

RACE, CLASS AND RESIDENTIAL PREFERENCES FOR URBAN NEIGHBORHOODS

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ABSTRACT

Racial and economic segregation are persistent problems across American cities, though both have declined in recent decades. One possible reason that levels of racial and economic segregation are declining is the redevelopment and gentrification occurring in many American cities. Redevelopment and gentrification have begun to blur the stark boundaries between central cities and surrounding suburbs along which segregation was for long maintained. Little is known, however, about what makes urban neighborhoods popular and the potential for their popularity to create more integrated metropolitan areas. This paper begins to fill the void by examining who would consider living in Chicago neighborhoods among a sample of metropolitan residents. Based on the evaluations of sixteen Chicago communities by 756 respondents and an extensive array of community characteristics, I investigate what attributes of urban neighborhoods metropolitan residents find attractive. I also explore whether these preferences present the possibility for greater racial and economic integration.

BACKGROUND

Racial segregation remains a persistent problem throughout most American cities. For most of the last half of the twentieth century, this racial divide was most pronounced between the predominantly African American central cities and the surrounding white suburbs (Farley et al. 1978). As jobs and residents fled central cities, the disproportionately poor and minority residents remaining in urban neighborhoods faced extreme disadvantages (Wilson 1987, 1996). These disadvantages were most pronounced for the least-skilled and poorest residents, but the high levels of racial segregation often meant that even middle-class African Americans were subject to worse housing and neighborhood conditions than their white counterparts (Pattillo-McCoy 1999; Massey and Denton 1993).

Levels of both economic and black-white racial segregation have declined modestly in recent decades. Part of the decline in black-white segregation is related to the increasingly multi-ethnic composition of most cities (Krivo and Kaufman 1999). While playing an important part, it is unlikely that immigration and increasing ethnic diversity in many cities can entirely explain the drops in black-white segregation levels or the declines in economic segregation. One possible reason for declining segregation that has received little attention is the possible effect of redevelopment and gentrification on metropolitan inequality. Redevelopment is often

encouraged because it brings investment to depressed urban cores and also offers the possibility of greater racial integration as whites are seen moving “back-to-the-city” (Vigdor 2002; Massey 2002; Freeman 2006). Those who laud the virtue of redevelopment argue that overcoming past decades of stagnation in central cities can be accomplished by redeveloping central city neighborhoods to the particular tastes of this new class of residents attracted to the vibrancy and cultural amenities offered by an urban lifestyle (Florida 2002; Glaeser, Kolko, and Saiz 2001).

What is unclear, however, is how wide-spread the preferences for urban neighborhoods are among the wider metropolitan population and the extent to which these preferences might reveal potential for racial and economic segregation in central cities. Some scholars have argued that one of the reasons that residents, both black and white, do not consider predominantly black neighborhoods is because racial composition serves as a proxy for the kinds of amenities available in that neighborhood (Harris 2001). As many urban neighborhoods have gained more amenities, experienced declines in crime, and improved their physical appearance, one would expect that racial context should matter less in these neighborhoods. In fact, scholars have made this point and argued that the new class of urban professionals actually embraces diversity which will lead to more integrated neighborhoods (Florida 2002; Ley 1996). However, because they only study residents who have already moved to urban neighborhoods, it is difficult to determine the extent to which increased preferences for urban lifestyles are likely to lead to more integrated urban neighborhoods (Bader 2008).

Using an innovative method of collecting data about respondent residential preferences in and around the city of Chicago, I evaluate how respondent race and class impact where residents would consider living based on the characteristics the communities. In particular, I examine how the racial and class composition of the communities matters to respondents’ evaluations of the neighborhood as a desirable place to consider living net of other factors that might contribute to residential preferences such as the quality of schools, commercial environment, and the physical condition of neighborhood structures.

DATA AND MEASURES

Individual-level variables

Respondent preference data for this analysis come from the 2004-2005 Chicago Area Study (CAS). The CAS is an area probability sample of residents 21 years and older sampled from block groups in Cook County, Illinois with a response rate of 45 percent. Interviews were conducted with 789 respondents as a face-to-face personal interview. Due to an insufficient number of racial groups other than blacks, whites, and Latinos, all analyses were restricted to respondents identifying as one of these three racial/ethnic groups.

For one module of the CAS, respondents were handed a booklet of maps. On each map, 41 communities in Chicago metropolitan area were identified by name and had a check box next to their name. Sixteen of these communities are communities, usually defined as Community

Areas, in the city of Chicago. Respondents were then asked a series of five questions; after each question, they were asked to respond to the question by marking the check box for any community for which the response applied. The data for this analysis come from the question, “Where would you seriously consider looking for a house or apartment?” The responses to this question for the 16 communities in the city of Chicago form the set of dependent variables in the analysis.

The primary independent variables for this analysis are race/ethnicity, educational attainment, and income. *Race/ethnicity* is a three-category variable indicating whether the respondent is non-Latino white, non-Latino black, or Latino. Although respondents were given the opportunity to indicate multiple racial categories, few did and so were thus coded into one of these three categories. *Educational attainment* is a four-category variable measured by: less than a high school degree (or G.E.D.); a high school degree but no college; some college, but less than a B.A.; and a B.A. or higher. *Income* was also measured in four categories: less than \$20,000; \$20,000 to \$39,999; \$40,000 to \$79,999; and \$80,000+. The dataset also includes an extensive list of individual-level control variables.

Community-level variables

The community-level variables used in this analysis were culled from a variety of different sources to provide a complete picture of the community characteristics. Demographic and socioeconomic characteristics were developed from Census data that has been specially tabulated to the Chicago Community Area level. Measures include racial composition, median home value, total population, percent foreign born, and percent homeowners.

The physical characteristics of the community areas come from the Systematic Social Observation (SSO) component of the Chicago Community Adult Health Study (CCAHS). CCAHS field staff observed 1,664 blocks in the city of Chicago on characteristics of the community such as the level of physical disorder, level of building security, and the quality of the buildings, streets, and sidewalks on the observed block. Using ecometric methods (Raudenbush and Sampson 1999), these observations will be aggregated to the community level.

Finally, I also have sources of administrative data for the communities. Cultural and commercial amenities come from data purchased from a proprietary data vendor. This data contains the location of businesses in the city of Chicago classified by business type using the North American Industrial Classification System (NAICS). Based on the geocoded addresses of businesses, I create measures of the number of different types of businesses available in each of the community areas. The number of major crimes committed in each community was created from reports from the Chicago Police Department. School-level math and verbal test scores for a number of different grades were obtained from the Chicago Public School system.

INITIAL RESULTS

For the purposes of this abstract, I calculated the percentage of respondents who would consider each of the 16 communities by their individual race and income level. The results broken down by race are presented in Table 1. The communities are grouped by their racial/ethnic composition using a scheme adapted from Krysan (2008). Overall, Latinos find the least number of communities desirable (meaning they have consistently lower values for considering any given neighborhood) and blacks find the greatest number of communities desirable with whites in between. Most of the communities have only small differences in the proportion of whites who would consider that community, generally around thirty percent. Two communities, predominantly white Lake View and the mixed black-white Loop. Blacks, on the other hand, showed the strongest preferences for mixed black-white communities,¹ followed by the all-black communities of Bronzeville and South Shore. The most popular two communities among Latinos were the mostly white Lake View and the mixed white-Latino gentrifying area of Logan Square. Surprisingly, the only all Latino community, Pilsen/Little Village, was rated below many other communities.

Table 2 shows the results breaking down the proportion of respondents who would consider a community by the respondent's level of income. In this table, the communities are grouped into two categories by whether the median household income in the community is greater than the citywide median household income in Chicago (\$43,223). In all of the communities, a greater proportion of the wealthiest respondents would consider communities than the other groups. This is not surprising as they are the most likely to be able to afford the largest number of communities and, therefore, be unconstrained by cost. Looking at differences in the communities that respondents within each group would consider, however, there appear to be only small differences.

CONCLUSIONS AND EXTENSIONS

Based on the initial findings presented in this abstract, race still appears to be an important dimension along which residential preferences are made. Unsurprisingly, black respondents find all-black communities desirable; however, they also find mixed areas equally as desirable. Whites, on the other hand, find all black and mixed white-black areas undesirable with the one exception of the Loop. Latinos, while overall finding few communities desirable, find the mostly white and white-Latino mixed communities desirable. On the other hand, there were only very small associations between the respondents' level of income and that of the community.

Extending this analysis for PAA will include several steps. First, I will estimate community-specific logistic regressions for each of the 16 communities where the outcome variable is whether a respondent would consider living in that community and responses are predicted by individual-level independent variables including race, income, educational attainment as well as

¹ It should be noted that the mixture of blacks and whites varies between the three communities in this category.

controlling for other individual-level characteristics. This will more accurately reveal the independent associations between race, class, and residential preferences.

The second step will incorporate multilevel models following the strategy of Krysan and Bader (2007) where preferences are modeled as clustered within individuals. This will allow me to estimate preferences as a function of both the characteristics of the community and respondent characteristics. Because I have a large amount of data at the first level with only sixteen communities, I will also explore dimension-reduction techniques to determine underlying characteristics of communities that I can then introduce into the model.

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Table 1. Proportion of respondents indicating they would consider community by race/ethnicity

	White	Black	Latino/a
All or Mostly White			
Norwood Park	0.34	0.40	0.21
Lake View	0.41	0.45	0.28
All Latino			
Pilsen/Little Village	0.27	0.42	0.22
All Black			
Austin	0.28	0.46	0.21
Bronzeville	0.28	0.53	0.18
South Shore	0.28	0.52	0.18
Mixed Black-White			
Beverley	0.30	0.61	0.19
Morgan Park	0.28	0.50	0.18
Loop	0.44	0.51	0.26
Mixed Black-Latino			
Humboldt Park	0.30	0.41	0.27
Mixed White-Latino			
Logan Square	0.39	0.41	0.30
Mixed Three Groups			
Albany Park	0.31	0.39	0.21
Uptown	0.35	0.45	0.21
Ashburn	0.27	0.49	0.18
Bridgeport	0.29	0.39	0.20
Hyde Park	0.30	0.67	0.23

Table 2. Proportion of respondents indicating they would consider community by level of income

	< \$20,000	\$20,000 - \$39,999	\$40,000 - \$79,999	\$80,000+
Communities Below City Median Income				
Austin	0.34	0.32	0.22	0.39
Bridgeport	0.28	0.30	0.21	0.42
Bronzeville	0.28	0.38	0.22	0.44
Humboldt Park	0.28	0.32	0.27	0.42
Hyde Park	0.36	0.43	0.26	0.51
Logan Square	0.31	0.35	0.37	0.45
Pilsen/Little Village	0.27	0.33	0.20	0.40
South Shore	0.30	0.33	0.23	0.43
Uptown	0.28	0.35	0.29	0.46
Communities Above City Median Income				
Albany Park	0.26	0.34	0.22	0.44
Ashburn	0.29	0.31	0.23	0.40
Beverly	0.36	0.35	0.26	0.47
Lake View	0.32	0.37	0.34	0.53
Loop	0.37	0.38	0.32	0.60
Morgan Park	0.30	0.32	0.22	0.42
Norwood Park	0.28	0.36	0.24	0.44