Chapter 3: West Mount Airy, Philadelphia

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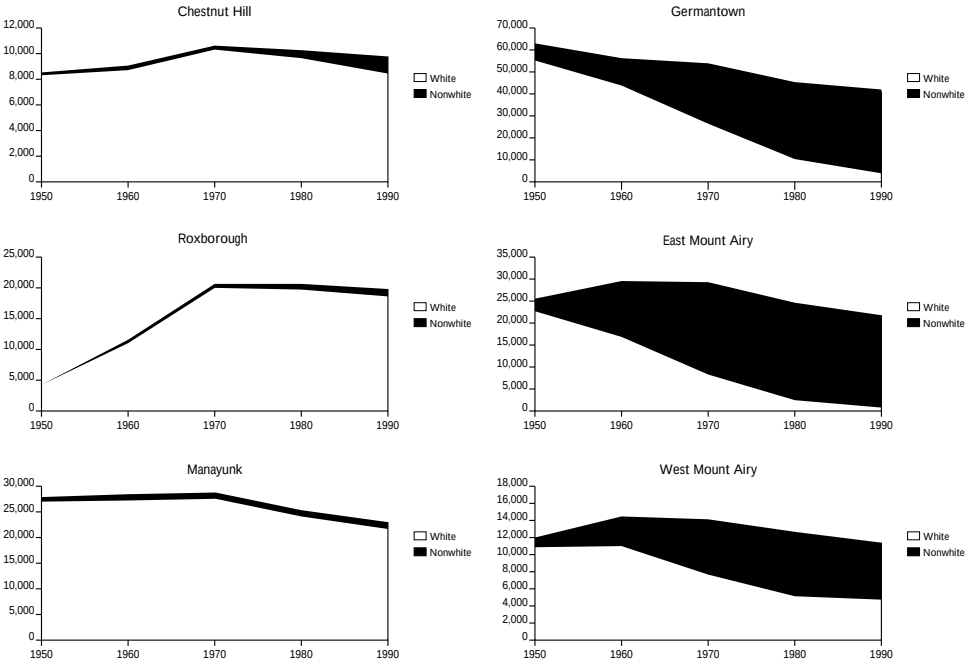
West Mount Airy, a neighborhood in the northwest section of Philadelphia, has achieved national acclaim as a model of stable racial integration. The paucity of such examples renders each one important for the lessons that can be learned. The experience of West Mount Airy is even more illuminating when examined in the context of the adjacent communities in northwest Philadelphia. Large portions of East Mount Airy and Germantown, which began as all-White communities, have resegregated to predominantly African-American communities, while Chestnut Hill has retained much of its enclave character as home to some of the city's wealthiest White families.[1] Roxborough and Manayunk, which are separated from West Mount Airy by the Wissahickon Creek and the surrounding Wissahickon Valley of Fairmount Park, are largely White middle-class and working-class communities, respectively. Exhibit 1 illustrates the racial patterns in these neighborhoods between 1950 and 1990. Exhibit 2 provides 1990 racial data for these neighborhoods. Given this particular configuration, the question of how West Mount Airy created and maintained a racially and, to a lesser extent, economically diverse community becomes quite interesting and important.

This chapter attempts to explain that process. In so doing, it explores how West Mount Airy became diverse. In particular, it will seek to explain the factors that prevented West Mount Airy from following the unfortunate but familiar trajectory of early racial change followed by panic selling resulting in resegregation.

The chapter is divided into seven sections. The first section describes the study design. The second section provides a profile of the West Mount Airy neighborhood. The third section begins with a brief discussion of housing markets and race to provide the context for examining the somewhat exceptional case of West Mount Airy. The fourth section examines the key factors—demographic, environmental, and organizational—that facilitated stable racial diversity in West Mount Airy. The fifth section discusses some of the issues raised by the research, including varying definitions and perceptions of diversity

Exhibit 1

Racial Patterns, Northwest Philadelphia Neighborhood Populations, 1950–90



Source: *City and County Data Book*, 1990 U.S. Bureau of the Census

Exhibit 2

Northwest Philadelphia: Percentage of Black* Population in Selected Neighborhoods, 1990

West Mount Airy	East Mount Airy	Germantown	Manayunk	Roxborough	Chestnut Hill
44.8	83.1	81.2	4.1	3.4	11.2**

*The Hispanic and Asian populations are negligible in these neighborhoods.
**This figure is somewhat misleading since 87.7 percent of the Blacks living in Chestnut Hill live in one census tract (257). This tract borders East Mount Airy.
Sources: 1990 Census Selected Tables: Population and Housing Data: 1990 and 1980; Philadelphia City Planning Commission

and the race-class quagmire. The sixth section examines broader issues that may affect West Mount Airy: educational patterns, population and economic trends in the city of Philadelphia, and citywide housing policy. The chapter concludes by drawing out the lessons learned from the case study.

Study Design

This is an exploratory and descriptive case study of racial diversity in the West Mount Airy neighborhood of Philadelphia. The purpose of the study is twofold. First, it seeks to identify the factors that enabled West Mount Airy to maintain a stable, racially diverse population. This task involves looking at the initial period of African-American movement into the neighborhood and at continuing efforts to promote diversity and, in general, a viable community. Second, the project seeks to identify current issues in West Mount Airy that may affect its diversity. The study relies on secondary and primary data to synthesize and build on earlier research that was conducted on the period of initial racial change in West Mount Airy. In so doing, it employs a variety of data collection techniques.[2]

The project relies on documentary analysis and archival research to provide information on organizational activities. Temple University's Urban Archives houses considerable documentation on early activities in West Mount Airy. The West Mount Airy Oral History Project (housed at the Germantown Historical Society) is a series of 30 interviews with past and current Mount Airy residents who lived in the West Mount Airy/Pelham area during the 1950s, the period of initial racial change. The Mount Airy collection, housed in the Lovett Memorial Public Library in Mount Airy, also contains numerous files on institutions, organizations, and individuals that played a critical role in promoting racial diversity.

A series of semistructured interviews with key informants, both residents and activists, was conducted. In addition to corroborating and expanding on some of the historical data collected from the sources above, these interviews were used to acquire information on current organizational activities and issues within Mount Airy. Further, these interviews were quite instructive in gaining insights into different interpretations of diversity and issue saliency in West Mount Airy. We emphasize the term *insights*, since our methodology is not designed to yield hard and fast "scientific" results. Nevertheless, we believe these insights are helpful and form the basis of future research on these issues.

The study had some data limitations. This study was funded with the understanding that most of the data collection would consist of pulling together existing studies and materials on the neighborhoods being researched. Thus we did not conduct full-blown surveys of neighborhood residents or businesses, nor did we conduct analyses of housing markets. Rather, the study relies on findings from prior research, census data, analyses of relevant reports and documents, and key informant interviews. As stated above, the interview process yielded a series of important insights into interpretative processes. Limiting our interview pool to key sources rather than to the community as a whole has both disadvantages and advantages. A major disadvantage is that these perceptions may not reflect the perceptions of others within the community. Yet, since many of our interviewees were among the more active persons within the community, their perceptions shape the direction that many of the organizations take, which in turn has communitywide effects.

The focus of this study—one neighborhood—also has inherent limitations. Neighborhoods do not exist in spatial or economic vacuums. Although most of this chapter is an examination of the internal factors that contributed to a stable situation, the sixth section provides a corrective to this focus by looking at some of the larger demographic and

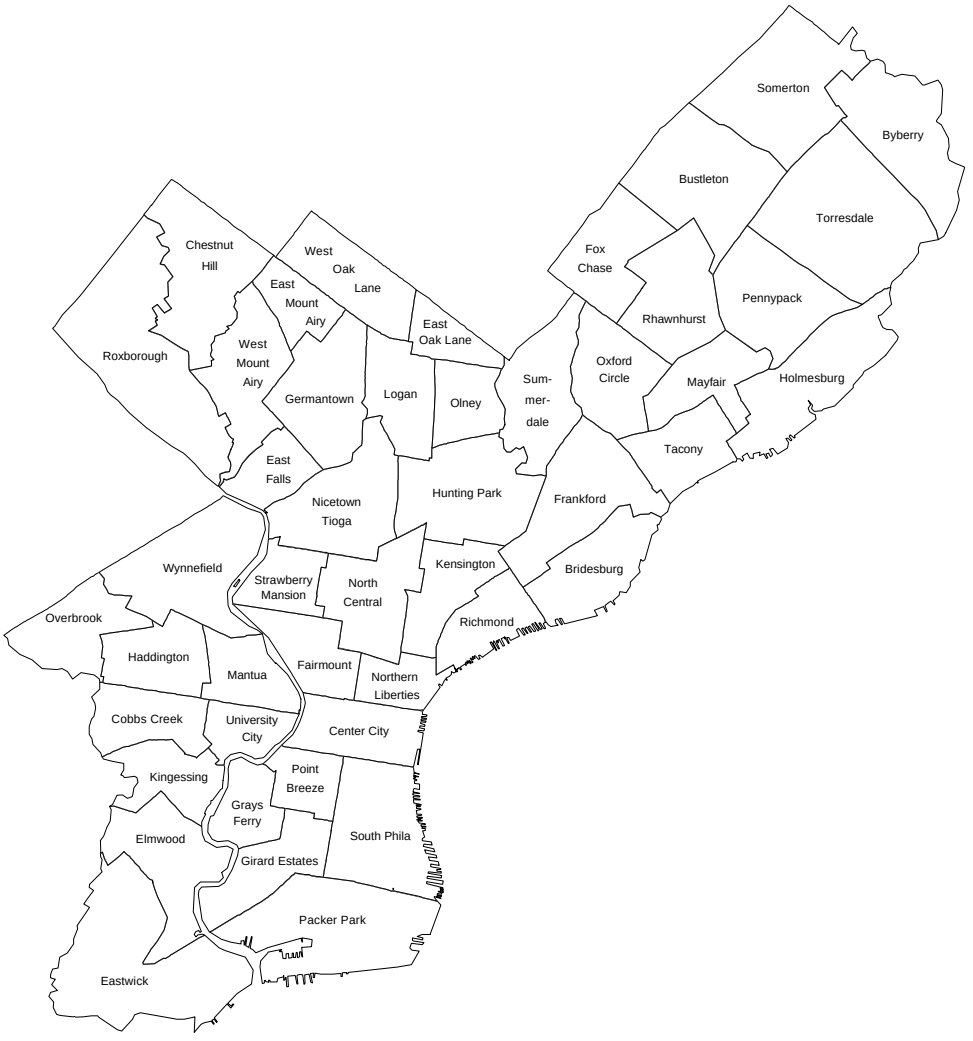
economic patterns in Philadelphia, as well as citywide housing policy and their likely effects on West Mount Airy.

West Mount Airy: A Diverse Neighborhood

West Mount Airy is a community located in the northwest section of Philadelphia. Once part of greater Germantown, West Mount Airy is now bounded by Creshiem Valley Road to the north, Johnson Street to the south, Germantown Avenue to the east, and the Wissahickon Creek to the west. Exhibits 3 and 4 locate West Mount Airy within the city

Exhibit 3

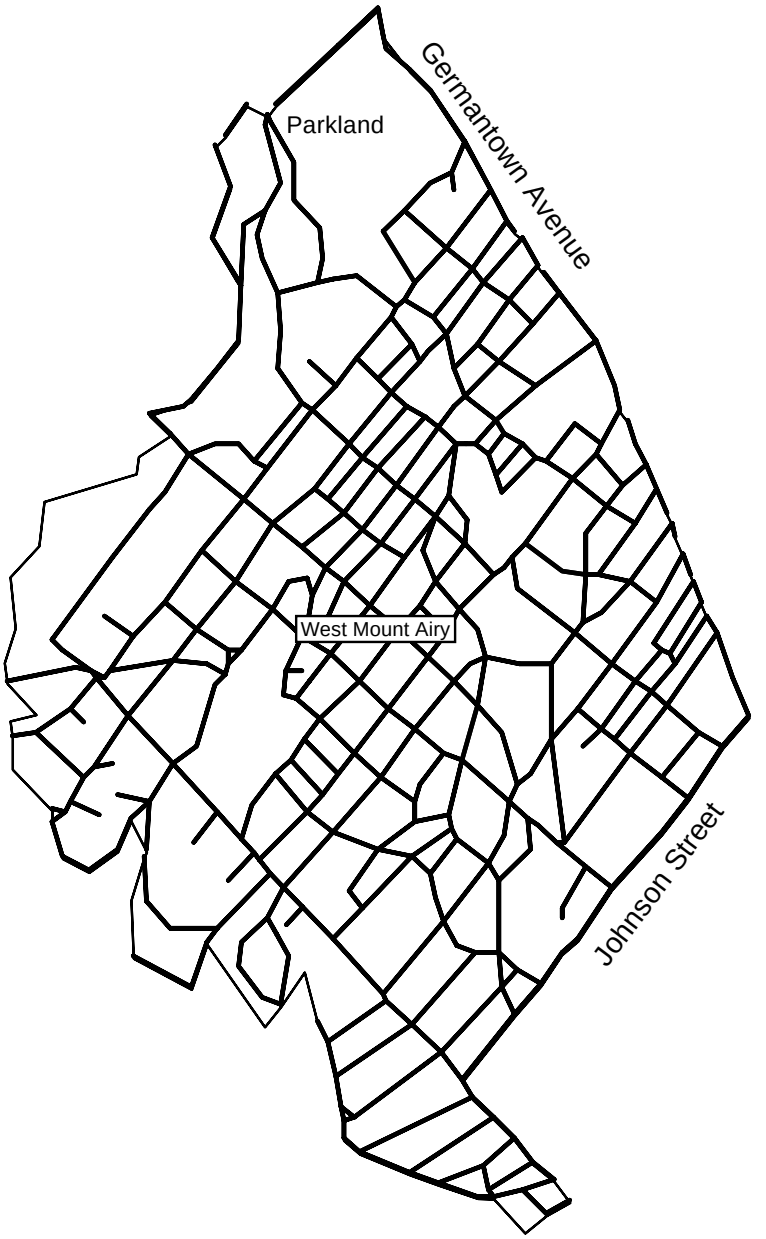
Philadelphia's Neighborhoods



Source: Social Science Data Library, Temple University

Exhibit 4

West Mount Airy



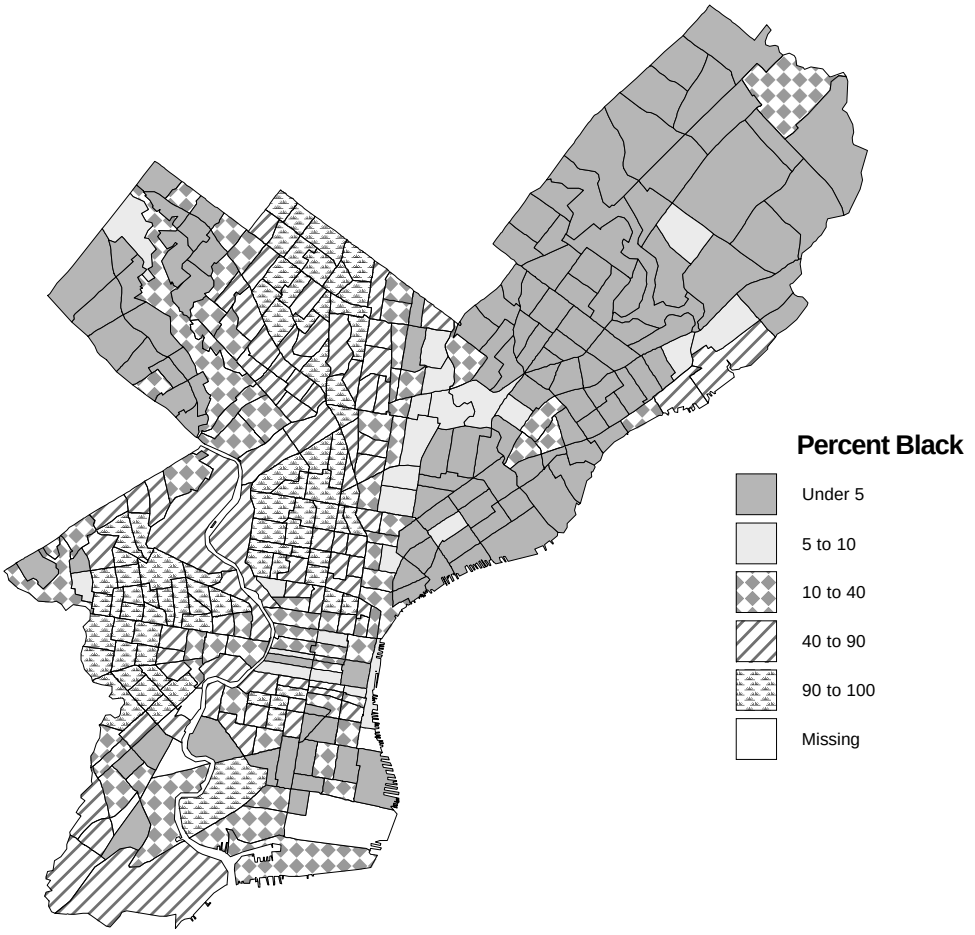
Source: WMAN Collection, Temple University Urban Archives

of Philadelphia and delineate the boundaries of West Mount Airy, respectively. West Mount Airy is made up of six census tracts (232–237) and had a population of 13,858 in 1990.

Diversity is a term that captures many aspects of the West Mount Airy neighborhood. Much of the community's fame, both nationally and locally, is centered on one aspect of this diversity: stable racial integration. While African-Americans had traditionally settled in small pockets on the edge of this area, integrated residential patterns began to truly develop in the late 1950s. Since then, the number of African-Americans living in West Mount Airy has increased significantly. Unlike the typical scenario of resegregation, however, West Mount Airy has maintained a sizable White population. In 1990 the community's population was 52.6 percent White and 44.8 percent African-American; citywide the figures were 52.2 percent White and 39.5 percent African-American.[3] Incorporating 1980 data into the equation reveals a very stable racial picture in West

Exhibit 5

Percentage of Philadelphia Population That Was African-American, by Census Tract, 1990



Source: Social Science Data Library, Temple University

Mount Airy. African-Americans made up 45.8 percent of the population, and Whites, 51.7 percent.[4] Exhibit 5 provides a racial breakdown of West Mount Airy and Philadelphia by census tract.

Racial diversity in West Mount Airy is complemented and reinforced by other forms of diversity. Economically, one finds significant diversity in the neighborhood. As exhibits 6 and 7 indicate, median household incomes by census tract ranged from a high of $72,087 (tract 234) to a low of $31,482 (tract 237) in 1990. It should be noted that even at the low end, median household income is significantly higher than the citywide figure of $24,603.[5]

Exhibit 6

West Mount Airy: Demographic Profiles, 1990

	West Mount Airy	Philadelphia
Population	13,858	1,585,577
Percentage for groups		
African-American	44.8	39.5
White	52.0	52.2
Hispanic	1.4	5.3
Education (in percent)		
High school graduate or higher	73.6–97.9*	64.3
B.A. or higher	36.0–71.9*	15.2
Income**		
Median household	31,482–72,087*	24,603
Median family	41,186–84,130*	30,140
Number of persons below poverty level (percent in parentheses)	1,078 (7.78)	313,374 (19.76)

*These two figures represent the lowest (census tracts) to the highest. For a specific breakdown, see exhibit 7, West Mount Airy: Population and Income by Census Tract, 1990.
**Income figures are for 1989.
Source: 1990 U.S. Census of Population and Housing

The neighborhood is also characterized by numerous institutions such as the Mount Airy Learning Tree, Allen's Lane Art Center, the Germantown Jewish Centre, and the Weaver's Way Food Co-op, which operate as channels for social and cultural diversity.

West Mount Airy's housing stock constitutes yet another form of diversity. Of the total stock, 29 percent are row homes, 41 percent twins, and 30 percent single-family dwellings (Leaf, 1995). As Exhibit 8 indicates, the varied price categories that accompany these different housing styles and sizes have allowed for an impressive homeownership rate. Although the overall rate of 58 percent is lower than the citywide rate (62 percent), four of the six census tracts exceed the citywide rate, with the two highest tracts having rates of 95.9 percent (234) and 73.7 percent (235).[6]

Exhibit 7

West Mount Airy: Population and Income by Census Tract, 1990

	Census Tract					
	232	**233**	**234**	**235**	**236**	**237**
Population	874	3,243	591	1,238	2,563	5,349
(Percentage for groups)						
African-American	16.6	42.6	27.6	34.7	32.8	60.8
White	82.4	55.5	71.6	62.0	63.0	35.2
Hispanic	0.6	1.0	0.8	0.6	2.6	1.3
Median household income (dollars)	37,931	40,532	72,087	39,375	50,251	31,482

Source: 1990 U.S. Census of Population and Housing

Exhibit 8

Selected Housing Characteristics of West Mount Airy by Census Tract and Philadelphia, 1990

	West Mount Airy Census Tracts						Philadelphia
	232	233	234	235	236	237	
Percentage owner-occupied	52.3	67.6	95.9	73.7	65.8	41.3	61.9
Percentage African-American occupied*	46.0	57.3	100	68.7	65.6	44.0	56.7
Median value of owner-occupied (thousands of dollars)**	$134	98	195	144	145	86	49

*Refers to the percentage of African-Americans living in the census tract who are homeowners.
**These units include only single-family homes with neither a business nor a medical office on the premises.
Sources: 1990 U.S. Bureau of the Census, Selected Tables: Population and Housing Data: 1990 and 1980; City of Philadelphia, Philadelphia City Planning Commission

Thus, while West Mount Airy is typically cited as a model of successful racial integration, one must be cognizant of the other aspects of the community's diversity and how they contribute, directly and indirectly, to racial diversity.

Housing Markets and Race

The city of Philadelphia, like most cities, is replete with neighborhoods that have undergone wholesale resegregation. In some neighborhoods, the entire process might have

taken as few as 10 years. Douglas Massey (1997) provides a partial picture of how and why this resegregation occurs:

> Demand is strong for homes in all-White areas, but once one or two Black families enter a neighborhood, White demand begins to falter as some White families leave and others refuse to move in. The acceleration in residential turnover coincides with the expansion of Black demand, making it very likely that outgoing White households are replaced by Black families. As the Black percentage rises, White demand drops ever more steeply as Black demand rises at an increasing rate. By the time Black demand peaks at the 50 percent mark, practically no Whites are willing to enter and the large majority are trying to leave. Thus, racial segregation appears to be created by a process of racial turnover fueled by the persistence of significant anti-Black prejudice on the part of Whites.

To complete the picture provided above, it is necessary to add the role of the real estate industry, especially in racial steering, blockbusting, and panic selling, which often causes Whites to sell low and African-Americans to buy high and which precipitates extremely rapid turnover of property. Mortgage lenders have often played a role as well, either in denying credit to individuals on the basis of race or to communities on the basis of location or by providing credit in situations where default was quite foreseeable. Thus resegregation often results from a combination of individual prejudice, market forces, and the manipulation of both of these factors by institutions and institutional actors. This process has many losers: Whites who sell low, African-Americans who purchase high, and the entire group of housing consumers because they are denied a truly open and competitive housing market.

Racial Change and Stable Integration

The experience of West Mount Airy represents a departure from these scenarios. The first migration of African-Americans to the neighborhood was not followed by a massive exodus of Whites, nor did it result in decreased demand for housing in the area. Although there was an initial period of "softness" in the housing market, it was not severe and, in fact, it may have even contributed to the resulting neighborhood stability.

In their study of West Mount Airy, Chester Rapkin and William Grigsby (1960) noted that the turnover rate in the areas in which early African-American purchases were concentrated was roughly the same as the citywide rate of 6 percent a year. This figure is well below the "normal" turnover rate of 8–12 percent a year. In the remaining portions of West Mount Airy, turnover rates during this initial period (1951–1955) were somewhat lower than those in the mixed zone[7] and thus lower than the citywide rate. On the basis of turnover rates, the experience of West Mount Airy points to a picture of stability.

West Mount Airy's early experience with housing prices also runs counter to the typical scenario. Due to a variety of factors, including panic selling and unscrupulous real estate practices, neighborhoods undergoing racial change often experience an initial rise in housing prices. According to Rapkin and Grigsby, this situation occurred in other Philadelphia neighborhoods undergoing racial change. In the early stages of West Mount Airy's integration (1951–58), however, housing prices declined. This was not part of a larger trend, since citywide housing prices were increasing. According to Jack Guttentag (1970), this phenomenon may have contributed to the overall stability of West Mount Airy. He suggests that rising housing prices, in the beginning stages of integration, serve as a deterrent to White purchasers, whereas declining prices during this phase can make an area attractive to White buyers with limited means. Obviously one has to qualify this

statement in the context of the particular housing stock and the degree of price decline. Deteriorating housing stock with declining prices may not be attractive to White buyers. Yet, high-end housing that is declining in price may very well be attractive to a White middle-class purchaser. In West Mount Airy, most of the price decline was among the higher priced housing stock (Guttentag, 1970). Even this situation, however, presupposes that White buyers were able to see beyond short-term price declines. That is, they did not associate these declines with imminent wholesale resegregation.

The second important qualifier is the degree and length of price decline. While initial price decreases may attract White buyers, continuous decline will obviously have a negative effect on neighborhood stability. This did not occur in West Mount Airy. Beginning in 1958, the early trend was reversed as housing prices increased at a faster rate in West Mount Airy than they did in the city as a whole (Guttentag, 1970).

What accounts for this reversal of housing trends? Guttentag hypothesized that price declines are often a self-fulfilling prophecy. Because Whites believe that racial change is tantamount to falling property values, they cease to purchase in neighborhoods undergoing racial change. This consequent reduction in demand is then reflected in falling property values. Thus, if initial expectations can be altered, we may find different patterns of behavior and, ultimately, a very different housing market. This is precisely what occurred in West Mount Airy. Between 1951 and 1966, there was an even distribution of home purchases between African-Americans and Whites (Guttentag, 1970). Understanding why this occurred requires an examination of demographic, environmental, and organizational factors. Although these factors are best discussed separately, it was the critical interaction among them that shaped West Mount Airy's capacity to maintain stable racial diversity.

Demographic Factors

The demographics of West Mount Airy played a critical role in altering the equation of expectations, behavior, and housing markets as noted above. The two most important demographic factors were, first, the comparatively high income levels, occupational standing, and overall socioeconomic status of incoming African-Americans and, second, the liberal values, higher educational level, and financial stability of many of the White residents. Together, these factors created a situation in which the incoming African-Americans appeared less threatening to a White population that was relatively secure.

In her examination of racially diverse neighborhoods in Chicago, Rose Helper (1986) suggested that Whites are more likely to be receptive to racially mixed neighborhoods when the African-American residents are of the same social class. Data on the economic and social status of African-Americans who moved to West Mount Airy in the 1950s show a cohort that was decidedly middle class and above. Closed suburban housing markets and segregated housing patterns within the city made West Mount Airy very attractive to Philadelphia's African-American middle class. As Exhibit 9 indicates, in 1960, earnings, occupational status, educational levels, homeownership rates, and median home values for African-Americans in West Mount Airy exceeded the comparable levels for African-Americans citywide. They also exceeded total citywide levels. The median income for African-Americans living in West Mount Airy in 1960 was $6,323, whereas for African-Americans citywide it was $4,248 and for all families citywide it was $5,782. The percentage of African-Americans in professional and technical occupations was 22.7 in West Mount Airy compared with 4.7 percent for African-Americans citywide. The comparable figure for all Philadelphia workers was 9.4 percent.[8]

Exhibit 9

Demographic Profile of African-Americans in Mount Airy and Philadelphia and Total Population in Philadelphia, 1960

	West Mount Airy*	Philadelphia	Philadelphia (all)
Median family income (dollars)	6,323	4,248	5,782
Median years of education	12–14.9**	9.0	9.6
Percentage professional and technical workers	22.7	4.7	9.4
Percentage managers and administrators	3.7	1.7	6.1
Homeownership rates (percent)	76.5	42.9	58.7
Median home values (dollars)	11,300***	7,000	8,700

*The data for African-Americans moving into West Mount Airy are only available for those census tracts that report a non-White population of 400 or more persons or 100 or more units owned by non-White families, for population and housing statistics, respectively. As of the 1960 census, only two tracts in West Mount Airy fit this description: 0059–H (236) and 0059–I (237). The above data refer to these two tracts.
**The range represents the varied numbers in the two census tracts.
***Data were only available for tract 0059–I (237).
Source: *City and County Data Book*, 1960 U.S. Bureau of the Census

The relatively high socioeconomic status of incoming African-Americans greatly reduced fears among Whites of neighborhood decline. Research conducted by Leonard Heumann confirms this position of White residents. He discovered that 63 percent of the White residents surveyed in West Mount Airy felt that African-American residents had the same or higher educational levels than they did, and that 73 percent of the Whites sampled believed that African-American residents had occupational levels equal to or higher than their own (1973). Thus the demographic profile of incoming African-Americans mitigated against the development of negative expectations regarding racial change in the neighborhood. This profile also conforms to Helper's assertion regarding the circumstances of White receptivity to racially mixed neighborhoods.

The demographic profile of White West Mount Airy residents also helps to explain the neighborhood's move toward stable racial diversity. This population was characterized by high levels of education and occupational status and median incomes well above the citywide figure (exhibit 10). These features, in particular high levels of education and occupational status, are usually positively correlated with liberal political views and high levels of social tolerance.

Exhibit 10

Demographic Profile of West Mount Airy, East Mount Airy, and Philadelphia, 1960

	West Mount Airy	East Mount Airy	Philadelphia
Median years of education	12.2–13.4*	11–12.5*	9.6
Percentage of professional and technical workers	27.3	15.7	9.4
Percentage of managers and administrators	12.0	8.5	6.1
Median family income (dollars)	5,238–13,625*	5,749–8,700*	5,782
Median home value (dollars)	11,500–22,300*	8,200–16,400*	8,700

*Census tract data were not aggregated to the neighborhood level. Thus the ranges reflect the ranges of the census tracts.
Source: 1960 U.S. Bureau of the Census

Further boosting the liberalism and tolerance of West Mount Airy was the presence of a large and active Jewish population. Although exact population figures are unavailable, there are indications of a sizable Jewish population whose significance probably exceeds actual numbers. The presence of this Jewish population is, in large part, attributable to the Germantown Jewish Centre and to the Havura movement within Judaism, which has a large following in Philadelphia and especially in West Mount Airy. The Havura movement is disproportionately made up of highly educated Jews who tend to hold liberal positions on social issues. A key inspiration for this movement was the belief that more emphasis needed to be placed on community and family. Their orthodox religious observance, which includes not driving on the Sabbath, requires that followers be able to walk to the synagogue. Hence, locational requirements have made this a very stable population within West Mount Airy.

The significance of this Jewish presence for racial diversity was partly revealed in Samuel Brown's (1990) study of community attachment in West Mount Airy. Through various surveys of West Mount Airy residents, he discovered that the Jewish population had higher levels of education and greater levels of concentration in occupations associated with liberalism than non-Jewish respondents. He also found that Jewish respondents were more likely to be organizationally involved in the community and, overall, to express a greater sense of community attachment than non-Jewish respondents.

Complementing the favorable educational and occupational characteristics of West Mount Airy's White population were their relatively high income levels. The degree of financial security enjoyed by many West Mount Airy residents may have enhanced receptivity to racial diversity in several ways. The first way centers on the direct financial benefits associated with homeownership. The post-World War II experience of continuous appreciation of property values transformed homeownership, for vast segments of the working and middle classes, into a solid form of preretirement savings. Their houses constituted their financial security. Thus, African-American movement into a neighborhood, which is often portrayed as tantamount to falling property values, is perceived as a great financial risk. For families with a financial cushion beyond their house, perceptions of risk may differ.

When combined with high levels of education and liberal values, financial stability may facilitate racial diversity in yet another way. In his study of early integration in West Mount Airy, Heumann (1973) suggested that residing in a segregated neighborhood was a mechanism whereby certain working- and middle-class Whites acquired status among their peers. A similar theme was revealed in a Michigan study that found that many working-class Whites felt that "not being African-American is what constitutes being middle class; [and that] not living with African-Americans is what makes a neighborhood a decent place to live" (Greenberg, 1985) Thus one would expect to find a high level of resistance to integration among such populations. In contrast, Whites who derive significant status from their occupational and/or educational success do not have the same status needs to live in an all-White community (Heumann, 1973). Their preexisting status combined with their financial stability makes them much more receptive to living in a racially diverse neighborhood.

In turn, this position may have a spillover effect, to the extent that it encourages Whites of lower socioeconomic means to remain in the neighborhood. The operative assumption is that the commitment of higher status Whites to a neighborhood keeps property values fairly stable and thus decreases the perceived risk factor for Whites with fewer economic resources.

The role of demographic factors in explaining West Mount Airy's ability to make the transition to a racially diverse community is further strengthened when it is compared with the experience of residents in many parts of East Mount Airy. By 1990, four of East Mount Airy's six census tracts had an African-American population of 90 percent or greater. Although other factors such as housing stock (see below) were at work, one cannot escape the different demographic profiles of the two communities.

Environmental Factors

Environmental factors have also played a key role in West Mount Airy's stability. Many attributes make the neighborhood very attractive to potential homebuyers. The diversity of the housing stock, which ranges from immodest mansions to modest row houses, affords opportunities to a wide range of income groups, thereby contributing to the area's economic diversity. The architectural variations create a very pleasing aesthetic, which attracts many to the area. This is well complemented by the proximity to Fairmount Park and the general lushness of the neighborhood, which creates a suburban atmosphere. In short, the physical aspects of West Mount Airy contribute to maintaining a viable housing market.

An environmental factor more directly related to maintaining racial diversity is housing density. Overall, West Mount Airy is a relatively low-density neighborhood, with some parts featuring only a few houses per block. In his examination of the civil rights movement in the North, James Ralph (1993) suggested that housing, because of its spatial dimension, may be the most difficult area in which to achieve racial integration. We are very concerned with who surrounds our space and who may enter into our space. Building on Ralph's thesis, we can posit that lower density neighborhoods will be more amenable to racial diversity than higher density ones. This assertion is supported by several studies. Leonard Heumann (1973) suggested that areas with very dense row housing will exhibit the fiercest resistance to African-American entry, and that once African-American entry has occurred, maintaining stable integration in such areas is extremely difficult. Juliet Saltman (1990), in her study of East and West Mount Airy, suggested that the different density levels in the two communities may be the most important variable for explaining the different experience with integration maintenance.

Organizational Factors

Despite favorable environmental and demographic conditions, alarm bells did sound when the first African-Americans moved into West Mount Airy, signaling the need for an active response. This response was forthcoming from key individuals and institutions (largely religious ones) in the neighborhood. Responses came in the form of door-to-door campaigns and community meetings to calm people's fears and in the formation of organizations to unite and mobilize the community against unethical and destructive real estate practices. The continuing and expanding work of these institutions and organizations has created a viable organizational framework in West Mount Airy that is central to the neighborhood's continued stability. This framework allows for the articulation of issues both internally and to elected officials and city government, thus providing open lines of communication and a strong lobbying force. It also creates strong community and social networks, which are key factors in breaking down barriers of race and class. Finally, it has become part of West Mount Airy's attractiveness. For individuals seeking an activist lifestyle, West Mount Airy provides endless opportunities. In turn, this becomes mutually reinforcing, thereby further strengthening the organizational framework.

West Mount Airy Neighbors. West Mount Airy Neighbors (WMAN) was founded in 1959 to deal specifically with the issue of racial integration. A key figure in WMAN's early history was George Schermer, one of the founders and architects of the organization. Schermer came to Philadelphia in 1953 to head the city's newly created Commission on Human Relations. Before coming to Philadelphia, he was the director of the Mayor's Interracial Commission in Detroit (1945–52). He was also the founder and president of the Michigan Commission on Civil Rights. A strong advocate of civil rights, Schermer was instrumental in securing passage of Pennsylvania's Fair Housing Law in 1956.[9] When he came to Philadelphia, Schermer settled in West Mount Airy. Arriving at the same time that African-American movement into the neighborhood was beginning and observing some of the real estate practices and other behavior that accompanied them, Schermer urged the formation of a civic association to address these issues.

WMAN focused initially on real estate practices and education. In the area of real estate, WMAN's efforts included pressuring real estate agents to halt destructive activities such as steering, solicitations, and panic selling; getting the city council to pass an ordinance banning solicitations and *sold* signs and restricting the number of *for sale* signs per block; and judiciously using zoning tools to prevent subdivision of large houses or their conversion to institutional usage and to maintain a desirable balance between residential and commercial usage.

On the educational front, WMAN was instrumental in getting the city to include one of West Mount Airy's two elementary schools—Charles West Henry—in its desegregation program. As part of this program, schools receive additional resources to bolster overall quality on the assumption that better schools would attract a more racially diverse student body. Through its education committee, WMAN has also sponsored open houses to acquaint new parents with the neighborhood schools.

Over the years, WMAN has significantly expanded the scope of its activities, becoming deeply involved in business efforts and social activities. Most of WMAN's business efforts have been directed toward the revitalization of Germantown Avenue, a major commercial street in the neighborhood. As part of these efforts, WMAN has organized street cleanups, tree plantings, sign hangings, and facade improvements.

To enhance social interactions between neighborhood residents and to break down the "East Mount Airy–West Mount Airy" distinction, WMAN, in conjunction with East Mount Airy Neighbors (EMAN)[10] has sponsored several Mount Airy events. Mount Airy Day, first organized as Community Day in 1968, is a joint collaboration between EMAN and WMAN as well as various community businesses. Featuring a flea market, art exhibits, and games, Mount Airy Day is designed to celebrate the strength, unity, and diversity of the community.

The religious community. The religious community has played and continues to play an integral role in promoting racial diversity. Both individually and collectively, Mount Airy's religious institutions have attempted to address the race issue. The first collective effort was the Church Community Relations Council of Pelham, formed in 1956. Initially made up of the Church of the Epiphany, the Unitarian Church of Germantown, and the Germantown Jewish Centre (Faith Presbyterian and St. Michael's Lutheran churches joined later on), the council first addressed real estate practices in West Mount Airy. Through lobbying of and pressure on the real estate community, the council sought to end many of the panic selling tactics that had taken hold in the community. Through their congregations, the institutional members of the council also sought to promote a moral position on integration.

One individual who was critical during the early stages of West Mount Airy's integration was Rabbi Elias Charry of the Germantown Jewish Centre. A charismatic, energetic individual, Charry faced the prospect of losing his congregation to the throes of resegregation. Many synagogues and churches followed their congregations to the suburbs during this period. The fact that the Germantown Jewish Centre had been built only several years earlier created financial incentives to remain in the neighborhood.

Charry, along with other religious leaders at the time, embarked on door-to-door campaigns to persuade White residents to remain in West Mount Airy. In addition, some of Charry's religious reforms, most notably his liberalization of certain Jewish practices, were instrumental in attracting a liberal, community-minded Jewish population to move to the neighborhood. While perhaps not moving to Mount Airy for purposes of living in an integrated community, this population was certainly supportive of racial diversity.

Although the threat of destructive real estate practices has long since passed, the religious community is still quite active on issues of diversity. Through sermons, special services, and programs, many congregations try to incorporate diversity into regular worship. Other institutions have taken further steps. The Unitarian Church sponsored a workshop on diversity training in October 1995, and the Lutheran Seminary has been working with the schools on issues of diversity.

Allen's Lane Art Center. Organized in 1952, the Allen's Lane Art Center was developed to bring together West Mount Airy residents through programs promoting the arts. Allen's Lane Art Center was primarily responsible for running the educational portion of WMAN's early efforts to preserve neighborhood stability. The center held several discussion groups on the issue of racial integration and also operated one of the city's first integrated day camps (Leaf, 1995). Currently, the center showcases the talents of community residents and plays host to professional performers as well.

Mount Airy Learning Tree. The result of a joint project between EMAN and WMAN in 1981, the Mount Airy Learning Tree (MALT) is a community-oriented group that organizes classes taught by Mount Airy residents. By drawing participants from various parts of the city, the classes serve as a strong public relations tool for Mount Airy. As a

social outlet, MALT brings residents from various racial, social, and economic groups together to study topics as diverse as Mount Airy history, gardening, financial management, and computer purchase.

Weaver's Way Food Co-op. Incorporated in 1974, Weaver's Way Food Co-op serves as a crucial information and social link in the West Mount Airy community. In addition to serving the food-shopping needs of the residents, Weaver's Way, through its work requirements and communal spirit, fosters a sense of "neighboring" that tends to be absent in many other neighborhoods. The co-op has also served as a foundation on which other economic enterprises have developed. In addition to providing health and dental plans for its members, for instance, the co-op recently added a credit union and check-cashing facilities.

Affirmative Marketing

Although there are no official affirmative marketing tools employed, West Mount Airy does benefit from unofficial marketing devices. Perhaps most important is West Mount Airy's image as a diverse, liberal, and tolerant community. This image has been bolstered considerably by the significant amount of favorable media attention, both national and local, that West Mount Airy has received. Probably the most often cited piece is "Mount Airy, Philadelphia," which appeared in *U.S. News and World Report* in 1991 (Buckley, 1991). The article chronicles the history of West Mount Airy's successful efforts at preserving a racially integrated community, focusing attention on several families. Although cited with less frequency, West Mount Airy benefited from favorable national media attention long before the *U.S. News and World Report* story. As early as 1962, the *Christian Science Monitor* carried several stories on how West Mount Airy was bucking the tide of resegregation and neighborhood decline (Gehret, 1962). Locally, West Mount Airy has been covered quite favorably in newspaper articles and *Philadelphia Magazine* feature stories.[11]

Often referred to as the "Ph.D. ghetto," West Mount Airy attracts a disproportionate number of highly educated professional people who are committed to living in a diverse community. As noted above, the presence of the Germantown Jewish Centre, the early work of Rabbi Charry, and the Havura movement have also served to attract a liberal Jewish community to West Mount Airy.

For many African-Americans, diversity per se has not been the major attraction. Rather, other factors, most notably the affordable housing stock, the comparatively high quality of the public schools, the promise of upward mobility that Mount Airy represents, and the community's tolerance for racial diversity, are major selling points.

This difference in objectives between African-Americans and Whites is not limited to Mount Airy. Gary Orfield (1986) suggested that most minority families seeking integrated neighborhoods do so on pragmatic rather than ideological grounds. Their pragmatism is grounded in the belief that integrated neighborhoods, especially those that are home to some prominent White families, are better positioned to leverage key resources from local governments than are segregated minority neighborhoods.

Despite the different reasons that motivate Whites and African-Americans to move to West Mount Airy, there exists, among all groups, a deep sense of pride in their neighborhood. This pride is evident in the willingness of respondents to speak for hours about Mount Airy. This pride becomes mutually reinforcing to the extent that it motivates involvement, activism, and a strong commitment to problem solving.

Issues Raised by the Study

The research on West Mount Airy raises some interesting issues that may affect the neighborhood's economic, social, and racial makeup. These issues center on the measurement, definition, and interpretation of diversity and on the nexus of race and class.

Diversity: Measurement, Definition, and Interpretation

Although widely used, the term *diversity* raises many measurement, definitional, and interpretative debates, all of which are present in the West Mount Airy case.

Methodologically, there is considerable debate over the unit of measurement: Do we use census tract, neighborhood-level, or block-level data? A common argument is that whereas a given census tract may appear racially diverse, block-level data often reveal much more segregated patterns. In the case of West Mount Airy, this seems to be less of an issue. Of the 22 block groups that make up West Mount Airy, 13 have at least 30 percent of one race represented. Of these 13, 8 have more than 40 percent of one race represented.

The situation becomes more complex when we broaden the definition of diversity to include economic as well as racial characteristics. Racial and economic data on West Mount Airy reveal different patterns. Before introducing the data, an explanation of measurement tools is in order.

Diversity is measured through a statistical artifact called the *diversity index*. This statistic measures how closely an area's racial composition reflects the citywide racial makeup. The closer the index is to zero (which is perfect diversity), the more diverse the neighborhood is. Conversely, the further the index is from zero, the less diverse it is. Thus, if Philadelphia's population is 39.5 percent African-American, 5.3 percent Hispanic, and 52.2 percent White, a perfectly diverse neighborhood (that is, with a diversity index of zero) would be one in which the racial composition was exactly the same as the citywide racial makeup. When applied to economic data, the diversity index measures how closely the income distribution within a given area reflects the citywide distribution.[12]

Racially, West Mount Airy became more diverse from 1980 to 1990, although this pattern is not equally distributed; that is, the two wealthiest census tracts (234 and 236) became less diverse (see exhibit 11).

Exhibit 11

Racial Diversity in West Mount Airy, 1980 and 1990

Diversity index	Census Tract						
	232	233	234	235	236	237	All Tracts*
1980	0.31	0.06	0.10	0.17	0.02	0.24	0.08
1990	0.29	0.05	0.18	0.10	0.10	0.21	0.05

*Diversity index for the entire neighborhood.
Sources: 1990 U.S. Bureau of the Census; diversity indices were calculated by the Policy Research Action Group and the Leadership Council for Metropolitan Open Communities, Chicago, 1995

Economically, as exhibit 12 indicates, West Mount Airy is becoming less diverse, a pattern that is found in all census tracts. The median household income for all of West Mount Airy increased by 111 percent from 1980 to 1990, as compared with a 91-percent increase for the city as a whole. In census tract 236, median household income increased by 129.7 percent.

Exhibit 12

Economic Diversity in West Mount Airy, 1980 and 1990

	Census Tract					
	232	233	234	235	236	237
1980 Median household income (dollars)	18,241	19,444	34,246	20,521	21,875	14,615
Diversity index	0.18	0.18	0.41	0.22	0.23	0.06
1990 Median household income (dollars)	37,931	40,532	72,087	39,375	50,251	31,482
Diversity index	0.25	0.25	0.45	0.30	0.33	0.11

Sources: 1990 U.S. Bureau of the Census; diversity indices were calculated by the Policy Research Action Group and the Leadership Council for Metropolitan Open Communities, Chicago, 1995

This income phenomenon may reflect the increasing property values experienced in the neighborhood. Ironically, the decrease in economic diversity may strengthen racial diversity, because a major factor in resegregation is fear of falling property values. Clearly, this has not been a problem in West Mount Airy.

The increase in property values in West Mount Airy may also have a positive effect on East Mount Airy if it encourages purchases by White families there for whom West Mount Airy has become too expensive. There is some anecdotal evidence that this is occurring.

When we move from housing patterns to the realm of social interactions, the issue of diversity becomes especially murky. Using the latter as a measure of integration raises the thorny issues of interpretative and perceptual realities. For instance, the interview process has uncovered a wide range of opinions on how integrated social interactions are. Moreover, certain behavioral patterns—in particular, organizational membership, where people shop, and where they send their children to school—reveal less integration than housing data would indicate.

Earlier studies by Heumann (1973) and Brown (1990) revealed that organizational membership tends to be skewed toward the middle strata (that is, professionals and the middle class) with African-Americans underrepresented and wealthy Whites exhibiting little to no participation. African-American participation does increase in the case of town watch groups formed around issues of crime. These earlier findings were confirmed in our interviews, suggesting a continuation of these patterns.

One possible explanation for the different levels of organizational involvement exhibited by African-Americans and Whites may be found in the reasons for moving to Mount Airy. If, as described above, many Whites move to Mount Airy because they want to live in an activist community, we have a population favorably predisposed toward organizational involvement. If, however, African-Americans are moving to West Mount Airy primarily for the housing stock, the quality of the schools, and upward mobility, community involvement may not be as attractive.

Shopping patterns also reveal less integration than do housing patterns. Within Mount Airy, the southern portion of Germantown Avenue (the major commercial strip that also divides East Mount Airy from West Mount Airy) tends to be disproportionately patronized by African-American shoppers, as does the major supermarket on Germantown Avenue; Acme Supermarket shoppers are almost entirely African-American. Many White shoppers patronize the stores in Chestnut Hill and nearby suburban supermarkets. The Weaver's Way Co-op also disproportionately appeals to White shoppers (Heumann, 1973).

It is not clear how much these patterns reflect racial preference and how much they indicate class differences. For instance, many middle-class African-Americans do not shop at the Mount Airy Acme, but instead go to the Acme in Andorra, a shopping center in a predominantly White Philadelphia neighborhood. Similarly, middle-class African-Americans shop in Chestnut Hill. The membership base of Weaver's Way, although disproportionately White, is characterized by high levels of education and occupational prestige, suggesting more of a class, as opposed to racial, bias (Brown, 1990). And, as income data on the Henry and Houston schools reveal (see below), the class divide in education is becoming quite severe.

The Race-Class Quagmire

As is evident from our discussion, to disentangle race from class is often difficult. This difficulty shapes perceptions, which in turn may lead people to impute racial motives to situations that are really class based. Conversely, when individuals focus simply on the economics of a situation, they may miss the more subtle racial overtones. Such perceptual and interpretive differences can stimulate significant controversy. Two areas in which this has been manifest in West Mount Airy are the community's relationship to surrounding communities and its efforts at economic revitalization.

Relationship to surrounding communities. West Mount Airy borders three decidedly different neighborhoods: Chestnut Hill, East Mount Airy, and Germantown. Although its relationships with these communities are a source of internal debate, they do, and will continue to, affect what happens within West Mount Airy. For instance, the identification of West Mount Airy with Chestnut Hill by some wealthier residents may impede economic development efforts in Mount Airy.

Perhaps more problematic are the community's relationships to Germantown and East Mount Airy, neighborhoods that have much larger African-American populations (81.2 percent and 83.1 percent, respectively; 1990)[13] and much lower income levels than West Mount Airy. Although there have been efforts to work with organizations in Germantown, they are either sporadic or regional in scope.[14] Given the demographics of Germantown, the absence of any sustained organizational collaboration is sometimes interpreted in class and racial terms.

In contrast with the somewhat limited relations with Germantown, there has been a major effort by organizations in East and West Mount Airy to forge a single community.

Spearheaded by collaborations between EMAN and WMAN, these efforts have resulted in several major initiatives: Mount Airy Day, as described above, is an effort to celebrate unity; and the Mount Airy Learning Tree (a joint project between EMAN and WMAN). Other major initiatives designed to bring East and West Mount Airy together include the Mount Airy Business Association (MABA) and the Mount Airy Revitalization Team (MART). MABA is a joint business association, with members drawn from East and West Mount Airy. The association has dealt with issues of crime and was instrumental in assembling a town watch for the Germantown Avenue area (that is, the commercial strip). MART, established by MABA in January 1995, has played the lead role in economic revitalization efforts for Germantown Avenue.

The joint efforts between East and West Mount Airy have not been without issue. Some West Mount Airy residents and organization members are resistant to alliances with East Mount Airy out of fear that West Mount Airy will lose its status as a special community. Conversely, some in East Mount Airy feel that they have not benefited from the same positive press that has been showered on West Mount Airy over the years. Organizationally, there are also significant differences that need to be addressed. Whereas WMAN has come to focus more on cultural issues, EMAN maintains much more of a political stance, emphasizing issues related to social policy. Moreover, EMAN has tended to be more accommodating to requests for institutional usages (for example, nursing homes) in the neighborhood than WMAN.

Although none of these issues is insurmountable, as evidenced by successful joint efforts between the two communities, the different demographics of East and West Mount Airy increase the likelihood that class and racial interpretations will be imposed on situations.

Economic revitalization. Economic development strategies often produce winners and losers. Thus discussions of economic development become inextricably linked to the broader issues of growth, equity, displacement, and race. Current efforts to revitalize Mount Airy's commercial corridor, Germantown Avenue, have generated debates on these issues.

The stretch of Germantown Avenue that is the major commercial center of Mount Airy, and also the dividing line between East and West Mount Airy, has long been overshadowed by the more prosperous part of the avenue that runs through neighboring Chestnut Hill. With its quaint restaurants and shops, Chestnut Hill has attracted a large percentage of Mount Airy residents' money. To halt this outflow of revenue and to reinvigorate commerce on Germantown Avenue south of Chestnut Hill, MABA, through MART, has focused on economic development efforts for this segment of the avenue.

Bringing together business interests, active citizens, and an outside consulting firm, MART developed a revitalization plan for Germantown Avenue. Essentially, the plan calls for a reorientation of commercial activities on the avenue, with a focus on those businesses at the northern end. Citing the large concentration of child daycare centers, beauty salons, and fast-food restaurants in the area, the report suggests that such enterprises fail to attract a significant portion of Mount Airy residents, most notably higher income residents. In response, the plan calls for the development of stores that are more compatible with this higher income clientele.[15]

Efforts to attract this economic group are reflected in the plan's spatial dimensions as well. Since wealthier residents are disproportionately found in the northern sections of West Mount Airy, the plan targeted the northern portion of Germantown Avenue (the 7000 to 7400 blocks) for most of the development. The plan calls for the development of

a thematic specialty district focused on arts and cultural activities. The southern portion of Germantown Avenue, in contrast, received significantly less attention in the plan.

When the plan was introduced at a community meeting, it generated significant controversy. Its geographic emphasis, although justifiable in strict market terms (that is, efforts to encourage a wealthier market base), had a racial component. Not only is the northern section wealthier than other parts of West Mount Airy, it also has more White residents. Thus, critics of the plan argued that it devalued the commercial efforts of the southern sector, which is poorer and houses more African-American-owned businesses. Some critics view the plan as an effort to force those businesses with a predominantly African-American clientele off Germantown Avenue through systematic benign neglect. Defenders of the plan have countered that the plan is neither racially nor economically skewed against any group or set of interests. Rather, it is simply an effort to build on Mount Airy's economic strengths. The divisiveness expressed at the meeting forced MART back to the drawing boards. It is still in the process of revising the plan.

In assessing the positions in the controversy, it is easy to sympathize with both sides. The plan, as initially designed, did follow a definite market logic. If the objective is to lure a higher income clientele back to a local market, then one has to devise ways to appeal to that clientele. It appears that this is what the plan was, in fact, doing. However, following that market logic would probably result in class and racial consequences.

The incident is particularly instructive because it again underscores the difficulties of separating race from class. Even when individuals operate from nonracial motives, their actions may be interpreted in racial terms.

West Mount Airy: The Citywide Context

Neighborhoods are not autonomous entities. Their citywide, metropolitan, and national contexts bear directly on their viability. There is voluminous literature on the negative consequences for inner-city neighborhoods of Federal policy, especially urban renewal, highway, and public housing programs. This section looks at the citywide context—in particular, educational patterns within West Mount Airy and larger population and economic trends within Philadelphia. The second two items clearly have a metropolitan dimension as well. As for the schools, they are both local and citywide issues. At the local level, parents—both individually and through organized efforts—can pressure principals, teachers, and even the citywide board of education to bring about positive change. However, individual schools are also part of the Philadelphia School District and thus subject to overall policy, budgetary, leadership, and demographic trends.

Schools

Schools are an issue critical to neighborhood stability. The racial composition and overall quality of its schools can make a neighborhood more or less attractive to prospective homebuyers and current residents with school-aged children. In her examination of racial change in urban neighborhoods, Juliet Saltman (1990) suggested four contextual factors that distinguish successful efforts at maintaining stable racial diversity from unsuccessful ones. One factor was the absence of segregated schools. In a study of suburban integration, Dennis Keating (1994) reached a similar conclusion on the central role of the public schools in maintaining racially diverse communities.

West Mount Airy presents an interesting case, one that may ultimately test these findings. Targeted efforts by WMAN and other groups in the 1960s had a major effect on the schools. More recent trends, however, suggest a pattern of resegregation.

Recognizing the critical role of public schools in a neighborhood's vitality, WMAN and other organized interests within West Mount Airy have devoted significant attention to educational issues. Qualitative indicators suggest that these efforts have paid off. Of the 171 public elementary schools in Philadelphia, the Charles W. Henry School ranked 11th, with 55 percent of its students scoring above the national average, and the Henry Houston School ranked 36th, with 37 percent of its students scoring above the national average.[16] For many African-American families that have experienced the inferior public schools so often found in inner-city neighborhoods, West Mount Airy's public schools represent a major improvement. Middle-income and upper income White families, which have been spared the worst of the public schools and for whom private schools have long been an option, however, are much less tolerant of these local schools.

These different perspectives are reflected in the racial composition of the schools. The data show that the neighborhood public schools are disproportionately African-American. In the 1994–95 school year, the Charles W. Henry School was 63.7 percent African-American and 33.3 percent White, while the Henry Houston School was 83 percent African-American and 15.1 percent White.[17] Moreover, recent trends suggest that the Houston School is moving toward resegregation. In the 1992–93 school year, African-Americans made up 76.2 percent of the student body, compared with 83 percent for 1993–94, and Whites made up 21.8 percent, compared with 15 percent in 1993–94.[18]

Economic indicators present a somewhat puzzling trend. For both elementary schools, the data show an increase in the number of pupils from low-income families.[19] For the Henry School, this percentage increased from 40.4 percent in the 1992–93 school year to 47.8 percent in 1993–94 and to 49.7 percent in 1994–95. The increases are even more staggering for the Houston School. In the 1992–93 year, 50.9 percent of the students were from low-income families. This figure increased to 65.6 percent in 1993–94 and to 67.4 percent in 1994–95.[20] These data run counter to income data, which show an upward trend in all parts of West Mount Airy and a rate of increase much faster than the citywide rate. One possible explanation for this discrepancy is that the two elementary schools, because they rank so high citywide, are attracting poorer students from outside the district. A lack of information from the Board of Education prevents us from going beyond this speculation.[21]

Despite these problems with data accessibility, the information suggests that one of the two public elementary schools in West Mount Airy is resegregating, while income data show an increase in low-income students in both schools. It is difficult to predict what effect these trends will have on the neighborhood as a whole. Saltman and others have argued that the racial composition of local schools is a critical factor in maintaining stable, racially diverse neighborhoods. However, for those segments of West Mount Airy's White population for whom public schools were never a considered option, the racial composition of these schools may not be an issue.

Placing West Mount Airy's schools in the citywide context lends credence to this last statement. With a high-quality, nationally respected Friends (Quaker) school system and an extensive parochial school system, Philadelphia has a strong tradition of private school enrollment. Twenty-nine percent of the city's school population was enrolled in private schools in 1990.[22] The corresponding percentage for other cities was: Boston, 22.8 percent; Chicago, 21.5 percent; New York City, 20.9 percent; Pittsburgh, 24.2 percent; Cleveland, 21.3 percent; and Cincinnati, 18.7 percent.[23] Moreover, there is a correlation

between race and type of school enrollment. For the academic year 1992–93, Whites made up 79 percent of Philadelphia's private school enrollment, African-Americans 15 percent, Latinos 4 percent, and Asians 2 percent. The public-school situation was almost the opposite, with African-Americans making up 63 percent of total enrollment; Whites, 23 percent; Latinos, 10 percent; and Asians, 4 percent.[24] In the context of these citywide figures, the racial makeup of the Henry School is actually quite promising: African-Americans make up the same percentage of the school's enrollment as they do of the citywide enrollment, whereas White enrollment in the school—33.3 percent—is significantly higher than the citywide representation of 23 percent. Finally, income levels are positively correlated with private school enrollments. Thus, for many of Philadelphia's middle-income and upper income White families, the public schools may have ceased to be an issue.

In the case of West Mount Airy, this may be especially relevant. The demographic profile of the White population—in particular, education and income levels and professional status—suggests a strong orientation toward private school enrollment, especially Friends schools. As Exhibit 13 indicates, there appears to be an income and educational threshold below which private schools are not a viable option (for example, census tract 237). Above this threshold, the disposition toward private school enrollment becomes much stronger.

Exhibit 13

West Mount Airy: Private School Enrollment, Income Levels, and Education Levels, 1990

	Census Tracts					
	232	233	234	235	236	237
Private school enrollment (percent)	37.6	36.7	39.8	45.0	53.4	14.7
Median household income (dollars)	37,931	40,532	72,087	39,375	50,251	31,482
Education: percentage with B.A. or higher	60.6	51.1	67.3	57.7	71.9	36.0

Source: *City and County Data Book,* 1990 U.S. Bureau of the Census

There is another, albeit less direct, side to the school issue. While the racial composition of the schools may not be a deterrent to the residential choices of some White families, segregated schools represent a major loss in terms of diverse social interactions. Not only do children gain exposure to diversity in integrated schools, but parents do as well. In fact, many of West Mount Airy's organized efforts grew out of issues centered on children (for example, education, playgrounds, and day camp). Thus, if the public schools resegregate, the neighborhood may lose a rich and vital source of diversity.

Population and Economic Trends

Data on population and economic indicators for the city of Philadelphia suggest a situation of severe decline. Like many older industrial cities, Philadelphia's population decreased significantly after World War II. From a high population of nearly 2.1 million in 1950,[25] the city had lost 23 percent of its residents by 1990. Between 1970 and 1980

alone, the city had lost 13.4 percent of its population. Unfortunately, these trends show no sign of abatement. In fact, the 1990s may reproduce the experience of the 1970s. From 1990 to 1996, the city lost an additional 5.5 percent of its population, 87,000 people. With these losses, Philadelphia registered one of the largest population declines for U.S. cities during the 1990s.[26]

A closer look at population trends reveals that those moving out tend to be disproportionately middle class, whereas those moving in are significantly poorer. From 1985 to 1990, 24 percent of those moving into the city were living in poverty, compared with 10 percent of those moving out of the city. In 1970, 15 percent of the city's population was poor, but by 1995 the figure had climbed to 24 percent.[27]

Suburbanization and deindustrialization have also dealt the city's employment base a major blow. Between 1969 and 1995, the city lost 250,000 jobs, which represented 27 percent of its total job base.[28] Between 1979 and 1994 alone, the city lost 102,500 jobs.[29] By far the biggest hit was experienced in the manufacturing sector, where the city lost 53 percent of its jobs between 1979 and 1994. Although not as severe as the losses in manufacturing, other sectors of the economy also suffered. The transportation, communication, and utilities sector saw a 32-percent reduction in jobs; retail and wholesale experienced a 24-percent drop; the finance, insurance, and real estate sector saw a 15-percent decline, and government had an 11-percent reduction in jobs during this period.[30] Even more worrisome was the loss of jobs in the healthcare sector. The one area of Philadelphia's economy that had demonstrated robust growth registered a decline for the first time in 11 years.[31]

While losses of this magnitude in population and job bases would be problematic for any city, they are especially troubling for Philadelphia, a city that relies more heavily on its tax base as a revenue source than any other major U.S. city.[32] The population and job trends have meant that Philadelphia is losing tax ground to its suburban neighbors. In 1974 Philadelphia accounted for 27 percent of the region's tax base. By 1994 this figure had declined to 18 percent.[33]

With a declining share of the region's tax and job bases, Philadelphia's role as an economic player has become smaller. Internally, these losses translate into a weakening of city services and a continuing decline of the city's physical infrastructure. In short, the city has become much less attractive to many potential residents and businesses.

If the city continues to experience population losses of this magnitude, its housing market will unquestionably suffer. In many parts of the city, this has already become manifest. Although areas like West Mount Airy have maintained comparatively healthy housing markets, they too will feel the effects of continued outmigration.

Philadelphia's Housing and Community Development Policies

The city of Philadelphia operates an impressive array of nationally recognized programs intended to provide housing services and financial support for low- and moderate-income renters and buyers. Funds for these programs are derived from local taxation (for example, the real estate transfer tax) and from higher levels of government (for example, Community Development Block Grants [CDBGs] from the Federal Government). Additionally, public-private partnerships leverage funds from the private sector, which support not-for-profit as well as for-profit housing initiatives.

Officially, Philadelphia's housing policies are neither segregative nor integrative.[34] In fact, they are largely silent on the intended or expected racial outcomes. In practice, however, the service delivery mechanisms may unintentionally contribute to segregative housing patterns. In Philadelphia, as in many cities, housing services are delivered by place-based organizations (that is, community development corporations and housing counseling agencies) and organizations that are selected on a geographic basis, which usually coincides with a specific racial/ethnic identification. Such organizations understandably pursue territorial interests fueled by localized spheres of knowledge (that is, a strong familiarity with neighborhood housing markets). Structuring housing assistance in this fashion, however, often perpetuates and extends housing markets that concentrate residents by race and income.

The potential for segregative patterns to emerge from current service delivery practices was noted by John Andrew Gallery, former director of Philadelphia's Office of Housing and Community Development. Speaking at a conference of pro-integrationists, Gallery said the following:

> At the present time there is no doubt that the City's housing policy, although not intentionally so, preserves the existing patterns of racial and economic segregation. The City's housing policy relies on Community Development Corporations [CDCs] for its implementation and so must inherently support the preservation of existing racial and economic patterns because CDCs are committed to serving their neighborhoods and that normally means serving the existing racial character of residents and developing low-income housing in areas where all the housing is already low income. Much as I support, work with, and advocate for CDCs, [I] cannot help but recognize that their fundamental weakness is this tendency to preserve these existing racial and economic patterns.[35]

The effects on West Mount Airy of the city's housing policies have been minimal at best. These programs focus on assisting low- and moderate-income and minority homeseekers in mostly low- and moderate-income and minority markets. Consequently, much of the housing market in West Mount Airy is beyond the price caps of these programs. However, looking at the broader Northwest section of Philadelphia, the picture changes. It is not unreasonable to suspect that the rate at which portions of Germantown and East Mount Airy have resegregated and the relative lack of diversity in Roxborough and Manayunk are attributable, in part, to the policy approach described above. The lack of any comprehensive study of government housing programs prevents us from making a more definitive statement on the extent to which these programs contribute to or mitigate racially divided housing markets.

Lessons

The experience of West Mount Airy offers numerous lessons on diversity. First, the exceptional nature of West Mount Airy and the other neighborhoods included in the larger study suggests that maintaining diverse neighborhoods is not easy. Typically, institutional practices combine with individual perceptions and behavior to form near-insurmountable barriers.

Second, creating and maintaining racially diverse neighborhoods results from the interactions of various sets of factors. As the early history of West Mount Airy demonstrated, environmental factors in the absence of organizing efforts would not have been sufficient to stem the White exodus. Similarly, organizers had to be able to point to reasons why residents should remain. It is doubtful that appeals to principles alone would have carried the day.

Third, West Mount Airy's demographic makeup—middle-class and upper middle-class, highly educated, professional—was one of the critical factors facilitating stable racial integration. Moreover, this demographic profile is not atypical for racially diverse neighborhoods. Oak Park (a suburb of Chicago), the Hyde Park neighborhood of Chicago, and Cleveland Heights and Shaker Heights (both suburbs of Cleveland) are examples of racially integrated communities whose population demographics closely resemble those of West Mount Airy. The West Mount Airy study combined with these other examples raises the question of whether racial diversity is possible in neighborhoods with different demographic profiles.

Fourth, the study demonstrates that the area of race relations is an extremely sensitive one. This country has a much longer history of negative than of positive relations. Compounding the problem is the difficulty involved in separating race from class. When dealing in race-related issues, the possibilities for miscommunication, misunderstanding, and misinterpretation are quite high. Consequently, individuals, especially those in leadership positions (that is, community activists and organization leaders), need to be extremely sensitive to the issues. The research suggests that such a sensitivity is present in West Mount Airy. Even those who criticized some organizations or plans noted that West Mount Airy was the type of community where objections would be heard. For critics to have this much confidence is a very positive statement about the community.

Fifth, despite neighborhood efforts to preserve racial diversity and viable communities, the city and metropolitan contexts can have negative effects. If the city of Philadelphia continues to decline—and there are no indications to the contrary—ultimately, that decline will have a negative effect on West Mount Airy.

Sixth, there is a need for a comprehensive assessment of the effect of Federal, State, and local housing policies on racial and economic diversity within local housing markets. Such a study should identify effective mechanisms for promoting racially and economically diverse housing markets.

Authors

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We would like to thank Pat Henning and David Moore for unselfishly giving their time and guidance to this study. Thanks also go to David Elesh, director of Temple University's Social Science Data Library for preparing the maps. Mike Maly, who coordinated parts of the larger national study, was always prompt in his response to questions and, most important, never lost his sense of humor. We also want to thank those residents and activists who spoke candidly of their experiences in and perception of West Mount Airy.

Notes

1. Four of the six census tracts that make up East Mount Airy have an African-American population of at least 90 percent. The remaining two tracts are much more diverse: one tract is 65.8 percent African-American and the other 36.5 percent African-American. There has been White movement into East Mount Airy. Some people attribute this to the increased housing prices in West Mount Airy, others to organizational efforts by, among others, East Mount Airy Neighbors (EMAN) and West Mount Airy Neighbors (WMAN) to erase the distinction between "East" and "West" and create a single Mount Airy. Germantown, at the census-tract level, actually exhibits more diversity than East Mount Airy. Of the 13 census tracts that make up Germantown, 3 tracts are at least 90 percent, 7 tracts are at least 85 percent, 10 tracts are 75 percent or more, and the remaining 3 tracts are 68.3 percent, 66.6 percent, and 49.6 percent African-American.

2. A literature review has revealed several key works that focus on this early period of racial diversity. Of particular importance are two doctoral dissertations and one senior's honors thesis, all written at the University of Pennsylvania. Leonard Heumann's dissertation, "The Definition and Analysis of Stable Racial Integration: The Case of West Mount Airy, Philadelphia" (1973), Samuel Brown's dissertation, "Community Attachment in a Racially Integrated Neighborhood," (1990) and Brian Leaf's honors thesis, "Breaking the Barrier: The Success of Racial Integration in the Philadelphia Community of Mount Airy, 1950–1975" (1995), together provide an excellent examination and recounting of the factors that contributed to West Mount Airy's smooth transition to a racially diverse community. These works provide a solid overview of the early activities of critical individuals and organizations in West Mount Airy. Juliet Saltman's book, *A Fragile Movement: The Struggle for Neighborhood Stabilization* (1990), examines the activities of organizations and individuals in five cities that sought to maintain racially integrated neighborhoods. The examination is conducted in the context of local and national factors that contribute to maintaining such neighborhoods. Some critical factors at the local level are neighborhood amenities, a comprehensive school desegregation program, deconcentration of public housing, and an extensive affirmative marketing program. National factors include the commitment of the Federal Government to enforcing civil rights legislation, the degree of coordination between fair housing efforts and neighborhood stabilization movements, and the level of funding available to the movement organization. Although Philadelphia was not one of the five cities, the book does provide a snapshot comparison of West and East Mount Airy to explain why the former maintained a much greater degree of racial diversity than the latter. Jack Guttentag's article, "Racial Integration and Home Prices: The Case of West Mount Airy" (1970), is a market analysis of West Mount Airy in the initial periods of racial transition.

3. *City and County Data Book*, 1990 U.S. Bureau of the Census.

4. *City and County Data Book*, 1980 U.S. Bureau of the Census.

5. Median family incomes are even higher; the respective figures are $84,130 for census tract 234, $41,186 for census tract 237, and $30,140 citywide.

6. 1990 U.S. Bureau of the Census. Selected Tables; Population and Housing Data: 1990 and 1980; Technical Information Paper: Philadelphia City Planning Commission.

7. *Mixed zone* is the term that Rapkin and Grigsby (1960) used for areas where African-Americans made purchases.

8. *City and County Data Book*, 1960 U.S. Bureau of the Census.

9. Oral History Project, interview with Judy Schermer, November 25, 1988.

10. East Mount Airy Neighbors was formed in 1966 as the result of a series of meetings and a much publicized sermon by the Reverend Rudolph Gelsey entitled, "East Mount Airy: Slum, Ghetto, or Good Place to Live?" The formation of EMAN was a recognition of the rapid racial change in East Mount Airy and of the inability of existing small organizations to adequately address issues associated with neighborhood change. Gelsey became the first president of EMAN. Under his leadership, EMAN addressed issues of real estate practices and schools, much as its counterpart WMAN had done when it began.

11. In chronological order, these pieces include: Gordy (1959), "Mount Airy Group Drafts Code of Ethics for Home Sales"; "NCCJ Sees Results: Mount Airy Sets Example in Integration," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, July 30, 1964; Corr (1974), "Mount Airy Braggarts, not Bigots"; Shapiro (1979), "Happy Birthday: Civic Group Celebrates Unique Urban Life-Style"; Cass (1987), "A Jewish Rebirth in Mount Airy"; Huler (1991), "Very Mount Airy"; Heavens (1993), "A Diverse Enclave Celebrates A Century, Living in Pelham"; and Jones (1994), "A City Community Prides itself on Its Diversity, Country Beauty: Living in West Mount Airy."

12. For further description, see "Creating and Sustaining Viable, Inclusive, Diverse, Stable Urban Neighborhoods in the United States. Neighborhood, City and Census Tract Summaries 1980–1990: Demographic and Socioeconomic Statistics." A working report prepared by the Policy Research Action Group, Leadership Council for Metropolitan Open Communities, Chicago, 1995.

13. 1990 U.S. Bureau of the Census. Selected Tables; Population and Housing Data: 1990 and 1980; Technical Paper: Philadelphia City Planning Commission.

14. There have been efforts to deal with a whole series of issues on a regional basis. However, the impetus for these initiatives usually does not come from a West Mount Airy organization. Efforts by specific organizations in West Mount Airy to work with organizations in Germantown have occurred on a much more limited and sporadic basis.

15. "Mount Airy Business District Market Facts," (partial draft), MART, in consultation with E.L. Crow, Inc., Consultants, 1995.

16. *Philadelphia Inquirer*, October 23, 1994.

17. Both the Henry and Houston schools are grades Kindergarten–8.

18. Philadelphia Public School Profile, Board of Education, 1994–95 school year, Board of Education, City of Philadelphia.

19. Low-income families are defined as those meeting one (or more) of the following criteria: recipient of Aid to Families with Dependent Children, refugee status, or receiving free or reduced-price lunch.

20. Philadelphia Public School Profile, 1994–95 school year, Board of Education, City of Philadelphia.

21. Numerous efforts were made to obtain information from the Board of Education regarding school boundaries, where students who attended these two schools came from, and the school district's desegregation program. These requests were either met with responses of "I don't know" or "Contact so and so." Following up on the latter referrals resulted in similar responses.

22. 1990 U.S. Bureau of the Census, Housing and Population.

23. 1990 U.S. Bureau of the Census, Housing and Population.

24. *Philadelphia Inquirer*, October 23, 1994.

25. The actual figure was 2,071,605. Technical Paper: Philadelphia City Planning Commission; 1990 U.S. Bureau of the Census. Selected Tables; Population and Housing Data: 1990 and 1980.

26. *Philadelphia Inquirer*, March 24, 1996.

27. *Philadelphia Inquirer*, September 24, 1995.

28. *Philadelphia Inquirer*, September 24, 1995.

29. *Philadelphia Inquirer*, September 24, 1995.

30. *Philadelphia Inquirer*, September 27, 1995.

31. *Philadelphia Inquirer*, March 24, 1996.

32. In 1980, for example, Philadelphia's tax base supported 72 percent of the city's budget. In several other large cities, the percentages were: Boston, 37 percent; Baltimore, 43 percent; New York, 54 percent; and Chicago, 65 percent. Goode and Schneider, (1994).

33. *Philadelphia Inquirer*, September 27, 1995.

34. Fair housing laws are by nature antisegregative. However, we are referring here to policies and programs that deal directly with providing housing, like CDBGs, as opposed to regulatory policies.

35. From a speech given at Fund for an OPEN Society's conference, "Challenging Residential Apartheid: Quality of Living Through Intentional Integration," Lutheran Theological Seminary, Philadelphia, April 28, 1995. Reprinted in *Open Forum* Vol. 19(1), Winter 1995–96.

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