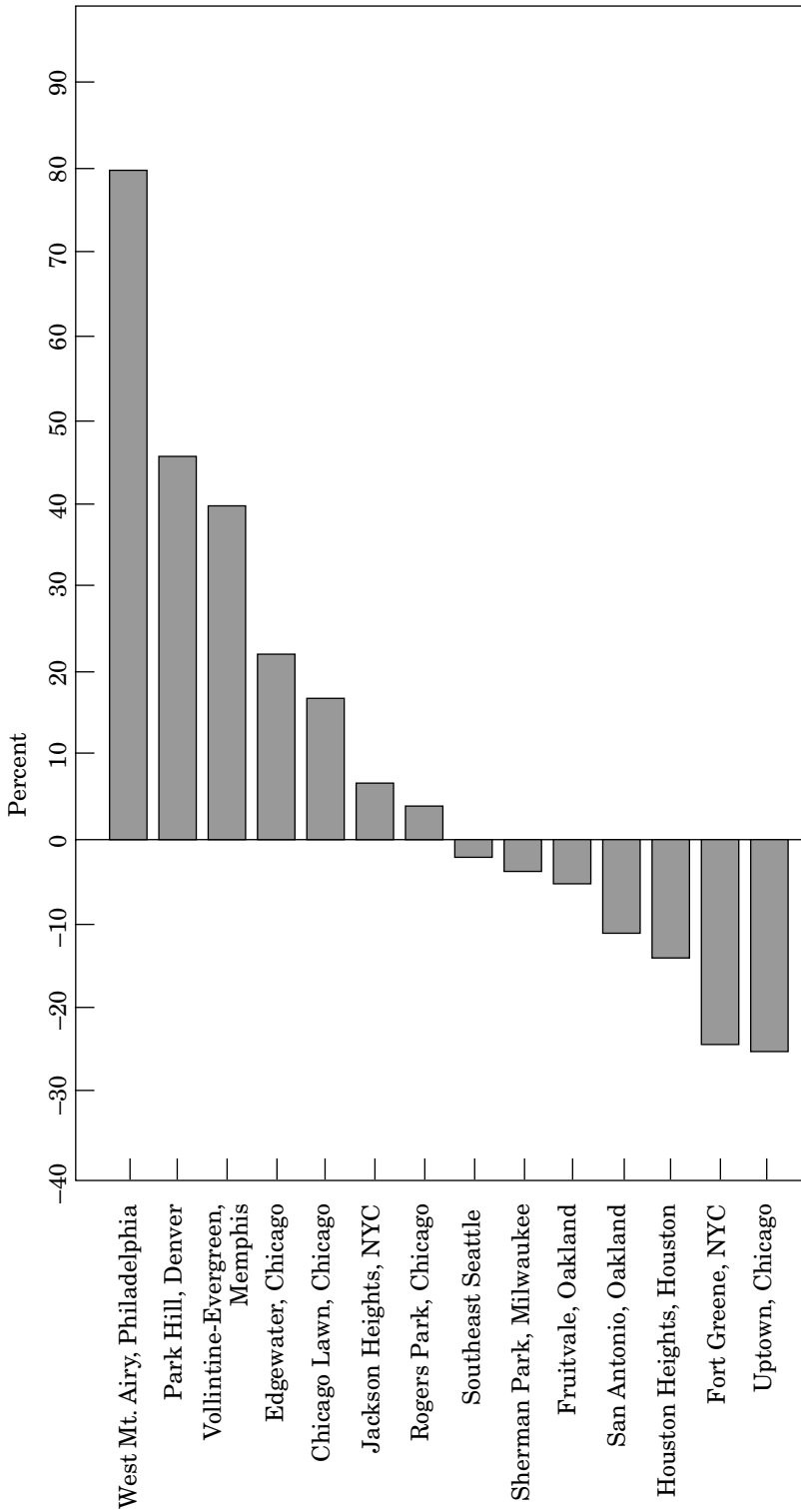
Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census (1990).

Figure A.1. 1990 Index of Dissimilarity Scores, Indicating Segregation between African Americans and White Anglos for Metropolitan Areas in Cities of Diverse Neighborhoods



Source: Farley (1995).

Figure A.2. Percent Difference of Diverse-Neighborhood Median Income Compared with City Median Income, 1990



Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census (1990).

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