CITY & COMMUNITY

The Civic Side of Diversity: Ambivalence and Belonging at the Neighborhood Level

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Although diversity has become a cherished ideal for Americans, a growing literature suggests that many are also ambivalent about lived experiences of diversity. Focusing on three historically homogeneous neighborhoods in Atlanta, Minneapolis, and Los Angeles, this paper explores the "civic talk" used to express this ambivalence through interrelated frames of social order and civic engagement. In all three neighborhoods, long-term residents and neighborhood association members speak fluently about race, class, and other forms of diversity in their neighborhoods. Yet when they assess who "belongs" in the neighborhoods, the discussion is coded in civic terms. This framing enables neighborhood association members to act as gatekeepers, wielding civic discourse in ways that reinforce traditional neighborhood boundaries and social hierarchies, while maintaining structural inequalities.

INTRODUCTION

Academic discussions about diversity typically position the concept in relation to philosophical and political debates about equality, identity, and recognition (Goldberg 1994; Gordon and Newfield 1996; Hartmann and Gerteis 2005; Kymlicka 1995; McLaren 1997; Melzer, Weinberger, and Zinman 1998; and Taylor 1994). Most Americans have come to champion a less expansive but still idealistic form of the concept (Embrick 2011; Glazer 1997) in which diversity "will breed tolerance, respect, and, because it increases the pool of skills, will enhance the effectiveness of work groups and contribute to economic prosperity" (Wood 2003: 5–6). On the ground, however, Americans are ambivalent about diversity; even as they affirm this idealistic vision, they struggle with the practical implications of living among those who are different from themselves (see Anderson 2011; Berrey 2005, 2015; Brown-Saracino 2010; Burke 2012; Charles 2009; Ellen 2000; Maly 2008).

Examining this ambivalence in neighborhood settings, we identify and analyze the civic frames that organize how urban residents talk about diversity and community belonging—what sorts of people are included and excluded—in ways that reinforce tra-

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This article is part of the American Mosaic Project funded by the Edelstein Foundation of Minneapolis, MN.

City & Community 18:1 March 2019
doi: 10.1111/cico.12363

ditional neighborhood boundaries and social hierarchies. In particular, we analyze "civic talk" in three neighborhoods, one predominantly white and affluent (Los Angeles' Hollywood Hills West), another primarily white and middle-class (Minneapolis' Nokomis East), and the other mainly black and low-income (Atlanta's West End). Although defined by social homogeneity, these neighborhoods all contend with various levels of diversity, visible as class and race differences as well as differences of religion, sexuality, and citizenship. In all three neighborhoods, neighborhood association members and longtime residents are invested in the diversity ideal yet continue to cling to a cultural vision of neighborhood belonging that is relatively exclusive. We analyze the civic frames used to talk about belonging. These discursive strategies allow residents to define the parameters of community membership that often exclude their neighbors along lines of race and class, while at the same time enabling them to square this exclusion with their acceptance of diversity as an ideal. In our interviews, residents talked about belonging in terms of the civic culture of the neighborhood, an understanding that they framed in two ways. They questioned the inclusion of residents who they perceived to be at odds with the neighborhood's commitment to social order (indexed by unruly or illegal behavior) and who demonstrated a lack of civic engagement in local groups, particularly the neighborhood association.

In what follows, we examine the recent literature on tensions in the diversity discourse and discuss why these tensions are particularly salient in contexts like the ones we explore: historically homogeneous neighborhoods where diversity, while welcomed, is weighed against an established sense of community. We then introduce the three neighborhoods and the frames that organize "civic talk" about diversity. Most significantly, we argue that researchers and community leaders alike should recognize this "civic talk" about belonging as a way that ambivalence about diversity is commonly expressed. While these civic frames are ostensibly neutral, in practice they are wielded to exclude along lines of race and class, with important consequences for neighborhood residents who are perceived to disrupt social order or not engage in neighborhood institutions. Our analysis demonstrates that neighborhood context is an important factor in the ways that these frames are voiced and the various groups against which they are deployed.

DIVERSITY DISCOURSE AND AMBIVALENCE

Americans' embrace of an idealized vision of diversity (Wood 2003) is expressed through what Bell and Hartmann (2007) have termed the "happy talk" of diversity: an upbeat discourse that enables an ignorance, and even a de-politicization, of persistent structural inequalities. Bell and Hartmann maintained that the language of diversity "creates a real, albeit seemingly comfortable, tension in the diversity discourse: people have the ability to talk about race without ever acknowledging the unequal realities and experiences of racial differences in American society" (Bell and Hartmann 2007: 905).

Suggesting that this happy talk may not be as uniform as it appears, Burke and other scholars pointed to a certain ambivalence people feel when their appreciation for the diversity ideal comes into tension with the cultural and material differences that accompany race and class diversity in their own neighborhoods (Berrey 2005, 2015; Burke 2012; Joseph 2002; Lichterman 1996; Voyer 2013). For example, in her analysis of diversity in three Chicago neighborhoods, Burke (2012) argued, "The complexity and ambivalence

that residents expressed around diversity disrupts their own happy talk, but also echoes the uncertainty that many people all over the nation face when diversity moves from an abstract ideal down into one's lived experiences" (p. 114). Much of the current work on the dynamics of diversity and inclusion in neighborhoods has examined changing demographics, including the unsettling of established neighborhood dynamics (Berrey 2005, 2015; Brown-Saracino 2004) in neighborhoods that would be considered racially heterogeneous. While not always focused on diversity discourse, case studies of particular localities including Philadelphia (Anderson 2011), Los Angeles (Charles 2009), and Chicago (Berrey 2005, 2015; Burke 2012; Maly 2008; Pattillo-McCoy 1999; Wilson and Taub 2006) have opened a space for understanding the expression of this ambivalence.

Neighborhood associations are an important site for the analysis of ambivalence toward diversity. As "organizations oriented toward maintaining or improving the quality of life in a geographically delimited residential area" (Logan and Rabrenovic 1990: 68), neighborhood associations are enduring organized structures for participatory democracy cultivated on the local level. These associations link neighborhood residents with city government, and in doing so, provide everyday citizens with the power to leverage decision-making structures, while cultivating social capital. Neighborhood organizations and their memberships are thus local sites in which engaged residents articulate and reaffirm understandings of the norms and expectations of the neighborhood. Scholars such as Mayorga-Gallo (2014) and Tissot (2015) have explored the ways that diversity discourse and ideology circulate in these associations, specifically with respect to race and class. In particular, Mayorga-Gallo identified a "white, urban, middle-class habitus" among white neighborhood association members that remained unchallenged by the ways that diversity ideology operates in urban neighborhoods. As she argued, "Even when people care deeply about issues of equity and justice, racial inequity can still be reproduced and continue to benefit those with race and class privileges" (Mayorga-Gallo 2014: 24). Although committed to diversity as an abstract ideal, these middle-class urban dwellers subscribe to a diversity ideology that emphasizes the mere presence (or addition) of diverse demographic groups, rather than shifting existing power and social hierarchies in the neighborhood (Mayorga-Gallo 2014).

Our analysis draws from and builds on the scholarship on ambivalence about diversity and belonging on the local level. Focusing on neighborhoods that are historically homogeneous along lines of race and class, we consider the discursive frames that residents and neighborhood association members employ to describe their ambivalent attitudes toward experiences of diversity in their neighborhoods. In order to manage their contradictory feelings about diversity, neighborhood association members and longtime residents use "civic talk" to delineate belonging and define outgroups in their neighborhood contexts. We find that this civic talk, in particular the frames of social order and civic engagement, enables them to moderate feelings of ambivalence, maintaining an acceptance of the diversity ideal while reinforcing established boundaries of neighborhood belonging. As our research demonstrates, the reproduction of social hierarchies and inequalities occurs in a variety of neighborhood contexts where residents are trying to make sense of contradictory and ambivalent emotions about diversity in light of localized neighborhood-specific challenges. We argue that, whereas happy talk may ignore structural inequalities (Bell and Hartmann 2007), civic talk effectively masks and maintains these inequalities on the neighborhood level.

DATA AND NEIGHBORHOOD CONTEXTS

In our analysis of ambivalence toward diversity at the neighborhood level, we draw from ethnographic fieldwork and semi-structured interviews with participants in neighborhood associations in three major U.S. cities—Atlanta, Los Angeles, and Minneapolis. In comparison to other studies of racial ambivalence and neighborhood-level belonging that concentrate on diverse urban neighborhoods (Burke 2012; Mayorga-Gallo 2014; Tissot 2015), our study centers neighborhoods that are historically homogeneous, with one racial group comprising more than 75 percent of the neighborhood population. In Los Angeles and Minneapolis, these homogeneous neighborhoods contained a majority of white residents, while the Atlanta neighborhood was predominantly black.

These data are part of a larger mixed-methods study, the American Mosaic Project (AMP), which examines post-9/11 attitudes toward, and experiences of, diversity, race, religion, and belonging in the United States. The qualitative aspect of the AMP focused on cities across four regions of the country: East Coast, West Coast, Midwest, and the South. Researchers conducted ethnographic fieldwork at cultural festivals and events focused on ethnic identity and heritage, interfaith organizations and activities, and neighborhoods, with a concentration on neighborhood associations. In total, the research team conducted 166 semi-structured interviews. For the purposes of this paper, we focus on the neighborhood association research, including a subset of 40 interviews with association members and other residents, and more than 50 ethnographic fieldnote entries from association meetings and other neighborhood events. Through a series of open-ended questions, the semi-structured interviews comprised four main lines of questioning: 1) general questions about diversity in the United States, including how the respondents would define diversity and any benefits or challenges of diversity, 2) questions about diversity in the neighborhood and neighborhood association as well as groups that would not be welcome or would not fit in, 3) the values and ideals that bring people together as Americans, and 4) the importance of respondents' various demographics (such as their race or religion) to their overall sense of identity.

In analyzing the interview and ethnographic data, we developed and then refined an inductive coding scheme in ATLAS.ti, coding for themes including definitions of diversity, discussions of diversity in a positive light, the challenges of diversity, and implicit and explicit discussions of belonging and exclusion on the neighborhood level. Our coding scheme was able to capture the tensions between the abstract discourse of the diversity ideal and the friction of everyday experiences. Focusing on the series of questions about diversity in relation to neighborhood belonging, we analyze the specific frames our interviewees use to articulate the experience of ambivalence that arises from these tensions.

Conducted in the summer of 2003, the ethnographic and interview research captures a snapshot of neighborhood-level understandings of diversity and belonging in the early post-9/11 moment. During this time, discussions of difference and attitudes toward various outgroups were particularly salient, both socially and politically. Given national discourses of difference that arguably reflected a heightened wariness of others, our paper examines the way these discourses permeated neighborhood-level understandings and experiences of diversity and belonging. Over a decade later, these themes remain as relevant as ever, even as some of the social and political parameters of the debate have changed.

A SNAPSHOT OF THE NEIGHBORHOODS

The three neighborhoods at the heart of our analysis are all historically homogeneous along lines of race and class: Los Angeles' Hollywood Hills West (primarily white and wealthy), Minneapolis' Nokomis East (mostly white and middle-class), and Atlanta's West End (black and low-income). At the same time, each neighborhood included small pockets of demographic diversity, and although this diversity was not necessarily new, the neighborhood association members still struggled to contend with this difference and continued to discuss it as if it was a recent or perplexing phenomenon. We have chosen to focus on these three neighborhoods with their regional and demographic variation in order to demonstrate the salience of civic discourse across otherwise very different contexts. In this section, we introduce the demographics of each neighborhood to frame our analysis.

A major metropolitan area in the Midwest, Minneapolis is a majority-white city with growing numbers of people of color, including significant African American, Somali, Hmong, Latino, and Native American populations in the city. In the decade before our fieldwork, the white population fell from 78 percent to 65 percent, a decrease in both relative and absolute terms, as non white populations grew and some whites decamped for the suburbs and exurban areas (City of Minneapolis n.d.). The city remains deeply segregated, and inequality has increased alongside racial diversity (Bernardo 2014; MN Advisory Committee 2013). Located in South Minneapolis, Nokomis East is dominated by modest owner-occupied single-family homes. Solidly middle-class and predominantly white, the neighborhood's diversity is concentrated in one area in particular. Known as "Bossen" after the name of a nearby park, this area is home to the majority of the neighborhood's black and Latino residents and is dominated by higher density apartment buildings and Section 8 rentals—a sharp contrast to the rest of the neighborhood.

Historically more racially mixed than Minneapolis, Atlanta has been a majority-black city since the 1970s, with a large and long-standing African American population. During the white flight of the mid-20th century, Atlanta's West End neighborhood became almost entirely African American. Bordering historically black colleges Spelman and Morehouse, West End has a considerable history of Civil Rights and black nationalist activism. At the time of our research, West End was almost 97 percent African American and predominantly low income, with 65 percent of the neighborhood's households living on less than $25,000 a year, while almost 10 percent made more than $60,000 per year (U.S. Census Bureau Census Viewer n.d.). One resident described West End as "a very diverse neighborhood that will give you some people that are making a couple million dollars and others that are barely making it, and everything in between." The sharp class divisions between middle-class homeowners and Section 8 renters caused friction in the neighborhood and scrambled race- and class-based solidarities in ways that did not occur in other neighborhoods. At the height of the housing market in the early 2000s, the property prices in West End remained low compared to other areas in Atlanta. For several years prior to our research, the neighborhood had attracted some new residents, mainly white gay men. Also lured by the relatively cheap housing, amateur property developers had been buying homes in the neighborhood and trying to "flip" them, and longtime residents were wary of these profiteers.

As an established majority–minority city, Los Angeles includes substantial populations of African American, Asian, and Latino residents, with non-Hispanic whites comprising

less than 30 percent of the population. The city is made up of 40 percent of residents who are foreign-born, primarily from Latin America ("Mapping L.A." n.d.). This level of demographic variety means that interviewees defined diversity differently than the other neighborhoods, recognizing the uniqueness of the mix of people and cultures of their city. One resident described it this way:

> The neighborhood that I grew up in was white, the need to be diverse there meant being "something other than white" so it really didn't matter. Whereas here, [. . .] you're not just black but you could be Haitian black you know, and then maybe you could be Jamaican, or maybe you're American black, or maybe you're from South Africa [. . .] you can really take a general category of black and break it down into so many different things [. . .] you get the idea that diversity kind of subsets down and breaks down further.

Compared to the rest of the city, Hollywood Hills West is 85 percent white and one of the wealthiest neighborhoods in Los Angeles, with a median income of over $100,000 ("Mapping L.A." n.d.). It is also a historic "gayborhood" with a relatively large percentage of households comprised of single, middle-aged men. The neighborhood is divided with residents on the west side living in the more affluent and pastoral "Hills" versus the more densely-populated east side known as the "Flats." The neighborhood association's committees in the Flats addressed issues like gang activity, prostitution, drugs, and homelessness, while those in the Hills were more concerned with the impact of development, the maintenance of parks and recreational areas, and the large production studios in the vicinity.

AMBIVALENCE IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD CONTEXT

Well-versed in discourses of diversity, the majority of residents we interviewed professed to be invested in and committed to the idea of diversity as a positive and even necessary force in their neighborhoods. In this "happy talk" of diversity, the concept was linked to harmony rather than discord. Lance Hull,[1] a white Hollywood Hills West resident, used a musical illustration when he described diversity as "a choir having different voices." Participants in the neighborhood associations defined the concept broadly to include variations of race, sexuality, socioeconomic status, religion, and even differing political views. Jackie Newton, a middle-aged African American woman and Atlanta resident, summarized this sentiment, which was echoed by interviewees across all three neighborhoods:

> On a social level you'd say [diversity is] accepting people with different points of view. It could be on gender, race, socioeconomic level. . . . I wouldn't say the traditional sense of [diversity as] being purely racial is breaking down, but maybe at this time, we're in a transition period where you think of diversity formerly strictly as a racial issue. Now it's, you know, sexual orientation, economics, and even political point of view. So perhaps there's an evolution of what we're talking about.

Stakeholders in the neighborhoods also recognized that diversity necessitated concrete efforts at inclusion. Sarah Durant, a middle-class white woman who worked with children in a Nokomis East school, said that diversity means "welcoming everybody and making a place or our institutions comfortable for everyone."

While residents expressed support for the diversity ideal, they also qualified their embrace of diversity with an understanding of the "comfort" they found in contexts where

people were similar to themselves. Referring in particular to racial homogeneity, many explicitly discussed this comfort as if it were a taken-for-granted social fact. Paul Eliot, an African American resident of West End and a vice president of the neighborhood association, said, "You know, let's face it, people like to be with people they feel comfortable with. It's a general rule. White folks tend to want to live with other white folks, and black folks like to live with black folks, you know. Hispanic people all seem to live together. A lot of times given the choice, people, that's something that they like." Eliot's statement about the comfort of residential racial homogeneity implied a certain level of discomfort associated with diversity on the neighborhood level.

Troubling the correlation of demographic sameness with comfort, some residents recognized discomfort as vital to the cultivation of diversity. Speaking as a white resident in a predominantly black neighborhood, Jim Bradburd, an Atlanta native in his mid-50s, echoed this sentiment:

> When I go back to the neighborhood where I was raised I have this innate feeling that I'm perfectly accepted, that it's very easy for me to blend in and there's a commonality of identity. Well, I don't feel that in the neighborhood that I'm in now. [. . .] I happen to like that everyone is different, I mean, that's the environment I want to be in. But it is different; it's not quite as comfortable an environment in that sense, so *it doesn't mean that it's a comfortable neighborhood I guess to live in, but I think it's a healthy one.* (Emphasis added)

Bradburd identified a seeming contradiction that a healthy, diverse neighborhood can be an uncomfortable environment. This paradox is at the heart of Bradburd and other residents' ambivalent feelings about diversity on the neighborhood level.

Many urban residents acknowledged with ambivalence that concrete experiences of diversity within the neighborhood context do not necessarily reflect the happy image of musical harmony. Ursula Gunn, a white Atlanta resident in her 40s, described her area as a "real neighborhood" where people "get to know each other and even argue," a neighborhood that has a diversity of strong voices and viewpoints, "even if they dissent at times." Some residents experienced neighborhood levels of diversity as disorienting, "like the familiar is being lost," as a white Hollywood Hills West resident put it. Reframing and qualifying their "happy talk" about diversity in the abstract, residents admitted that lived experiences of diversity require dealing with the discomfort and dissention that arise from differences of opinion and perspective and perhaps sacrificing some common identity to cultivate belonging for many different people. This discomfort and dissension are the sources of ambivalence that result from actually grappling with diversity and difference to negotiate belonging. Although residents indicated that they were seemingly open to diverse neighbors, their experiences with the "discomfort" of diversity on the neighborhood level ran counter to their happy talk discourse. These contradictory values and experiences are at the heart of their ambivalence about diversity in the neighborhoods.

CIVIC FRAMINGS OF AMBIVALENCE

In order to manage and express this ambivalence, residents employed a distinctly civic discourse to reconcile their support for diversity with their exclusion of particular residents in their neighborhoods. Rather than expressing categorical differences of race, class, religion, or sexuality to be problematic, residents instead identified the behaviors

and cultural expectations thought to conform to, or violate, community standards. Compared with overt exclusionary language about demographic difference, this "civic talk" gives the impression of openness and inclusivity, even though it accompanies and encodes race, class, and other forms of difference. We argue that civic talk is pervasive across neighborhood context because, while ostensibly neutral, it does not actively challenge cultural definitions of belonging or structural inequalities in the neighborhood. These civic discourses involve their own kinds of cultural distinctions and social exclusions surrounding the definitions of "good neighbors" and what sorts of people are deemed capable of adapting to the local culture and expectations. First, the "social order" frame links belonging to respectable behavior, including keeping properties clean and orderly, avoiding crime and drugs. Second, the "civic engagement" frame connects belonging more directly to involvement in neighborhood organizations, a kind of on-the-ground membership in the community that is particularly valued in (white) middle-class neighborhoods.

Although local challenges and context varied across our sites, these civic frames were employed in similar ways to express residents' ambivalence and demarcate neighborhood-level belonging. In Minneapolis' Nokomis East neighborhood, these frames reflected the white, urban, middle-class habitus that Mayorga-Gallo (2014) has identified, distinguishing lower income and nonwhite residents as those who do not belong. In Atlanta's West End, the frames had a double valence: The social order frame positioned homeowners (middle-class and lower middle-class) in opposition to Section 8 renters (low-income), while the civic engagement frame positioned residents (both black and white, middle-class and low-income) in relation to absentee landlords and amateur developers using the neighborhood as a platform for making a profit. There was a similar double valence in Hollywood Hills West, in which (mostly white) homeowners saw themselves in opposition to wealthy, white developers on the neighborhood's west side and the crime and drugs associated with low-income residents on the east side.

Ultimately, civic talk enables residents to manage their ambivalence by demarcating what types of diversity and diverse neighbors are welcome in the neighborhood, while identifying unruly, uninvolved, and undesirable neighbors. Although belonging is discussed in terms of behavioral norms and expectations that appear equally available to all residents, these civic frames are exclusive and conservative. They are exclusive in the sense that they specify who does not belong as much as who does, often reinforcing race and class distinctions, and conservative in the sense that they privilege already-established boundaries of neighborhood belonging and existing distributions of local social capital. Those residents from demographic groups deemed outside of community membership of the neighborhood continue to face structural and economic inequalities, as a result in part of their exclusion from the neighborhood association and decision-making structures.

SOCIAL ORDER

One of the frames of this civic talk centers on issues of social order, which encompass a shared sense of neighborhood culture, norms, and acceptable behavior. Discussions about infractions of social order, which often broke down along demographic lines in terms of race and class, served to reaffirm and maintain the social hierarchies within

the neighborhood. Rather than specifically or explicitly ascribing challenges of social order to the experience of neighborhood diversity, this discourse denoted neighborhood exclusion based on three common and inter-related themes. Residents who were deemed to belong 1) abided by the law and did not engage in illegal activity, 2) contributed to the esthetics of the neighborhood, and 3) demonstrated a commitment to the shared cultural values of its residents (described by one interviewee as "the rules of the community"). In this way, residents mitigated their ambivalence about diversity in the neighborhood. They attempted to maintain their support of diversity, while demarcating which of their neighbors did not uphold social order and were therefore not considered full and welcome members of the community. Whereas the social order frame is present in each neighborhood and employed in similar ways, this language varies depending on the particularities of the neighborhoods, including neighborhood demographics and localized challenges.

This civic frame defined valuable community members as ones who upheld law and order and avoided illegal activity. In the Nokomis East neighborhood, residents singled out the Bossen area and its inhabitants as the source of problems with social disorder. In the eyes of neighborhood association members and white residents, some of the "otherness" of Bossen had to do with crime and drug use, which they had trouble reconciling with their understanding of their otherwise quiet neighborhood. James Ferrin, a white neighborhood organizer with longstanding ties to the area, cited "an increase in drugs and gang activity down in Bossen," categories often used as proxies for race and class differences. The ways that these white residents employed the civic frame of social order positioned Bossen residents as invading outsiders, rather than fellow community members. For instance, Rob Edwards, a white community organizer who worked closely with the neighborhood association, described the Bossen area as if it were a completely separate community, saying, "You've actually got two areas [Nokomis East and Bossen], it's like within one neighborhood [. . .] what you've really got here, are completely different communities, and I don't think there's been a way found yet how to bridge that." This approach to Bossen as separate from the larger community belied the neighborhood association members and longtime residents' intolerance toward the perceived social disorder in the area. For instance, the members of the neighborhood association were particularly worried about the potential for an increase in gang and drug activity being "pushed" into their neighborhood as other higher crime areas in the city were being "cleaned up." To mitigate issues of gangs, crime, and drugs in Bossen, the neighborhood association helped facilitate a working group between landlords who owned rental units in the area and local police officers. On anonymous tips from Nokomis East residents, they would have the police "look in on" specific problem houses or residents. Given these examples, Nokomis East residents, it seems, were quick to turn to formal local institutions such as law enforcement to deal with the perceived social disorder in Bossen.

Similar to the sentiments expressed in Nokomis East, neighborhood association members in West End were wary of what Langston Hammond called "the criminal element." In response to a question about what types of people would not be welcome in his neighborhood, Hammond, a longtime African American resident and self-described community activist, discussed this exclusion from the community saying,

> There's one group that I do not want to see move into this neighborhood. That's the criminal element, the people that come into the neighborhood that have ill intent [. . .] people that

> have something that is not going to conform with where the neighborhood wishes to go in the direction of the positive, safe, and livable environment.

But unlike the pervasiveness of the tough-on-crime approach to Bossen residents, West End neighborhood association members recognized that, given the demographic (in particular, the socioeconomic) diversity in the neighborhood, some level of petty crime was to be expected. Lionel Peterson, an African American resident of West End since the 1970s, distinguished his neighborhood from others "out in the suburbs," acknowledging that West End was "an environment where everybody does not have equal resources." He argued that the more middle-class West End residents had a responsibility not to flaunt their wealth or else they would invite petty crime, "You don't wave a steak in front of a hungry man. If you do, he's gonna find out how to get a piece of that steak . . . if you leave stuff in your car, little Sammy might be walking by and he wasn't thinking about breaking in 'til he saw your phone there."

Whereas the white neighborhood association members and residents of Nokomis East turned to the police to help them deal with the social disorder in the Bossen neighborhood, longtime African American West End residents appealed to a sense of community responsibility and mutual respect. Peterson said, "I ain't gonna start bringing police into the neighborhood because police, you just try to tell folks, you want to be able to respect your neighbor, and thus your neighbor will respect you. If you start to disrespect your neighbor, then your neighbor's gonna turn his eye to some things if he sees somebody breaking into your house." Although issues with social order are present in all the neighborhoods, the hardline approach of the Nokomis East residents contrasts with West End residents' tolerance toward minor infractions of social order that do not alter the overall "feel" of the neighborhood. Nokomis East residents appeal to formal mechanisms of local law enforcement and city services, while West End residents view this as at odds with their goal of fostering community respect, opting instead for a more informal strategy.

Beyond issues of law and order, residents also framed social order in terms of neighborhood esthetics, claims that were particularly salient in West End and Hollywood Hills West. In Hollywood Hills West, the council devoted an entire committee to the esthetic feel of the neighborhood. The Aesthetic Environment Committee investigated complaints about the impact of development, particularly on the more affluent Hills side of the neighborhood. Their main worries about the appearance of the neighborhood involved wealthy developers building big mansions on the Hills and causing "erosion, dirt, and dust" to rain down on the people living below, according to Aidan Metzger, the chair of the committee. "The dust was blowing across the canyon and coating everything. I mean, it was amazing, you'd sit out there on that deck and you'd be coated with dust. [. . . The developer was going] to turn the whole mountain side into an awful vision, his vision. [. . .] He had plans for another 21 or 26 houses over there." In response, members of the neighborhood council organized and campaigned for months to get the development halted. Metzger considered this to be a huge victory, particularly in terms of maintaining the esthetics of the neighborhood, yet he reflected on the limitations of organizing against big developers while reaffirming his commitment to neighborhood esthetics, saying, "You're not gonna stop every development, but you may make developments safer, you may make it better for the community. You're not gonna make a developer of a 5,000 square foot mansionette include an apartment for a welfare Section 8 family. But you may get them to landscape so it's not ugly."

As part of the West End neighborhood association's aspirations to be a respectable middle-class African American neighborhood, residents prided themselves on the parts of their neighborhood that were esthetically pleasing. Paul Eliot, a vice president of the neighborhood association, described the esthetic ideal of the neighborhood as one that looks respectable, saying, "Once you get inside the community it looks good, lawns are cut, cars are parked legally, people take their flowers, the garden is appropriate and they're taking care of it [. . .] it's a nice decent-looking neighborhood." Neighbors who did not contribute to the "decent-looking neighborhood" included residents who failed to keep up their properties by not mowing their lawns, parking their cars illegally or on their yards, putting sofas on their front porch, or even not bringing their empty trash cans in at the end of trash day. Iris Johnson, an African American woman in her late 60s, described her disorderly neighbors, explicitly evoking class by ascribing these characteristics to Section 8 renters. "It's all level income, people that live on this particular street," she said. "We got some people here that are Section 8, and we're worried about them keeping up their yards and stuff, like some of them leave their garbage out. We'll go and talk to them and they'll eventually put it away, and some of them get mad, but we don't care." Conflating Section 8 renters with social disorder, Johnson perceived them as less invested in the neighborhood, displaying less pride in their properties, and ultimately outside of the collective "we" that she used to describe her orderly (home-owning) neighbors. Although both West End and Hollywood Hills West were concerned with the esthetics of their neighborhoods, the particularities of this theme of social order have specific classed (and related racial) implications. On the one hand, Hollywood Hills West homeowners were worried that the new mansions built by big developers would alter the pastoral feel of the Hills and ruin the view from their own homes. On the other hand, West End homeowners worked with Section 8 renters in order to cultivate the image of a modest, middle-class, "decent-looking neighborhood." The mechanisms that the residents employed to maintain social order in terms of esthetics also varied across neighborhood and according to the magnitude of the infraction, as evidenced by Hollywood Hills West residents' legal battle to halt the development in their neighborhood as opposed to West End residents' discussions with their neighbors about their trash cans.

Another infraction of social order was connected to violations of the cultural norms and shared values of the neighborhood that correspond with an urban, middle-class habitus. For instance, in Nokomis East, the neighborhood values were defined by the local culture of what is termed "Minnesota Nice," an interactional norm referring to courtesy, outward propriety, and careful maintenance of polite distance. Patricia Beeman's concerns about social order in Nokomis were reflective of a longer term change she had seen in Minneapolis since the late 1970s that involved race and class. A white resident of Nokomis East for almost 20 years, she recounted an example of what she perceived as a crisis of this interactional norm, giving an example of her daily bus rides:

> The norms in our area when I first started riding [the bus] were that you have a polite good morning [. . .] make sure that everybody has enough physical space, you know so you don't bump into each other. [. . .] You always let the seniors get on the bus first. [. . .] Then as, as the population changed and there were more African Americans. [. . .] The big healthy young boys would shove right ahead, and sometimes you know mouth off to one of the older ladies, and you know at that point you get less stable. [. . .] I'm not sure these kids meant to be rude and disrespectful, but that's how it was perceived, rude and disrespectful. But I don't know that they knew that. And I don't know whether that's African American or Chicago, I

> mean the two were coincident, you know? The young men were both African American from Chicago, so I don't know which it is, big city or race, but [pause] it's a challenge.[2]

Beeman's narrative is an important illustration of how the seemingly neutral civic talk demarcates boundaries of belonging along racial lines in Nokomis. In fact, her narrative flounders when she recognizes race and thus the possibility that these neutral "polite" norms are actually white norms.

Although the social order frame appears in all three neighborhoods, the discourse varies according to local context, resident demographics, and neighborhood-specific issues. Consistent across the neighborhoods, the deployment of civic language denotes differences in belonging depending on residents' embrace of behaviors that enhance social order. Whether implicitly or explicitly exclusionary along lines of race and class, this language enables residents to moderate their feelings of ambivalence toward diverse neighbors, even as they reassert social order as a core value of the neighborhood.

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

In addition to social order, a second discursive frame privileges civic engagement as a barometer by which to denote neighborhood-level belonging and to manage ambivalence toward diversity in the neighborhood context. This frame is rooted in an idealized image of the diverse community where people from all different demographics participate in the neighborhood association. As many of our interviewees are themselves involved in their neighborhood association, it is perhaps unsurprising that they measure belonging in terms of such engagement. However, it is notable "how" these residents wield the civic engagement frame, defining neighborhood outgroups in a way that maintains social hierarchies and protects their material interests.

At its heart, this frame recognizes the neighborhood association as an organization for all residents that should ideally represent the demographic diversity within their neighborhoods. Our interviewees realized that, at least to some extent, this way of thinking implicated them in the failure to recruit a diverse membership, raising questions about the diversity of the neighborhood association that members frankly did not want to answer. Vince Vicario, a wealthy white Hollywood Hills West resident in his 50s, affirmed a desire for the neighborhood association to be diverse (meaning specifically in this context that it should include residents of color in its membership), while lamenting the ways members are made to feel guilty when the association does not reflect this diversity:

> We do want participation from people from all sorts of demographics. If you believe in diversity—and I do—then you want lots of participation. And what happens when people from some of the major demographics aren't interested? It happens a lot. And in some organizations, if there's not participation from those demographics, then the existing members are made to feel guilty, or like they haven't been doing their job by dragging those other demographics in. And I'm sorry, it's just, it's not that simple.

In this statement, Vicario's profession of belief in diversity—his "happy talk"—comes into tension with his aversion to being made to feel guilty for the lack of diversity in the neighborhood association. He speaks vaguely about the challenges of recruiting a diverse membership, chalking up their absence of participation to a general lack of interest.

Echoing Vicario's discomfort, other neighborhood association members bristled at the idea that they held responsibility for ensuring that these demographics were represented in their associations. For example, white neighborhood association members in Nokomis East struggled with whether it was feasible or desirable to include the black and Latino Bossen residents, even as they recognized part of their mission was to do such recruitment. Sheila Mueller, a middle-aged white woman who works in the neighborhood association, drew a distinction between representation and involvement, saying, "I don't think we have representation . . . and again, I shouldn't say representation because I think that's not a good word. I think 'involvement', I think we could be more effective, unified, and stronger as an organization and a neighborhood if we had more people of color and cultural backgrounds involved." Rather than call for representation, which implies a standard that the neighborhood association needs to achieve, she decried a lack of involvement, shifting the responsibility to Bossen residents themselves to participate. Thus, the civic engagement frame places the onus of community participation on residents from the neighborhoods' underrepresented demographics. Both Vicario's vague assumption of residents' disinterest and Mueller's preference for "involvement" over "representation" demonstrate an ambivalence toward diversity at both the neighborhood and institutional levels that is at the core of the civic engagement frame.

In explaining differences in neighborhood association participation, residents drew distinctions between renters and homeowners, based on raced and classed assumptions about community belonging and homeownership. For instance, Rob Edwards, the Nokomis East organizer who described Bossen as a separate area, said, "I suspect that renter status is probably the number one key in terms of whether you're involved or not." This sentiment echoes widely held assumptions that homeowners are more active members of their communities while renters are not invested in their local neighborhoods. In this way, the civic engagement frame serves to reinforce the existing boundaries between homeowners and renters by reifying tropes of renter disengagement. Lance Hull, the same Los Angeles resident who described diversity as a "choir," linked residents' renter status with a transience that signaled a lack of investment in the neighborhood and a general lack of interest in "neighborhood politics:"

> Hull: My own area [in the Hills on the western side] is made up of well-off single family homes. [. . .] The eastern half of it tends to be apartment buildings. We haven't had a whole lot of success getting many people who live in those apartment buildings to show up for our meetings.
> Interviewer: Do you feel like they don't have the same investment as homeowners?
> Hull: Uh, I guess I'm not sure what it is, the, since there are a lot of them that might only be living in the neighborhood for a year or two and then moving on someplace else. . . . It's not that they're all, that they're all ethnics or immigrants or anything like that. A lot of them are young entertainment people who are just out of college or whatnot and are renting apartments. They're just not that likely to take any interest in neighborhood politics.

Echoing Vicario's assumption that residents of color in his neighborhood are not interested in the neighborhood association, Hull takes for granted that racial minorities—"ethnics or immigrants or anything like that"—would not want to get involved in the neighborhood association, acknowledging that participation in the association reflects raced as well as classed understandings of civic engagement. Because the renters in this instance are presumably white and upwardly mobile, he struggles to articulate the

reasons for their lack of involvement, eventually turning to the language of renters versus homeowners to explain their lack of interest. McCabe (2016), in his book *No Place Like Home: Wealth, Community, and the Politics of Homeownership*, finds that homeowners are in fact more active in some neighborhood organizations, particularly in neighborhood associations. However, this participation is strategic and selective, driven by residents' direct economic interest in maintaining property values and thus protecting their material investment in the neighborhood. In the case of Hollywood Hills West, according to Hull, the neighborhood association has no trouble recruiting members living in the mansions in the Hills who are worried about maintaining their quality of life and their property values, yet they struggle to engage renters in the Flats.

Unlike the majority white middle-class homeowners on the neighborhood associations of Nokomis East and Hollywood Hills West, the demographics of the West End's homeowners mean that the neighborhood association is diverse in terms of race and sexual orientation, but this diversity masks social exclusion along socioeconomic lines. Newer middle-class white gay homeowners are welcomed onto the neighborhood association with the longtime middle-class African American homeowners, while other longtime residents (low-income African American renters) continue to be excluded. Leonora Melnick, an African American resident of the neighborhood since the 1980s, describes her white gay homeowner neighbors as those who had invested the most "sweat equity" into the neighborhood:

> No, they're very much accepted. [. . .] I mean they moved into the neighborhood, renovated the houses, so there's always been as long as we've been here, always been an acceptance. Many of the gay couples were the ones who put the most sweat equity into the houses, fixing them up.

Signaling their belonging in the neighborhood, these white gay homeowners' economic investment in their homes combined with their civic engagement in the neighborhood association trump their potential outgroup status and set them apart from the Section 8 renters who, though both African American and longtime residents, are still seen as not belonging to the community.

These white gay homeowners are able to transcend their initial outgroup status by uniting with African American homeowners in their opposition to absentee landlords. The majority of these landlords were amateur developers looking to make a quick profit by "flipping" homes in the neighborhood but, when unsuccessful, ended up renting them out. Longtime residents felt that these amateur flippers, though also technically homeowners, did not share an appreciation for the area as a historic neighborhood and were actually undermining West End's sense of community. Martin "Oko" Gray, an African American man in his 60s who had been active in the Nation of Islam and a longtime resident of the West End, gave voice to these views on absentee landlords:

> What we're finding is that most of these people that are buying and rehabbing these homes are not interested in living in them. What they're interested in doing is buying these homes cheap, selling them high, and making money and going back to their neighborhood. [. . .] And they're finding that they can't do it. [. . .] So those homes then become problems. Those homes become rooming houses or rental properties.

In contrast to absentee landlords, the white gay homeowners prove that they share a mutual investment in the neighborhood, what one resident called the neighborhood's

"common goals and common morals," by becoming involved alongside the longtime homeowners in the neighborhood association. More so than common goals and common morals, however, these residents share a common economic interest as homeowners.

In focusing primarily on the differences in participation between homeowners and renters, the discourse of civic engagement fails to interrogate the structure and culture of the neighborhood association that actively discourages the engagement of underrepresented groups. As the West End neighborhood association worked to address the issue of absentee landlords, the members embarked on a campaign to change the zoning rules in their area to eradicate against "rooming houses." These changes directly jeopardized the tenancy of many renters in the neighborhood, yet renters in West End remained ineligible to vote or hold office in the association. Similarly, the Nokomis East neighborhood association lamented the lack of interest of residents of color in participating in the organization. Evidently, there was once "a bright young Somali" who came to an association meeting and expressed interest in participating, but he "disappeared" and the white homeowner members never heard from him again. Justin Haywood, a white middle-class Nokomis East resident and staff member of the neighborhood association, recounted Bossen residents' explanations for their lack of participation in the neighborhood association, saying, "We hear the comments, 'Well, it doesn't matter what we do, you're not going to listen to us anyway,' or, 'it's a white thing.'" Although Haywood was quick to dismiss these explanations, he also discussed the close collaboration of white homeowners with the landlords in the Bossen neighborhood to identify and "deal with" any problem tenants. This paternalistic approach to the black and Latino residents of Bossen and the sentiment that the neighborhood association is a "white thing" provides an explanation for their reluctance to engage in the neighborhood association that goes beyond a general lack of interest.

As evidenced by the discourse of civic engagement in these neighborhoods, homeowners' selective participation in the neighborhood, in activities and organizations that protect their economic interests, does not necessarily lead to inclusive communities. In discussing the social exclusion perpetuated by homeowner civic engagement, McCabe argues, "While we often describe owning a home as a marker of social inclusion, homeownership also creates a unique form of social stratification and contributes to the politics of exclusion" (McCabe 2016: 16). As we also see in these three neighborhoods, civic engagement does not necessarily challenge social hierarchies; rather, it often reinforces existing structural inequalities and power divisions in the neighborhood. While members professed to aspire to diverse representation in the neighborhood associations, the civic engagement discourse was wielded to maintain social exclusion in the neighborhoods. As such, far from being neutral in its consequences, the civic language of the neighborhood association members belied an insidious side to their feelings of ambivalence and ultimately raised questions about the sincerity of their devotion to diversity beyond the tokenistic inclusion of difference.

CONCLUSION

For urban residents of historically homogeneous neighborhoods, their acceptance of the abstract ideal of diversity exists in tension with the frictions of day-to-day experiences of difference on the neighborhood level (Burke 2012; see also Berrey 2005; Brown-Saracino

2010; Charles 2009; Ellen 2000; Maly 2008). Although they profess to be open and accommodating to different identities and viewpoints, many of these residents experience ambivalence over the perceived sacrifice of the common identity and "comfort" of shared demographics and perspectives that would accompany such differences. This ambivalence drives the differential inclusion of residents from diverse racial and socioeconomic backgrounds.

Whereas Bell and Hartmann (2007) have outlined the "happy talk" of diversity that operates at an abstract level, we have demonstrated the "civic talk" through which ambivalence about the day-to-day experience of diversity is commonly expressed. If happy talk ignores structural inequalities related to demographic difference (Bell and Hartmann 2007), civic talk enables neighborhood residents to manage their ambivalence about diversity even as they maintain power divisions and structural inequalities within the neighborhood. Reasserting the narratives of established community identity in an ostensibly neutral way, civic talk is nevertheless correlated with race- and class-based boundaries and organized around two discursive frames that demarcate belonging—one in terms of social order and the other in terms of civic engagement. In both cases, these frames emphasize residents' civic investment in the neighborhood. The first justifies the exclusion of neighbors who (in the eyes of neighborhood stakeholders) do not uphold law and order, contribute to the esthetics of the neighborhood, or subscribe to cultural norms. The second presents a higher bar by suggesting that those who truly belong are residents who are civically engaged, primarily in neighborhood organizations. These frames define the parameters of community membership by imposing forms of exclusion, heavily correlated with categories of race and class within the neighborhood, which maintain and even exacerbate existing social hierarchies and structural inequalities.

The manner in which these urban middle-class residents wield civic discourse deepens understandings of ambivalence on the neighborhood level. First, civic talk represents a ubiquitous and flexible form of diversity discourse that varies across neighborhood context. In contrast to the inclusive generalities of "happy talk," this civic discourse is an expression of ambivalence about the grounded and practical difficulties of living in urban neighborhoods. Second, although presented as neutral, civic talk has real consequences for community membership, defining belonging through social order and civic engagement. However, neighborhood-level distinctions about belonging are ultimately boundary questions (Lamont and Molnár 2002). Though these cultural norms and behavioral expectations are ostensibly available to any neighborhood resident, in practice, this discourse is exclusive, conservative, and heavily correlated with historical race- and class-based understandings of a neighborhood's identity. The ambivalence of civic talk demonstrates a dilemma faced by many urban residents. Committed to an abstract ideal of diversity, they are open to a more demographically expansive understanding of belonging in their neighborhoods, but they are also unwilling to sacrifice the cultural definitions of "good neighbor" or jeopardize their own economic investments in the neighborhood.

Though these discursive frames appear across our three sites, they differ according to neighborhood-specific challenges, demographic groups of residents against which they are employed, and the formal and informal social control mechanisms that residents use to maintain these community values. Despite this variation, the latent assumptions about culture and community revealed through these frames define what kinds of people are

capable of being good neighbors. When neighborhood residents employ civic talk, either in terms of social order or civic engagement, they draw boundaries in ways that seem like they are not exclusive, even though they are. As demonstrated by our analysis of these frames across the three neighborhoods, the civic discourses of the residents and neighborhood association members reinforce the power of these members and their status as gatekeepers over decision-making in the neighborhood, with material consequences for marginalized demographic groups.

Notes

[1]All names of interviewees provided in this paper are pseudonyms.

[2]Although Beeman gave no indication in the interview how she knew that these African American boys were from Chicago, it is perhaps more telling that she attributes their manners both to their race and to their more urban, (perceived) outsider status.

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