"Because the World Consists of Everybody": Parents' Understandings of Neighborhood Diversity

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Abstract: Previous research, primarily using survey data, highlights preferences about neighborhood racial composition as a potential contributor to residential segregation. However, we know little about how individuals, especially parents, understand neighborhood racial/ethnic composition. We examine this question using in-depth interview data from 156 Black, White, and Hispanic parents of young children in two metropolitan areas. Prior research on neighborhood racial preferences has mostly been animated by expectations about in-group attraction, out-group avoidance, the influence of stereotypes, and perceived associations between race and status. However, we find that a substantial subset of parents expressed a desire for racially and ethnically mixed neighborhoods – a residential preference at odds with racial segregation. Parents conceptualized neighborhood diversity as beneficial for children's development: cultivating skills and comfort interacting with racial/ethnic others, teaching tolerance, and providing cultural enrichment. Black and Hispanic parents also recognized diversity as a marker of relative neighborhood advantage. However, beliefs about the value of neighborhood diversity were rarely a primary motivation for residential choices. Nonetheless, parents' beliefs about the benefits of neighborhood racial mixing reveal the reach of discourse on the value of diversity and suggest a potential opportunity to advance residential de-segregation.

Understanding the forces that reproduce racial residential segregation has been a central challenge of social science research (Alba and Logan 1993; Bobo 1989; Bobo and Zubrinsky 1996; Krysan and Crowder 2017; Lareau and Goyette 2014; Logan and Molotch 1987; Massey 2016; Massey and Denton 1993; Sharkey 2013). While scholarship has identified multi-leveled dynamics that sustain segregation, individual preferences about neighborhood racial composition is among the most common explanations for persistent segregation (ibid). A large literature is devoted to understanding individuals' neighborhood composition preferences (Charles 2000; Charles 2006; Krysan and Farley 2002), how these preferences may shape housing searches (Havekes, Bader and Krysan 2016; Krysan and Bader 2007; Krysan et al. 2009), and their ultimate impact on patterns of residential segregation (Adelman 2005; Bobo 1989; Bobo and Zubrinsky 1996; Bruch and Mare 2006; Charles 2006; Schelling 1971).

This research shows how preferences with respect to neighborhood racial composition contribute to residential segregation (Bobo and Zubrinsky 1996; Bruch and Mare 2006; Charles 2000; Charles 2006; Quillian and Pager 2001; Schelling 1971), drawing on social psychological theories about in-group preferences and out-group avoidance (Charles 2000; Charles 2006; Charles 2007; Clark 1992; Farley et al. 1978; Krysan et al. 2009), including avoidance based on racial stereotypes or perceived status differences. Yet this work provides little insight into alternatives – specifically, the preferences for neighborhood diversity that some may hold, their meanings, and how they matter for outcomes. Furthermore, while existing research on neighborhood racial preferences reveals patterns in respondents' ideal or suitable residential destination, few studies directly address the reasoning behind such preferences.

In this study, we draw on 264 in-depth interviews with 156 Black, White, and Hispanic parents of young children living in neighborhoods across the Cleveland and Dallas metropolitan

areas to examine how they think about neighborhood ethnic and racial composition. While previous research on neighborhood racial preferences has largely examined the preferences of individuals without regard to parenthood status, we focus on the preferences of parents with young children, as segregation in the U.S. is higher among families with children, compared to households without children (Iceland et al. 2010; Logan et al. 2001).

We find that across race, a sizable share of respondents explicitly, and typically unprompted, voiced a desire for neighborhood racial and ethnic diversity. Parents often motivated this preference by describing the benefits of diverse neighborhood environments for their children: cultivating skills interacting with racial or ethnic others that will be useful in the "real world"; nurturing tolerance and a propensity to "see beyond" color; and offering enriching experiences of ethnic difference. Such preferences are consistent with the relatively stable integration patterns of "global" neighborhoods in the U.S., in which Black, White, Asian and Latino residents are represented (Logan and Zhang 2010). Our findings speak to why parents might want to live in such contexts.

These ideas about diverse environments as beneficial for child development, expressed by parents across race/ethnicity, intersected with racial segregation and stratification in ways that shaped parents' understandings of diversity and hindered the realization of these ideals. Parents often framed diversity in reference to homogenous environments they or their peers had experienced, such that neighborhood diversity could convey relative advantage for Black and Hispanic parents – shielding them from the structural disadvantages of all-Black or all-Hispanic areas and the racial isolation of all-White areas – but create tradeoffs for White parents, for whom pursuing diversity often meant conceding preferences for areas near workplaces and preferred public school districts. In this paper we take seriously parents' expressed desire to live

in diverse neighborhoods, detailing the specific reasons for these aspirations. Yet appreciation for neighborhood diversity, as reflected in parent discourses, may not necessarily advance efforts to remedy systematic racial inequality if it does not strongly inform residential decisions (Berrey 2015; Smith and Mayorga-Gallo 2017). For most of our respondents, racial inequality produced conditions in which parents' positive views about neighborhood diversity remained idealized and aspirational.

Background

The structural sources of segregation—federal housing policy and associated patterns of investment and divestment, public housing siting, White violence against non-White would-be neighbors, and racial discrimination by residents, landlords, and real-estate interests—are well recognized (Goetz 2018; Hirsch 2009; Jackson 1987; Massey and Denton 1993). Likewise, racially-patterned economic inequality plays a role in circumscribing the housing options open to Black and Hispanic parents, relative to White parents, on average (Adelman 2005; Alba and Logan 1993; Iceland and Wilkes 2006).

In addition to these important factors, there is also a near consensus in the segregation literature that neighborhood racial composition preferences, however constrained, play a role in shaping broader residential patterns (Bobo and Zubrinsky 1996; Bruch and Mare 2006; Charles 2000; Charles 2006; Quillian and Pager 2001; Schelling 1971). Though families do not move only according to their stated preferences (Adelman 2005; Havekes, Bader, and Krysan 2015), these preferences predict neighborhood racial composition outcomes (Charles 2006), and hypothetical models show that even slight differences across groups in individual preferences for same-race neighbors can result in persistent segregation (Bruch and Mare 2006; Schelling 1971;

Xie and Zhou 2012). Racial composition influences people's assessments of neighborhoods as well as their propensities to move or leave specific places (Bader and Krysan 2015; Goyette, Iceland and Weininger 2014; Krysan 2002a; Krysan 2002b; Krysan et al. 2009). However, questions remain about how parents understand the meaning of neighborhood racial composition, and how these understandings matter for neighborhood aspirations and outcomes.

Neighborhood Racial Preferences

A considerable body of research has examined how neighborhood racial composition preferences vary by race. Typically, this work analyzes how respondents evaluate hypothetical neighborhoods[1] (Charles 2000; Charles 2006; Krysan et al. 2009), often asking which of several levels of racial mixing at the block level they would prefer (Charles 2000; Charles 2006; Farley et al. 1978; Krysan 2002b; Krysan and Farley 2002), or asking respondents to draw their ideal neighborhood racial mix (Bruch and Mare 2006; Charles 2000). This literature finds that, on average, White individuals prefer neighborhoods with a plurality of White residents, with estimates ranging from about 50 to 80 percent White, depending upon the metropolitan area (Charles 2000 and 2006; Farley et al. 1978; Krysan 2002b). Black individuals' ideal neighborhoods demonstrate slightly lower in-group preferences compared with Whites'. Studies converge around the finding that Blacks' ideal neighborhoods range from around 40% (Charles 2006) up to a slight majority of Black residents (Farley and Frey 1994; Farley et al. 1978; Zubrinsky and Bobo 1996). Black individuals also often report *willingness* to live in predominately White or even all-White areas (Charles 2006; Krysan and Farley 2002). This research has identified patterns in neighborhood racial preferences among representative

[1] Some recent studies have shifted away from purely hypothetical preferences, such as research in Detroit and Chicago which ask respondents where they would "seriously consider" and "never consider" looking for a home, using a list of specific metro-area communities (Bader and Krysan 2015; Krysan and Bader 2007).

samples, but it is less suited to exploring the beliefs and frameworks underlying these preferences. Rich narratives captured in in-depth interviews are needed to complement these findings from survey research by drawing out people's ideas about the benefits and drawbacks of different neighborhood compositions.

To interpret the findings from survey research, the literature on neighborhood racial preferences has largely focused on why individuals might be attracted to same-race neighbors or avoid racial others. Drawing on social psychological theories, some have posited strong "in-group identity"—sometimes conceptualized as racial solidarity or "neutral ethnocentrism"—as a reason that some individuals across race might seek relatively homogenous neighborhoods (Clark 1992; Clark and Ledwith 2007).[2]

For White people, avoidance of Black and Hispanic neighbors may be motivated by the belief that Black or Hispanic presence reflects negative neighborhood characteristics (Charles 2007; Krysan 2002b). Research shows that White people view Black residents as a proxy for neighborhood crime, poverty, and risk of property devaluation (Clark 1992; Emerson, Chai and Yancey 2001; Harris 1999; Quillian and Pager 2001; Sampson and Raudenbush 2004). However, the role of direct racial prejudice cannot be discounted (Charles 2006; Zubrinsky and Bobo 1996). White people's stereotypes about Black and Hispanic neighbors, as well as a sense that integration lessens their group's dominant position in the neighborhood (e.g., a desire to not be in the minority), predict lower preferences for Black and, to a lesser extent, Hispanic neighbors (Bobo and Zubrinsky 1996; Charles 2006, 2007; Krysan 2002b; Krysan et al. 2009; Zubrinsky and Bobo 1996).

[2] Charles and Bobo show that Latino immigrants, as compared to native born Latinos, in Los Angeles express a greater desire to live nearer to co-ethnics for reasons of shared language and culture (Zubrinsky and Bobo 1996; Charles 2007).

As with White people, Black individuals may view a greater share of White residents as indicating greater neighborhood resources and status, reflecting the dominant position of White Americans and relatively White neighborhoods (Charles 2006; Charles 2007; Harris 1999). However, for Black families, large shares of White residents may also present risks such as hostility or discomfort (Charles 2006; Krysan and Farley, 2002). Therefore, for non-Whites, a desire to avoid racism from neighbors or authorities or to minimize hostility, stereotyping, or profiling may drive preferences for same-race neighbors (Feagin and Sikes 1994; Krysan et al. 2009: 5; Krysan and Farley 2002).

The research described above draws on social psychological theories, views of race as a proxy for neighborhood resources, and concerns about racism, to show how various beliefs are associated with neighborhood composition preferences. However, we know little about how individuals themselves understand and describe the motivations underpinning their neighborhood composition preferences. Krysan (2002b) and Krysan and Farley (2002) use brief open-ended responses in survey data from the Multi-City Study of Urban Inequality, fielded in the mid-1990s, to explore how White individuals explain why they would leave integrated neighborhoods and how Black individuals explain their neighborhood composition preferences, respectively. While this research provides perhaps the fullest understanding to date of how individuals think about neighborhood racial composition, we draw on qualitative interview data for recent, in-depth information on individuals' understandings of race and residential preferences. Additionally, we include Hispanic respondents, adding to the growing body of research examining racial preferences beyond Black and White (Bobo and Zubrinsky 1996; Charles 2006, Charles 2007; and Hall and Krysan 2017).

Our analysis further contributes to the literature on neighborhood composition preferences by focusing on families with children. Families with children are more racially segregated than other households (Ellen 2007; Iceland et al. 2010; Logan et al. 2001). Moreover, households with children have housing needs and preferences that may fundamentally differ from those of families without children (Owens 2016; Rossi 1955). Researchers have hypothesized that parents may prioritize child safety and school quality, which they may link to neighborhood racial make-up given prevailing racial stereotypes (Harris 1999). Additionally, parents may seek to influence their children's racial identity formation through neighborhood choices or social networks (Lacy 2004; Sweeney 2017). Yet the role of parental ideas about race have not been sufficiently explored in the neighborhood preferences literature—a notable shortcoming given the longstanding associations between race and place, and the consequences of residential location for children's trajectories (Leventhal and Brooks-Gunn 2000).

Previous research has examined parents' ideas about race as related to decisions about schools (Billingham and Hunt 2016; Condliffe, Boyd and DeLuca 2015; Johnson and Shapiro 2003; Kimelberg and Billingham 2013; Lareau and Goyette 2014; Posey-Maddox 2014; Roda and Wells 2012; Saporito and Lareau 1999). In this paper, we focus on neighborhood assessments. Particularly in urban areas, school and neighborhood racial compositions differ (Bischoff and Tach 2018), as not all parents use the neighborhood schools, and not all residents are parents of school-aged children. Moreover, recent research finds that school districts offering more school choice options are less residentially segregated (Rich, Candipan, and Owens 2018), suggesting that parents may conceptualize neighborhood and school racial composition differently. We focus on parents' discussions of neighborhood racial composition, building on research that shows that places of residence offer resources, exposures, social contacts, role-

models, and neighboring relationships that may be meaningful for parents and children (Leventhal and Brooks-Gunn 2000). While neighborhoods serve as far more than just school catchments, parents' perceptions about school choices undoubtedly play an important role in residential decisions, and parents' neighborhood racial preferences may be at odds with their desired schools, creating tradeoffs.

Existing studies offer mixed evidence about how and whether the presence of children affects residential mobility into or out of racially-mixed neighborhoods. While some analyses suggest that parenthood is associated with greater avoidance of Black neighbors (Goyette, Iceland and Weininger 2014), others, based on different data sets and measures, show negative associations (Krysan 2002b) or no association (Crowder 2000; South and Crowder 1998). Yet, as noted above, such studies do not allow investigation of the attitudes, preferences, strategies, or tradeoffs underlying observed aggregate outcomes for parents.

Appreciating Diversity

While previous research is driven by expectations that people favor same-race neighbors, less has been done to investigate and theorize alternatives. Why might parents prefer neighborhoods with at least some other-race neighbors? A broad range of studies shows that individuals' ideal neighborhoods demonstrate preferences for some level of same-race neighbors, but rarely for a fully homogenous neighborhood. Krysan's (2002) analysis of brief open-ended survey responses finds that African-American respondents identified "positive effects of integration" including a view that multiracial neighborhoods foster improved race relations. Overall, however, existing frameworks are less suited to explaining why survey results consistently show relatively high preferences for racially heterogeneous neighborhoods across racial/ethnic groups.

The literature on colorblind racism (Bonilla Silva 2003) leads us to expect that White respondents would express colorblind ideologies when speaking about neighborhoods. Colorblind ideologies expressed by White people and dominant institutions like courts and corporations deny the salience of race and its role in stratification (Bonilla-Silva 2003; Hughey, Embrick, Doane 2015: 1348). In the residential preferences context, Whites subscribing to colorblind ideologies might express a willingness to live in heterogeneous neighborhoods in the hypothetical – claiming race is unimportant in their decision-making – while nevertheless gravitating towards predominantly-White, privileged spaces.

A growing literature in critical diversity studies offers an alternative angle that may help explain why individuals' stated ideal neighborhoods are rarely fully homogenous. This research has identified the development of a "diversity ideology" as an alternative to or variant of a "colorblind ideology." Diversity ideology conceptualizes racial and ethnic diversity as an asset within White spaces (Embrick 2011; Mayorga-Gallo 2014). Research shows that such views are held by corporate managers, elite college students, gentrifiers in urban or rural neighborhoods, and middle-class White parents sending their children to urban schools (Berrey 2015; Brown-Saracino 2004 and 2010; Embrick 2011; Kimelberg and Billingham 2013; Mayorga-Gallo 2014; Posey-Maddox 2014; Smith and Mayorga-Gallo 2017; Underhill 2018a; Warikoo 2016). One line of this research shows how a dedicated contingent of upper-middle-class White parents seek cross-race exposure for their children, such as by sending them to integrated schools or spending time in multiracial public spaces like parks (Underhill 2018a) in order to nurture "non racist" children or provide cultural enrichment or preparation for adulthood (Kimelberg and Billingham 2013; Posey-Maddox 2014; Underhill 2018a). This literature focuses primarily on efforts of middle- and upper-middle class White parents to expose their children to non-White spaces.

How might these views extend to neighborhood preferences among both White and non-White parents? While previous research suggests that positive views about "diversity" are now mainstream (Bell and Hartmann 2007), we know less about the broader reach of diversity ideology among parents and its relevance for neighborhood choice.

In this study, we examine understandings of neighborhood racial composition among a class- and race-diverse sample of parents. Based on our finding that a substantial share of parents expresses a preference for neighborhood diversity, we focus on two research questions. First, how do parents perceive neighborhood diversity and its potential benefits? Second, how do parents' understandings of neighborhood diversity vary by race, and how do views of diversity inform residential outcomes?

Data and Methods

This study draws on 264 in-depth, semi-structured interviews with 156 parents, interviewed in two waves. We selected a random sample of Cuyahoga County, Ohio and Dallas County, Texas census block groups, stratified by income and racial composition and with an oversample of lower- and middle-income block groups. From these block groups, we randomly selected addresses and invited households with at least one child between the ages of three and eight to participate in the study. The total two-year response rate was 79.6 percent. (See Table 1 for information about respondents' demographic characteristics.)

Table 1: Respondent Characteristics (N=156)

	Count	Percent
City		
Cleveland	73	47%
Dallas	83	53%
Race		
Black/African American	77	49%
Hispanic/Latino	41	26%
White	36	23%
Asian	2	1%
Current marital status		
Married	69	44%
Unmarried	87	56%
Education level		
High school or less	52	37%
Some college/Associate's	59	42%
Bachelor's or higher	30	21%
Income		
10th percentile	$8,520	
Median	$28,200	
90th percentile	$98,000	

Initial interviews were completed by a team of interviewers, including the authors, during summer 2013, and follow up interviews were conducted in summer 2014. Researchers interviewed the person identified as the primary caregiver of the child(ren), typically the mother. Interviews were generally between two and three hours long and conducted in the respondent's home.

In the interviews, we took an inductive approach, encouraging respondents to reveal what factors were salient to their neighborhood preferences and aspirations, rather than asking about a prescribed list of factors. Interviewers also asked direct questions about respondents' housing and neighborhood preferences and about their perceptions of their current home and neighborhood. All interviewers received training in narrative or empathetic interviewing techniques (DeLuca, Clampet-Lundquist and Edin 2016), which are designed to elicit open-

ended stories and respondents' grounded perspectives and experiences. Field researchers listened with neutral engagement as respondents narrated the story of their lives, on their own terms. We indicated interest in the full range of respondents' perspectives and sought to minimize risks that respondents would feel judged or persuaded to say things we wanted to hear. Interviews involved narrations of personal and detailed stories over hours. We deepened rapport through repeated engagement with respondents over the course of the study. This research approach has yielded insights into normatively-laden features of social life, making it well-suited for studying ideas about neighborhood race (DeLuca, Clampet-Lundquist and Edin 2016).

Interviewers were trained to ask about the "mix of people" in the respondents' actual neighborhood and the "mix of people" the respondent would prefer for their neighborhood,[3] and, for respondents who did not bring up race in response to these questions, to ask directly about racial and ethnic composition. Interviewers were guided to elicit detailed responses and ask follow-up questions. Though the interview guide did not include direct questions about respondents' preferences for or beliefs about diversity, it was designed to allow constructs of this kind to emerge from responses to open-ended questions and probes.[4]

All interviews were transcribed verbatim. We analyzed similarities and differences across racial and ethnic group and income. We inductively identified themes through reading and

[3] Neighborhood preferences discussed in this paper reflect respondents' own ideas about what constitutes a "neighborhood." This grounded approach is appropriate for uncovering parental ideas about the meaning and significance of racial composition and diversity in residential contexts. Parent responses make clear that neighborhood racial make-up is meaningful to them in terms of social contact with or exposure to neighbors for children. However, parents may have different understandings about the geographic scale at which this might occur, variation that should be explored in future research.

[4] Our interview team was racially mixed though majority White, and we did not design the study to match field researchers and respondents by race or ethnicity. Our interview approach was designed to address this potential limitation and to encourage respondents' candor, as described above. As in-depth interviewing involves extended rapport building, often over several hours, race-matching may be less consequential for our study than for large survey-based studies.

discussing many of the interviews. From these themes, we developed a detailed code book and coded transcripts using qualitative data analysis software. Codes captured respondents' perceptions and preferences with respect to neighborhood composition, including race/ethnicity. For example, the code "DIVERSITY" captured any statements about neighborhood diversity, whether applied to a specific neighborhood or expressed in more general terms. During the coding period we held weekly meetings to discuss coding and clarify decision rules so as to increase uniformity; 12% of transcripts were read by multiple team members to ensure consistency. The racial/ethnic categories used throughout this paper refer to respondents' self-identification.

We examined parents' understandings of neighborhood racial composition in two large metropolitan counties – Cuyahoga County and Dallas County – which were chosen because they provide considerable variation in terms of region, economic development, population composition, housing stock, and residential segregation. Cuyahoga County encompasses the city of Cleveland, a traditional Midwestern rustbelt city, and some surrounding suburbs. Cleveland is a relatively poor city within a relatively poor regional economy, which impacts landlord behavior and rental options (Garboden et al, 2018). Cuyahoga County's residents are predominantly non-Hispanic White (61%) and Black (30%). By contrast, Dallas County is a large Southwestern metropolitan county, with a growing regional economy and lower poverty. It also has a larger Hispanic population (39%), along with Black (23%) and non-Hispanic White populations (32%) (US Census 2014). Compared to Cleveland, Dallas also has newer housing stock, with a larger share of single-family units (Garboden et al, 2018). The Cleveland metropolitan area is among the most segregated in the country with respect to Black-White separation and Black isolation,[5]

[5] As of 2010, the Cleveland-Elyria-Mentor metropolitan area had the 8th highest Black-White dissimilarity among metros with large Black populations (Dissimilarity index (D)=72; Black isolation index (i) =64.7). For the Dallas

while Dallas has lower Black-White segregation but relatively high Hispanic-White segregation (Logan and Stults, 2011). While our analysis was open to differences between metropolitan areas, we found similar themes in both field sites.

Findings

Preferences for Diversity

When discussing neighborhood preferences, a substantial share of respondents from each racial/ethnic group—51% of Black respondents, 36% of White respondents, and 20% of Hispanic respondents— raised racial/ethnic diversity as an ideal, sometimes repeatedly and without direct questioning by interviewers (see Table 2). For example, when asked about her preference for "the ideal mix of a neighborhood," Rhonda, a Black mother from the Dallas area, said, "a little bit of Blacks, Whites, Hispanics, Indian, African, Jamaican, uh a little bit of everybody." She spoke approvingly of several specific suburbs where she would consider living, as having this "nice mix." These parents offered more than a straightforward denial of the salience of race as anticipated by previous research on colorblindness. Instead, across our two research sites and across race, they articulated preferences for neighborhood diversity, often rooted in understandings of diversity as beneficial for children.

Metropolitan area, Black-White segregation is lower (D=55.1; Black isolation index (i)=37.1). However, Hispanic-White segregation is relatively high in Dallas; it has the 12th highest dissimilarity of the 50 metros with the largest Hispanic populations (D=51.9) and the the 25th highest out of 50 metros in terms of Hispanic isolation ((i)=46.6) **(**Logan and Stults 2011).

Table 2: Share of Parents Expressing a Preference for Diversity, by Race

	Desiring Diversity
All Parents (n=154)*	40% (n=62)
By Race/Ethnicity	
Black (n=77)	51% (n=41)
Hispanic (n=41)	20% (n=8)
White (n=36)	36% (n=13)

**These percentages reflect the proportion of parents who expressed a preference for neighborhood diversity during the interview. However, because our interview guide did not include direct questions about neighborhood diversity (as described in the data and methods section), these numbers do not necessarily reflect the total number of respondents who might feel positively about diversity.*

Ideas of child development were often central in the accounts of parents expressing a desire for diversity. When we asked Jessica, a White mother living in Dallas, about her neighborhood preferences, she clarified, "Are we talking about me by myself or are we talking about me with my child?" She then shared her view of the ideal neighborhood racial mix for her daughter:

> Okay with my child, a real even mix, not too much of any one thing. I would like it to be real even. If I lived on a street and I could choose I would say let's have Caucasian, Black, Hispanic, Asian, Caucasian, Black, Hispanic…just like that. If I was in a perfect world that is how I would do it. Culturally diverse.

Parents believed diverse neighborhoods would provide valuable skills and experiences that would benefit their individual children.

A larger proportion of Black respondents expressed a desire for neighborhood diversity relative to White and, particularly, Hispanic respondents. Yet, among those respondents who expressed an appreciation for diversity, we saw clear parallels in the reasoning underlying these preferences and in their shared views about diversity's import for child development. Across

race and class, three themes (summarized in Table 3) repeatedly emerged as parents described the benefits of diversity: first, diverse environments provided valuable preparation for the "real world"; second, engaging with racial and ethnic others could teach children to be tolerant and look beyond stereotypes; and third, diversity could provide multicultural learning and enrichment.[6]

Table 3: Reasons for Valuing Neighborhood Diversity among Respondents Who Expressed a Preference for Neighborhood Diversity, by Race*

Neighborhood Diversity Logics	Description	Parents who Valued Diversity who Expressed Each Logic, by Race	
Preparation For the Real World	Diversity will nurture human capital, useful for children's future	Black Hispanic White	32% (n=13) 25% (n=2) 54% (n=7)
Teaching Tolerance	Diversity will teach kids to respect others, avoid racial stereotypes	Black Hispanic White	29% (n=12) 13% (n=1) 54% (n=7)
Cultural Exchange and Enrichment	Diversity provides enrichment through exposure to different cultures	Black Hispanic White	42% (n=17) 25% (n=2) 39% (n=5)

**Logics are not mutually exclusive. Total of 8 cases state that they value neighborhood diversity, but we have limited data on their reasoning. Percentages do not reflect the percent of parents who might subscribe to each logic, but rather the percent who brought them up during their interview.*

Preparation for the "Real World"

Parents envisioned neighborhood diversity as providing a source of capital for children to draw upon as they entered the "real world." They described how growing up in a diverse neighborhood would lead their children to be comfortable in future racially-mixed contexts. Gail, a Black grandmother in Dallas, told us that she wished to live in a more "mixed neighborhood" "where there's options" for her grandson. Gail described her reasoning:

> Because the world consists of everybody, everyone…he can go in any

[6] These themes or logics were not mutually exclusive; parents often expressed multiple themes within one interview. Also, a few respondents (5 Black respondents; 2 Hispanic; 1 White) clearly expressed a preference for neighborhood racial diversity but did not convey during the interview the reasons or meanings behind this preference.

> surrounding and …he feels comfortable with anyone. And that's what we want him to be able to… Because sometimes if you just in that box of just one, and then you out of that box, then you're like you know how kids stare when they see somebody that's different. I don't like that.

Gail described her comfort with people of other races as a result of her childhood: "I have never had a problem with race… there was no one that my mom couldn't ever talk to. It didn't matter who you were, how much money you made." Gail hoped to nurture this sensibility in her children and grandchildren, saying she wanted them to "be the same. They have all kinds of friends. It don't matter… *I want them to be comfortable where they go"* (emphasis added).

Parents envisioned their children entering a world in which cross-race interactions were inevitable, and they saw neighborhood diversity as a way to prepare their children for this reality. Kenya, a Black mother in Cleveland, said that she would prefer to live in a "mixed race" neighborhood. Kenya described wanting her children to grow up around "a whole bunch" of racial and ethnic groups so they would "know how to deal in society with different people." She elaborated:

> Because if they grow up with all Blacks they're not going to know how to deal with other races…if I grow them up around all Caucasian people they ain't going to know how to act around other African-Americans and Puerto Ricans. It's going to be a different situation. But if they can grow up around different people. They friends with a Puerto Rican. They got an Arab friend down the street. You know what I mean? They learn of different cultures and know how to deal with different people in society.

Parents like Kenya described racially mixed neighborhoods as a training ground for a diverse world. Parents described how such training would benefit their children in their future pursuits, including in college and the workplace. Samantha, a Cleveland-area Black mother, described:

> I would prefer that my children be exposed to all different types of people because when I go to work I'm exposed to all different types of people. If they go to college they're going to be exposed to all different cultures and so growing up around one culture and not knowing how to interact or anything with other cultures would actually be a stifle for them, I think.

By contrast, parents perceived that growing up in a racially homogeneous environment would handicap their children when they entered the "real world." Rocío, a Hispanic mother in Dallas, reflected, "Why am I gonna make it even harder for them? To get acquainted to just a certain race, and then have them grow up and have life hit them like, 'That's not how it works.' So it's like, might as well teach them that now." Likewise, Jim and Melinda, a White couple in Dallas, worried that their homogenous neighborhood would not prepare their daughter to enter a diverse world. Melinda explained:

> I like the idea of my daughter growing up knowing a ton of different kind of people… I just think it would be great for her to have a more diverse environment. And I think that would make somebody more prepared for being an adult and living in the real world and not thinking, hey, life is the same 10 White kids you know? I just, I don't, I don't like that.

Parents like Melinda thought that socializing across race was important to prepare children for adulthood in a diverse world. Parents drew on this belief to justify their interest in raising their children in diverse neighborhoods.

Teaching Tolerance

Parents also viewed racially mixed neighborhoods as springboards for values of tolerance, empathy, and interpersonal respect, as well as for nurturing their children's ability to "see beyond" color. Justin, a White father from the Cleveland area, liked his current neighborhood in Shaker Heights, which he described as "real diverse." He told us: "I think that's important... Just for the boys growing up, they've got to learn that you have to treat everybody with respect, even if they come from a different background than us." Justin believed that through living in such a "diverse" place, his children could learn tolerance and a sense of how to get by in the "melting pot" of the U.S.

Parents wanted to show their children that people in other racial and ethnic groups were not so different from themselves. Nikki, a Black mother living in the Cleveland area, said that her ideal neighborhood would exhibit "a mixed culture" so her children could "get to know different ethnic backgrounds and stuff." She continued:

> It's fun sometimes to go down to your Puerto Rican friend's house and they got them beans, going on, and they partying. You know it's fun to see that. You know y'all are like us. *You all aren't so much different from us, this is what we do* (emphasis added).

Parents like Nikki saw diverse neighborhoods as a means to develop a sense that people, regardless of race, were fundamentally the same.

Parents explicitly rejected racial prejudice and hoped to teach their children to reject racial stereotypes. For example, Tonya, a Black mother in Cleveland, told us that she considered diversity when thinking about where to live. When we asked her to explain further, she told us:

> I just want a diverse neighborhood. I want [my kids] to be able to, I don't want them to have any judgment or stereotypes about different people. And if you grow up around that [a diverse neighborhood] then that kills that immediately. Cause you don't get a chance to build that stereotype in your head because now you're playing with this kid every day and that's exactly who they are. [It] is like you will see it and be like, if it's comical you might laugh, but you won't take it to heart because you know that's not the case because you grew up around this kid. So that's one of the main things, the diversity of the neighborhood.

Tonya believed that a diverse neighborhood would facilitate cross-race interaction and prevent her children from judging others based on race.

Similarly, when we asked Jessica, a White mother from Dallas with mixed-race children, "what would your ideal mix of people in the neighborhood be like?" she told us,

> I do not want [my daughter] to think that these people only do this and these people only do, because you hear it all the time, 'Well, Black people only eat chicken and watermelon and Mexicans only eat beans and rice.' I do not want her to grow up with that mentality whatsoever. I want her to be culturally diverse and be able to fit in wherever she wants because she is Hispanic.

Jessica believed a diverse neighborhood would develop a cultural fluency in her children. Parents drew on ideas about interracial contact nurturing tolerance and open-mindedness as they articulated their preferences for diverse neighborhoods.

Cultural Exchange and Enrichment

Finally, parents equated diversity with cultural differences and described how diverse neighborhoods could offer experiences of ethnic difference. For example, Bernice, a Black

mother from the Dallas suburbs told us "I wouldn't dare just want to stay around a bunch of African American people ever." She explained that living near a diverse group of people, you "learn new things" or "try new foods and experience different cultures." She opined, "It's good when you're around different races and stuff."

In addition to providing enrichment, parents described cross-cultural exchange as beneficial for their children's education. When June, a Black mother from the Cleveland suburb Garfield Heights, spoke to us about her "ideal neighborhood mix," she said, "Pretty much all the different races… to get to know different cultures and different backgrounds… if you actually think about it, that will teach your child different languages and other upbringings and stuff, and it can easily rub off and make them a better person." Similarly, when asked about her ideal neighborhood "racial mix," Regina, a Hispanic mother from the Dallas suburbs, responded:

> I would really want near me … Italians or just different cultures, so I wouldn't want just one specific [group] – Hispanic or White people. I want mixtures of them just so the kids can know other cultures to where 'Oh, look, let's go eat this type of food or let's go eat this type of food'…And I want them to eat other stuff and see other people, look at their religions, look at their culture-wise, their history, their side of the wars, what they look up to and how their life expectations are compared to our expectations. I want them to see all that stuff.

When discussing their preferences for diversity, especially around themes of cultural enrichment, most parents highlighted ethnic diversity beyond the Black/White (or, in Dallas, Black/White/Hispanic) divide characteristic of their metropolitan areas. Susan, a White mother in Dallas, commented that it had been "really neat" for her children to learn about "all these different cultures and religions and things that – you know, we grew up one way and they're like,

what is Diwali day? It's very interesting. It's great education for them…It's just fun, you know." Likewise, Annalise, a White mother, spoke approvingly of her Cleveland neighborhood, saying, "a family of Chinese people live down the street, there's actually a couple of them, we see them all the time walking with their kids. There's Puerto Ricans down the street, there's Whites, like it's a diverse street. You see a lot of everything on this street." Annalise described how her daughters "can learn a lot from… different cultures and foods and stuff like that—values, beliefs."

Residential Segregation and Parents' Understandings of Diversity

Though parents across race spoke similarly about the benefits of neighborhood diversity for their children, parents' understandings were based in dramatically different residential experiences in segregated and unequal spaces. The three logics discussed above were contextualized by these structural realities. White parents generally framed neighborhood diversity in contrast to all-White neighborhoods, describing it as an abstract ideal or as a desirable, though not essential, amenity. White parents rarely described racial diversity as a marker of relative advantage—perhaps reflecting the taken-for-granted nature of their relative neighborhood and racial privilege. By contrast, Black respondents in both metropolitan areas, and especially in Cleveland, live in a context of high racial isolation and segregation. Our interviews reflected this: for Black parents, segregated and disadvantaged Black neighborhoods generally served as a reference point when discussing diversity. Some Black and Hispanic respondents explicitly voiced a view of diversity as an indicator of neighborhood quality, often reflecting firsthand knowledge of how neighborhood segregation and disadvantage have gone hand in hand. Ideas about diversity were thus wrapped up in parents' lived experiences of racial inequality.

When we questioned Suzy, a White Clevelander, about her "ideal community" in terms of "mix of folks" she responded, "It's funny because I was just talking to my husband about that too… Because… where I grew up there wasn't a whole lot of diversity." Suzy voiced a view of neighborhood diversity as a means to *teach tolerance,* helping her children see that across racial/ethnic groups, people "do the same things" and "everybody is equal," which would help them when they got to college. Suzy's yearning to prepare her children for a multiracial real world was shared with parents of other races, yet residential segregation set up Suzy's reference point. Suzy framed the alternative to diversity as an all-White community, which she explained was "not reality…You're not seeing the whole picture."

When we interviewed her, Suzy lived in Lakewood, a Cleveland suburb that was 85% non-Hispanic White, 4% Hispanic and 7% Black. Yet because her envisioned alternative was all-White, like the area where she grew up, she portrayed her neighborhood as diverse, adding, "I think it's neat for the girls with all the diversity that they see." She repeated the same descriptor, "neat," or culturally enriching, as she described how her daughters have some friends with "different backgrounds". She elaborated, "I think that's what's neat, is that you're surrounded around other people so it's not strange that, you know, they're Asians, or the Arabs are around." Suzy's vision of diversity, then, was not so much an integrated Black/White neighborhood reflective of the metropolitan area's demographics, but a culturally enriching multiethnic space including "Asian, Arab, Black, Caucasian," as she put it – even if that space was almost entirely White.

Black parents expressed similar neighborhood diversity logics as White parents—voicing a desire for diversity for their children's human capital, moral development, and enrichment. For example, Shantay and Vanessa, Black mothers in Cleveland and Dallas, respectively, articulated

the view of neighborhood diversity as offering preparation for their children's future. Yet their reference points were homogenously Black areas. As Shantay stated, "I think diversity is good, period… Because if you grow up only seeing Black and that's all you know then you'll be shocked when you go someplace else." Likewise, Vanessa told us: "The truth is the world is not just Black people." She described her fiancé's upbringing in a low-income Black neighborhood, where "there were no White people at all," as a hindrance: "He didn't know how to interact, how to talk, nothing, because he never had to. Well that's not the world." Having seen how her fiancé had struggled to get along with people in a diverse environment once he became an adult, Vanessa hoped to give her daughter an alternative to that all-Black environment.

"Racial Mix" as a Marker of Relative Advantage

For some Black and Hispanic parents—unlike most White parents—their own negative experiences in segregated, disadvantaged neighborhoods bolstered their preferences for neighborhood diversity.[7] For these parents, neighborhood diversity represented relative neighborhood advantage, echoing the racial proxy thesis often advanced in the racial preferences literature (e.g. Harris 1999), as well as a resource for positive child development. For example, Gabrielle, a Black mother living in the Dallas suburbs, spoke about children's opportunities in predominantly White areas: "They have better schools; I'm just going to be honest. They're more focused. The neighborhoods are a lot better; not as much crime – there's crime everywhere, but it's a lot better."

[7] Of parents who described valuing diversity, about one-third of Black parents (14 of 41) and half of Hispanic parents (4 of 8) described neighborhood diversity as a marker of neighborhood advantage. Two White parents (of 13) spoke of experiences living in specific predominately Black or Hispanic neighborhoods, which they associated with relative neighborhood disadvantages like crime and lower quality schools. For these two White parents, diversity was also a marker of neighborhood quality, in addition to being desirable for its other child benefits.

Diversity conveyed safe and stable communities with high-quality institutions, as opposed to places like the predominantly Black east side of Cleveland, which respondents told us had a reputation for poverty, crime, and social disorganization—or what Chuck, a Black father from Cleveland, described as "drama." Chuck described disliking behaviors—people not watching their children or not taking care of their houses—that he observed during his upbringing "down in the projects" on the East Side. This was his point of reference as he explained, "Not to be racist against my own race… I just like to live around a mixture of people." While parents' statements often seemed to attribute the conditions of the neighborhood to its racial composition, this did not necessarily mean that these respondents were averse to Black communities in general—just what these spaces often represented in their racially stratified reality. Chuck, for example, clarified that he would welcome living in a middle-class Black suburb like Garfield Heights, which he deemed more stable and "civilized."

Likewise, a few Hispanic respondents shared negative impressions of specific poor and predominantly Hispanic neighborhoods. Marina, a Dallas mother, described specific Hispanic neighborhoods as notorious for drunkenness or rowdy behavior and opined that Asians and Whites are probably "calmer." Jennifer also wanted to avoid all-Hispanic areas, in part because she had lived in Hispanic neighborhoods with high crime. She also wanted a reprieve from nosy neighbors she attributed to "the Hispanic or Latino culture." She explained, "they're always checking, like, what time do you leave, what time do you come back, what are you doing?" With a self-conscious laugh, Jennifer told us about her ideal neighborhood: "I would have to go with White and Black, Asian, anything but [all] Latinos." In her current location, Jennifer enjoyed seeing her children play with non-Hispanic children and speaking both English and Spanish: "I like that, that they interact with different cultures, different people." Thus, in addition to

appreciating the opportunities for cross-race interaction that a diverse neighborhood afforded her children, Jennifer preferred a diverse neighborhood because she associated a preponderance of Hispanic neighbors with negative neighborhood characteristics.

In contrast to Black and Hispanic parents, White parents' aspirations for neighborhood diversity were not motivated by concerns about the quality of homogenously same-race (majority-White) neighborhoods. Given persistent place stratification by race (Logan and Molotch 1987; Sampson 2012; Sharkey 2013), most White parents did not expressly perceive predominantly White neighborhood destinations as low-quality – they did not, for example, note that such areas had poor-performing schools or reputations for violence. Rather, their only quibble with predominately White areas was that they lacked the advantages of a diverse neighborhood, such as preparation for the "real world" and opportunities to teach tolerance and provide cultural enrichment to their children, as described above.

Diversity as a Strategy to Avoid Racism

If Black parents, and some Hispanic parents, conceptualized non-White neighborhoods as undesirable given their marginalization, neglect, and disinvestment by systems of power, why would they express preferences for diverse neighborhoods as opposed to highly-resourced, predominantly-White neighborhoods? A few Black respondents expressed a preference for diversity to avoid feeling socially isolated or facing racism in all-White neighborhoods,[8] such that multiracial neighborhoods provided a favorable alternative (Charles 2006; Charles 2007; Krysan and Farley 2002). Kenya, for example, a Black mother in Cleveland introduced above,

[8] Such concerns were explicitly described as a benefit of diverse neighborhoods by 12% (5 of 41) of Black respondents who described diversity as an ideal. This theme did not come up for the eight Hispanic parents who valued diversity. However, in the full sample, approximately one in five of all Black and Hispanic respondents voiced concerns about encountering racism in specific (generally predominately White) neighborhoods, describing the prejudice and discriminatory treatment they or their social network ties had experienced from neighbors, classmates, and police officers.

recalled living in a place where "everywhere that me and my kids went we was the only African American family. It just got, people look at you different. It's just, it got tiresome." As such, she wanted to live in a diverse neighborhood: "You can stick me in the melting pot. I'm good with that…"

Accordingly, for a few Black parents, diverse neighborhood contexts enabled them and their children to avoid predominately Black neighborhoods and benefit from diversity without feeling "singled out." Ella, a Black mother from Cleveland, described two neighborhoods where she aspired to live as "racially diverse," adding, "That's a big thing for me. I don't want to put my kids in a situation where they feel awkward or like they're not welcome or unrepresented." Similarly, Gabrielle, a Black mother in Dallas introduced above who felt that White neighborhoods were safer and had "better schools," was wary of homogenously White neighborhoods. She described her ideal neighborhood, "I want it to be mixed…a little bit of everybody in the neighborhood. I don't want my kids to walk outside and feel kind of awkward." In this sense, neighborhood diversity is understood by some Black families as a way to secure a relatively advantaged neighborhood environment while avoiding some of the risks of homogenously White neighborhoods, such as racism and feeling "out of place" (Charles 2006; Krysan and Farley 2002).

From Ideal to Real: Barriers to Pursuing Neighborhood Diversity Preferences

A substantial share of parents across race expressed hopeful ideals about neighborhood diversity, based in large part on their understandings of its benefits for their children. However, very few parents described ideals about residential diversity motivating their residential moves *in practice*. In a context of structural constraints on parents' housing searches, parents' other preferences and needs generally took precedence over their diversity aspirations.

White Parents Who Value Diversity: What Motivates their Moves?

White respondents who expressed desires for neighborhood diversity rarely described prioritizing this preference in their housing searches. Reflecting broader patterns of racial wealth and income inequality, most White parents in our sample who valued diversity had relatively high incomes. [9] However, these higher-income White parents, who perhaps had the greatest ability to realize their neighborhood preferences, most commonly described prioritizing public school districts,[10] along with lower commute times to work, familiarity of area, and proximity to kin. These preferences often landed them in predominately White neighborhoods. Mary's example is illustrative. Mary a White mother, was unique among our respondents for a personal connection to civil rights and Black power movements, having grown up near a historically Black college in Washington, DC. Yet upon moving to Cleveland, she told us, she set her sights on living in Rocky River—a nearly all-White suburb—for the quality of its public schools, despite disliking the "wonder bread" character of the district.

As Mary's experience suggests, even for White parents who express a preference for neighborhood diversity, this diversity may be at most a bonus in the housing search, in contrast to other valued home or neighborhood traits. For example, Justin, a White father introduced above, also prioritized school and location when he and his wife first moved to Cleveland for work. They narrowed their housing search to Shaker Heights and Beachwood—suburbs within easy commuting distance that had been recommended by professional colleagues for their high-quality schools. Having happily settled in Shaker Heights, Justin described the city's racial and economic diversity as a "plus." He appreciated that Shaker Heights was a "real diverse

[9] 10 of the 13 White parents valuing diversity reported annual household incomes above the county median.
[10] Among parents who expressed a preference for diversity, 6 of the 10 higher-income White parents described public schools as one of their primary motivations for choosing their neighborhood. In addition, one prioritized being near a specific private school.

neighborhood," which he believed would provide "a good life skill" for his children "to learn how to get along with different types of people." However, he said, "I mean, if we had to live someplace where it was not as diverse, I don't think it would be a deal breaker but it's a nice – it's a nice thing to have." [11] In contrast, perceived school quality, followed by housing size and proximity to work, were non-negotiables for Justin and his wife.

Likewise, Suzy, introduced previously, valued diversity, yet was emphatic about prioritizing neighborhood safety and school district quality – characteristics that are themselves highly racialized (Billingham and Hunt 2016; Quillian and Pager 2001). When she discussed specific places she would consider living, she told us, "first, safety is very important… and then yeah what you're looking for in a house is important. And schools of course." As we probed her perceptions about neighborhood options, Suzy also made it clear to us that she would not move "farther out" beyond Lakewood because of her commute and that moving away from family was not desirable. While Suzy thought it would be "good to be in a community where there is some diversity, the "diversity" she talked about was abstract. As she articulated it, if she could shape the world to meet her ideals, she "wouldn't build a community where it's just, like, all White people." Yet this ideal remained disconnected from her perceived real-life options.

Catherine and her husband were one of just two White families who described prioritizing racial diversity—in addition to other goals—when searching for housing. Catherine, a White mother, loved living in Shaker Heights in large part because of its diversity. However, when describing her housing search, Catherine made clear that school quality served as a first-order priority. She explained that she and her husband had narrowed their choice to two school districts they viewed as high-quality, Shaker Heights and Bay Village, a suburb approximately

[11] As of 2010, the Shaker Heights population was about 55 percent White, just under 40 percent Black, and 5 percent Hispanic.

96% non-Hispanic White. Ultimately, Shaker's economic and racial integration, along with its proximity to their family, swayed their decision. Catherine told us, "You know, that was one of the reasons that we wanted to live here…I just wanted a more *real* environment." Speaking of the neighborhood they had lived in "pre-kids," which she described as "very homogenous," she told us, "I don't think we were taking that [homogeneity] into consideration as much as we would now. It's interesting that I think the decisions you make pre-kids and when you have kids." Catherine framed her desire for a more racially and economically diverse environment for her children as influential in her housing choice.

Additionally, Arlene, a White mother living in East Dallas, had bought her house before she had children, but as her daughter approached school age, she worried about her local public school's low ratings. While Arlene was clear that school quality would be her "main" criterion in choosing a new place to live, she pivoted, spontaneously, to discuss the racial and ethnic "mix" in a Dallas suburb she was eyeing. "Richardson is the only suburb that we would consider…It just sort of has a vibe and the community is just kind of a melting pot… I wouldn't feel like it was like total White flight." Arlene appreciated her own upbringing in multiethnic contexts and wanted a similar environment for her young daughter.

As these examples show, even for the affluent White families who were most emphatic about the value of multiracial contexts, diversity was one sought-after neighborhood trait among others. Thus, while White parents with economic means had the resources to realize their aspirations for neighborhood diversity, their pursuit of other neighborhood goods—especially public school districts—impeded this goal. Perhaps the exception in our sample of neighborhoods was Shaker Heights, a stably integrated suburb of Cleveland with schools well-regarded by affluent respondents. Moreover, explicit acknowledgement of the structural

inequalities shaping residential trade-offs, such as related to perceived school quality, was largely absent from parents' discussions.

Black and Hispanic Parents Who Value Diversity: What Motivates their Moves?

Reflecting larger patterns of racial inequality, the Black and Hispanic parents in our sample tended to face more constraints on their moves in terms of resources like income, search time, transportation options, and wealth, which often limited their abilities to enact their housing and neighborhood ideals.[12] These parents were more likely to experience moves that were "reactive" or necessitated by factors outside of their control, such as eviction, pest problems, a break-up, or a neighborhood shooting that left the parent feeling unsafe.[13] Reactive moves orient parents towards quickly finding an acceptable alternative to their current housing, leaving them little attention to dedicate to searching for housing aligned with their residential preferences (Harvey et al 2018), such as for a diverse neighborhood.

We illustrate some of these dynamics below. Shantay, a Black mother in Cleveland, valued neighborhood diversity and described an interest in living in Shaker Heights, a suburb known for racial diversity and good schools. However, she told us: "I couldn't pay Shaker taxes." When we first met her in 2013, she had just left her last rental, fed up with the bedbugs in her unit and desperate to avoid neighborhood crime: "I knew, since I had a kid, I wanted somewhere where I didn't look out the window and see drug dealers." She ended up in a place she could afford, but which did not reflect her ideals.

[12] Approximately half (20 of 41) of Black parents who voiced a preference for diversity reported incomes of less than 50% of the county median. About one quarter (10 of 41) were living "doubled up" with friends or family, often due to financial constraints. In doubled-up cases, neighborhood options were limited by the residential locations of the family and friends with whom they lived.

[13] Of the Black parents who expressed a preference for diversity, a majority (60% or 25 of 41) had landed in their current residence through some form of reactive move.

Similarly, Simone and Darnell, a mixed-race couple in Cleveland, described their ideal neighborhood composition as "a little bit of everything." However, their recent housing history consisted of a series of doubled-up households and reactive moves. When we met her in 2013, Simone told us she would never consider moving to Cleveland's East Side, saying it would be too far from her job and "like living in the hood. No White people live over there. There's nothing but Black people. And there is a lot of fights, a lot of guns, a lot of crack heads…That's why I said nowhere on the East Side period." However, by 2014, with limited finances, Darnell's criminal record, and a short time frame for their most recent move, they had landed in a unit on the East Side. Simone explained, "I wanted to stay on the west side but that's not how it worked out… the rent's cheap and it's the first place [we] could find so we're here."

Rocio, a Hispanic mother in Dallas, spoke vividly about wanting her children to live in a diverse neighborhood and learn from racial mixing, saying, "I think they would have more opportunity to grow as a person if they know different races and religions." Rocio has faced poverty and hardship—at times not even having enough to eat. When we met her, she was grateful for the steady income from her new husband's job and was relatively satisfied with her home and neighborhood. They lived near kin and co-workers—in a location chosen by her uncle on whom they depend for her husband's livelihood—so that her husband could get rides to work. So far, these demands, along with budget constraints, have determined Rocio's housing choices.

As these examples show, the Black and Hispanic parents in our sample often faced severe constraints to satisfying their preferences for diverse neighborhoods. Our sample did include some higher-income Black (8 of 41) and Hispanic (2 of 8) respondents who expressed desires for diversity. These parents had more means to attain racially mixed neighborhoods, yet often described neighborhood choices oriented around relatively affordable homeownership in suburbs

and proximity to family (Pattillo 2013).

Alternative Preferences

Some parents expressed alternative views or were less explicitly positive about the benefits of ethnic or racial mixing. Several (10 out of 41) Hispanic parents in our sample expressed positive sentiments about living near other Hispanic residents (in line with Zubrinsky and Bobo (1996) and Charles (2000, 2017)), often for reasons of cultural affinity. These preferences were not consistently driven by children's needs. For example, Fernando, a Spanish-speaking Hispanic father from the Dallas area, responded to our questions about racial mix as follows: "People feel more comfortable living amongst their own race, right?... you might have more communication with them because you speak the same language." Additionally, several Hispanic immigrants raised fears of deportation or police stops leading to immigration-related entanglements as reasons to avoid certain neighborhoods (see also Asad and Rosen 2018).

Finally, in addition to the ideas about diversity, about one-quarter of all respondents (38 of 156) indicated that they had no preferences regarding neighborhood racial/ethnic composition. These parents sometimes expressed pointed discourses of "colorblindness" (Bonilla-Silva 2003; Bonilla-Silva and Embrick 2001; Burke 2017), saying that race made no difference in their neighborhood preferences or choices and they only cared about the quality of the neighborhood and character of its residents. For example, Rafael and Aracelli, a Hispanic couple, said, "It doesn't matter to me if there's more Hispanics or more Black people; I just want somewhere peaceful and quiet." Hailey, a White mother, said, "It does not really matter your race – it matters how you live, the way you carry yourself." However, in contrast to these colorblind logics, the positive evaluations of neighborhood diversity described above show that many parents perceived and valued exposure to racial others, often for reasons related to their children.

Conclusion

Preferences about neighborhood racial composition have long been considered an important driver of residential segregation. Prior research on these preferences has mostly been animated by expectations about in-group attraction, out-group avoidance, the influence of stereotypes, and perceived associations between race and status (Bobo and Zubrinsky 1996; Krysan 2002b). Drawing on in-depth interview data from parents with young children in two metropolitan areas, we identify an important countercurrent to these themes: A substantial subset of parents pointedly expressed a desire to live in racially and ethnically mixed neighborhoods – a residential preference at odds with racial segregation.

Our findings extend the literature on colorblind racism in the context of residential decision-making. While parents in our sample tended to be silent on the connections between race, place, and inequality—as anticipated by scholarship on colorblind racism (Bonilla-Silva 2003)—they also went beyond colorblindness. Parents' positive evaluations of neighborhood diversity not only reflected a belief in racial difference, but construed such differences as valuable. Parents often linked neighborhood diversity to benefits for child development. These parents believed neighborhood diversity would prepare children for the "real world," prevent them from developing racial stereotypes, and enrich them culturally. Importantly, we found parallel logics expressed among Black, White, and some Hispanic respondents. While scholars have debated the consequences of multiracial exposure for stereotype development (Allport 1954; Pauker et al 2018; Pettigrew 1998), what our data make clear is that *parents themselves* express that multiracial contact for their children at the neighborhood level represents a good worth pursuing.

These views of neighborhood diversity as beneficial for individual children's development resonate with diversity ideologies, which conceptualize racial and ethnic diversity as an asset while failing to recognize structural inequalities in power and resources (Burke 2012, Embrick 2011, Mayorga-Gallo 2014). While most research on these discourses in other contexts has focused on affluent White individuals, the present study shows the reach of such narratives across class and race in the realm of neighborhood assessment and choice. Diversity ideologies reject overt racial animus but may not affirmatively dismantle institutionalized racial inequality (Bell and Hartmann 2007; Berrey 2015; Bonilla-Silva 2003; Burke 2012; Embrick 2011; Mayorga-Gallo 2014; Smith and Mayorga-Gallo 2017; Underhill 2018a; Warikoo 2016). In our sample, parents very rarely framed their stated desires for diverse neighborhoods explicitly in terms of the benefits of racial equity or even integration, instead highlighting the advantages they believed diverse residential contexts would have for their families (though their desire to prevent their children from internalizing racial stereotypes may, in part, reflect a desire to combat racial injustice). Additionally, when parents in our sample discussed the "mix" of their neighborhoods, they implied that racial or ethnic diversity reflected social inclusion in terms of neighbors' traditions, foodways, languages, and communication styles. This is consistent with a cultural view of race, which often downplays race as linked to social stratification (Berrey 2015).

Given the absence of attention to the broader context of racial and residential inequality, parents lack a framework for conceptualizing and tackling residential conditions that are at odds with their ideals. Higher-income White parents who stated an abstract preference for ethnically diverse neighborhoods often described moving to homogenously White neighborhoods because they prioritized other concerns; chief among these were public school districts, often along with relative proximity to work and/or family and other housing qualities. Perceived differences in

neighborhood institutions like schools are likely driven in part by real inequality in the level of historic investment in White and non-White communities (Massey and Denton 1993; Wilson 1987). Scholarship also finds that White parents assess school quality based on racial composition, preferring schools with fewer Black students even accounting for test scores, school safety, and quality of school facilities (Billingham and Hunt 2016). Although advantaged parents are well-equipped to achieve neighborhood diversity, perceptions of school and neighborhood quality – which may be driven by both racial stereotypes as well as systemic differences in school funding and community resources – stand in the way. We find little indication that parents, particularly White parents, consider how racial inequality structures these conditions.

Likewise, Black and Hispanic parents typically framed neighborhood diversity in contrast to predominately non-White neighborhoods, and they often linked the conditions of these neighborhoods with the racial composition of the residents, largely without discussing systemic racial inequality. For Black and Hispanic parents, compared to White parents, an additional meaning of diversity emerged, reflecting racial inequality and segregation: diversity as a marker of neighborhood advantage for Black and Latino parents—as well as a potential buffer from all-White spaces.[14]

Our findings suggest that policy has an important role to play in reducing the barriers parents face in pursuing more integrated neighborhoods. Currently, households with children have higher rates of segregation that households without children (Iceland et al 2010). However, our data show that many parents see benefits – often, specifically for their children – in living in

[14] Our findings are also consistent with the hypothesis that Hispanic and Asian-American residents are seen as "buffers" who soften the Black-White color line, rendering multiethnic places most attractive to all groups (Farley and Frey 1994; Logan and Zhang 2010).

integrated areas, but structural inequalities impedes this goal. Policy interventions should target this gap between aspirations and neighborhood outcomes. For higher-income parents, few real neighborhood options offer the full bundle of valued qualities (Adelman 2005; Havekes, Bader, and Krysan 2016) – neighborhood diversity, as well as amenities like high-quality school districts and desirable houses. This study underscores the importance of residential options such as Shaker Heights, a suburb in Cleveland known for stable racial integration and high-quality schools. Place-based investment might foster such real-world options, giving parents a better chance to realize their values. Conversely, lower-income parents find themselves making the most of limited resources, in metropolitan areas where neighborhood safety and school quality are segmented by race and class. For the most disadvantaged parents, their abilities to realize their preferences for neighborhood diversity are stymied by a strikingly *limited* amount of choice in where they end up—which often results in churning in high-poverty, racially segregated areas (DeLuca, Wood, and Rosenblatt, forthcoming). Supporting these parents' abilities to find, secure, and remain in housing in more integrated neighborhoods that are safe and have high-quality institutions should be an important policy goal. In sum, the preferences for neighborhood racial and ethnic diversity that we found across race and social class could serve as an important countercurrent to persistent residential segregation and policy interventions should work to unleash this potential.

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