

Oak Park: Discourses of Suburban Diversity

BY

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THESIS

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

HPAC	Housing Programs Advisory Committee
CIC	Citizens' Involvement Commission

SUMMARY

The project specifically examines the discourses, contradictions, and practices of integration and "diversity," in Oak Park, Illinois. The main argument is that while Oak Park's integration was successful and the village government created some innovative policies that helped to make integration acceptable to an all-white population, the local government's focus on managing the fears of white homeowners and equating integration to an economic choice have reinforced discrimination. The reinforcement of discrimination happens because integrating the village is understood as key to protecting home values, which disconnects residents and their actions from the social and progressive ideals integration in Oak Park is supposed to represent. By representing integration as the decision of those homeowners logical enough to choose to increase their wealth, large portions of the population are silenced, namely those who do not own homes and those who do not agree with the government's approach to integration, which limits the community's potential and hinders the integrationist project because the community's discourse lacks diversity that integration is supposed to provide.

Some of the silence surrounding integration is by design, since the original goal was to make white flight appear to be an unattractive and illogical decision that worked in opposition to common-sense financial interest. Yet, one unexpected result of this planned silence has been an intense focus on a very vague definition of "diversity." Without a deeper understanding of the social aspect of integration, statistics are touted as proof of integration without accounting for many of the residents who move in segregated social circles, and some policies seemingly designed to hinder social integration. These policies and the inability to more deeply analyze integration and the intent and meaning of "diversity" continue to play a role in fostering discrimination through segregating students of color, which reinforces the racial achievement

SUMMARY (continued)

gap in the Oak Park school districts, the fear of white residents about living too close to the eastern part of the village, which is 25% black, the village failing independent housing discrimination testing, and Village Hall's inability to respond to its integrationist growing pains with the kind of rigor and innovation, even if misguided, that helped the village to begin integrating 40 years ago.

CHAPTER I: NO BALL PLAYING ALLOWED

A. **Introduction**

Three things happened before I decided to write about “diversity” in the near- Chicago suburb of Oak Park: I moved to the village, I read Carole Goodwin's *The Oak Park Strategy*, and I became a volunteer citizen committee member for Oak Park’s Housing Programs Advisory committee, which is tasked with providing oversight for the village’s programs that support integration in the housing market. These three activities were foundational to this project because they either put me in close proximity to village life and governance or they required me to begin considering the village’s norms. Before starting this project, Oak Park was somewhere that I happened to live, but the more time I spent in the community, the more the community’s working contradictions became apparent and Oak Park became an area of study. I was almost immediately skeptical of the integrated nature of the village, and reading Goodwin’s book heightened my suspicions about the widespread interest in protecting integration, but it was not until I started to volunteer with Village Hall that I was introduced to “diversity” as a cornerstone of the community’s discourse and governmental planning processes. Essentially, the three events outlined above helped to shift my perspective from someone living in a community to one actively trying to understand the underpinnings of the community. Furthermore, the process of studying Oak Park not only shifted the way I interacted with others in the village, making me overly inquisitive and often pessimistic, it also began to shape my research interests and this project. Ultimately, this dissertation would not be possible without my unique relationship to Oak Park, its contradictions, its people, and its government.

When I first moved to Oak Park from Chicago’s Little Village neighborhood in December 2011, I would traverse the village aimlessly, just wanting to get a feel for my new

home. That winter was mild, which made exploration easy. Sometimes I would find a street full of expensive looking small mansions, other times I would find a run-down neighborhood grocery store full of old canned goods and strange smelling meats. The village, despite its interest in diversity and integration, still clearly had its blocks of difference. Through these walks, I quickly noticed that Madison Street, which bordered my apartment, was where the majority of the community's black businesses existed, while the more mainstream shops were located on Lake Street. About a year after my first winter in the village, I found a small park nestled behind an ugly four or five-story office building. The park, Austin Gardens, was small but was conveniently located just off Lake Street near the 19th century club (a huge mansion used as a gathering space). It was a little out of the way for my needs, but since it was near a Trader Joe's, which I used for a lot of smaller goods, I would often walk out of my way just to go there before the store. Over time I began to frequent the park, taking breaks during my reading or writing so that I could stretch my legs and get fresh air. It was almost another year before I noticed the "No Ball Playing Allowed" sign.

Nestled in a corner of the park, near the only water fountain, the sign struck me as odd. I figured that it had been there for a while since it was rust-stained, dirty, and sat above an old garage attached to the park's walkway. I just looked at the sign for a while trying to figure out if it applied to the whole park. The park was small, taking up only the space of a city block, but it had an open grassy field area, with bleachers where one could play and watch baseball, or flag football, or just find a fair number of people sitting around. When I would normally visit the park in the middle of the day, the typical visitors were senior citizens sitting and chatting and women with babies in strollers, which meant that I, walking around with a large black camera, usually stood out. The same field was even used for ice skating in the winter. Somebody, maybe the Park

District or some bored residents, would drag an enormous plastic pool in, fill it with water, wait for it to freeze, and then allow the whole thing to slowly fall apart as the months went on and winter turned to spring. After the rink melted and had been torn apart by wind, children, and animals, leaving a muddy mess, it would just disappear and the park would go back to normal. With all that the park was being used for, I could not figure out the need for a restriction on “ball playing.” By this point, I was fully engaged in studying Oak Park, so I took a picture, with plans on following up, and then I went about my day.

A few weeks later, I found a similar sign near my apartment. Unlike the machined metal of the last sign, this one was made from hand-painted, warped, and rotten wood. This sign made more sense to me: it was in a private alley, where a fair number of unsupervised children might play, and the sign was under a series of windows that could be easily broken. Some apartment dweller or landlord had probably gotten sick of replacing broken windows. Still, I never really saw any children with balls wandering around in that alley or the village in general. Sometime after this, I would find another sign in a parking lot on the back of the School District 097 building. These signs were all over the village if one looked.

It was the Easter Sunday of 2014 before I would solve the mystery of the signs. I was strolling down a long street of houses after taking pictures of Village Hall. After a few moments, I came across two black teens. One in basketball shorts, holding a basketball on his hip, and the other in jeans sitting on a bike. As they spoke, I wondered why they weren’t playing on the basketball court two blocks behind them, which was surprisingly empty for such a nice day. Despite my interest, I did not question them. They seemed to be enjoying themselves, and their activities were none of my business. As I got closer to the basketball court, I could see why it was empty. The backboards lacked rims and the rules of the court specifically stated that it could

be used only “when a court attendant is on duty.” Since that Sunday was a holiday, there were no attendants on duty. The sign with the rules of the court also forbade alcohol and illegal drugs, required “proper behavior,” banned “offensive or vulgar language, gestures or acts” and “amplified devices” such as “boom boxes,” explaining that “the court area is in close proximity to residential homes” and “the Park District expected” support in “respecting their property.” Finally, the sign explained that “The Park District reserves the right to exclude park and/or court usage to anyone violating Park District rules” and one could “report concerns” by calling the Park District.

Behind me and next to the basketball court, a white couple played tennis. The tennis courts had their own rules sign, which opened by saying that “These courts are for your enjoyment” and “for tennis use only.” The sign briefly listed a much smaller set of rules asking that players “wear shirts,” stating that “lessons must be authorized by the Park District,” and banning dogs and skateboards from the tennis courts. The sign ended with a statement telling tennis court users that they could “report vandalism or unauthorized use of the facility” to the same number on the basketball sign.

Wanting more information, I looked up the Park District of Oak Park website and found that Oak Park currently has five half courts and one full court spread across the three parks with basketball play areas where play is allowed during specific hours (3:30PM to 6 PM on weekdays and 1 PM to 5 PM on weekends) and “rims are removed each night at closing” and remain off until someone is on duty again or someone rents a court for \$35 per hour (Park District “Basketball”). Yet, there are 23 Tennis courts spread over seven parks. Also, over half of the courts have lights so residents can play from when the parks open in the morning until the park closes at 10 PM without the need for supervision (Park District “Tennis”). There are two

interpretations of these conditions: either Oak Park is a national anomaly and Tennis is the most popular sport in the village, or due to a series of policies meant to manage the appearance of the village, if everyone is doing their job properly, on a warm sunny, 70 degree April day, it is entirely possible that no one is playing basketball in an Oak Park public park.

B. Finding racism is not enough

So, what is the point of this story? Proof that Oak Park has some racist policies that inconvenience the lives of a small segment of African Americans? Kind of, but there is more to be said about Oak Park than the discovery of racism. For an American suburban community, especially one on the border of Chicago, it would be difficult not to find racism in both the community and governmental planning processes. Oak Park, like all communities, exists in the middle of a plethora of different systems and institutions of race, class, knowledge production, and power relations that influence discourse and life throughout the entire country. Since discovering racism is inevitable, I will instead focus on exploring how a pleasant, progressive, community dedicated to integration, anti-racist principles, and diversity, can continue to produce, reproduce, and utilize systems of racism. In other words, realizing that Oak Park has racism or is racist is only the beginning of the discussion about the interconnection between race, place, community, and population management. This project is an attempt to complete a genealogy of “diversity” in Oak Park, which entails understanding diversity’s origins, development, and reciprocal relationship with the community, government, and the community’s discourse. In addition, this project involves studying the systems of truth production that are necessary for diversity not only to play a role in community building, but also to become a relevant point of discussion and integral part of Oak Park’s identity.

For the purposes of this project Oak Park's modern history can be split into three eras: Pre-integration, Stable-Integration, and the Contemporary era. Pre-Integration takes place from the early 1960s until the 1980s. This is the period where Village Hall and some residents are trying to understand how to respond to blacks moving into and around Oak Park as well as what is happening in Chicago's Austin neighborhood. This is also the time when Village Hall begins to invent some of its policies and mechanizations for integrating and managing the village. The second period begins in the 1980s when integration has been deemed successful and Village Hall's work to manage the village and integration moves away from large gestures, such as relocating Village Hall to the southeast corner of the village, to smaller forms of management such as the establishment of community oversight groups that are used to approve Village Hall's practices. The final period is the contemporary era, which begins around 2010. This is the period where the village is enjoying nearly 40 years of successful integration, but problems around integration and diversity are starting to bubble up to the surface. For instance, accusations of segregation within the school system and documented problems with housing discrimination by some of Oak Park's landlords. Understanding Oak Park as being split into these three time periods helps to frame this project's argument and the understanding of Village Hall as the main driving force behind shaping the community and cultivating a population of residents who remain mostly docile toward the government's activities.

I argue that "diversity," as a part of Oak Park's integration process, became important because of the 1973 creation of the statement for "Maintaining Diversity in Oak Park," which set in motion a variety of policies, funding options, and management regimes that make up contemporary Oak Park. Oak Park exists in its current form because the local government was able to build a link between integration and increased property values and recast Oak Park's anti-

integration residents as outcasts who did not belong in the community. As a part of creating the link between integration and property values, Village Hall produces an image of the community and its fears and concerns that may not be entirely based on the reality of residents' experiences. This image of the community and its fears and concerns are key for the way that Village Hall has continuously governed and cultivated a population receptive to policies and management styles. As this project will explore, the problem with Village Hall responding to and governing a version of the community that it has invented or imagined is that the interest in diversity and the goals of integration are always focused around serving the needs of an imagined white homeowner who Village Hall believes needs to be protected from his or her own fears and inherent racism. Yet these very same homeowners may not actually have any real thoughts or concerns about diversity or integration, and are often complacent and just willing to let the government do as it pleases as long as the community seems stable. It is this very focus on the imagined needs and fears of the white homeowner as opposed to a deeper commitment to integration that continually reinforces racism and social segregation throughout the village. In Oak Park, despite the presentation and discourse of diversity, integration is always about creating a community that is financially and socially beneficial for white homeowners not the actual ability to transcend the problems created by racism and segregation.

The main way that Village Hall has continued to support and cultivate the type of residents that it has envisioned as integral to the village's health and stability is through instituting a connection between property values and integration by creating the Equity Assurance Program, which offered to pay back 80% of a home's value, if integration failed and home values decreased, for a nominal fee (Sokol 142), and explaining the benefits of integration in economic terms (increased demand and rising property value) to white homeowners, which

reduced integration to a seemingly commonsense economic choice. If white homeowners wanted to increase the value of their home, they would stay in the community and support integration because leaving or fighting integration was made more expensive than staying put and being quiet.

Outside of the economic realm and during the period of pre-integration, Village Hall worked to stem excessive white flight by ignoring the plethora of reasons one might have for leaving Oak Park and recasting white flighters as abnormal racists who did not fit in with the progressive spirit of the white, liberal homeowners who were already living in, or moving into, the village. The irony of recasting those leaving the village as abnormal racists is that many were probably using the same economic commonsense behind the Equity Assurance Program, but arriving at a different conclusion, to make decisions about where they lived. What was one community of likeminded people before the integration process began was morphed into separate groups as a way of furthering governmental policy. In other words, Village Hall relied on the logics of segregation and discrimination to separate out whites who did not agree with integration as a way of building a community more receptive to Village Hall's goals, while also attracting additional liberal whites and middle-class blacks interested in suburban homeownership to the community. In essence, Village Hall was producing the very residents that it had already been projecting as a part of the community.

Despite the prevailing narratives that are promoted and circulate in the community, Oak Park integrated, not just because of the spirit of some forward thinking and benevolent white liberals in the 1960s, but because of an aggressive campaign to turn integration into a smart economic decision and to recast moving out of the village (flight) as the choice of anti-liberal racists. This move to reduce integration to an economic choice while also employing tools of

racism is directly related to Oak Park's current failures, such as an inability to understand the difference between social and statistical integration and continued housing discrimination. Instead of challenging the discourses and practices that continue to cement Oak Park as a white suburb with residents of color, Village Hall continually responds to the fears of white homeowners with regard to minority presence while denying that their very fears are heavily based in traditionally racist attitudes. It is Village Hall's subservience to these fears that is actually causing Oak Park to fail at the very diversity and integration that are seen as a cornerstone of the community (for instance, failing the most recent housing discrimination test that took place between 2013 and 2014).

It might seem that this argument puts too much weight on the ability of a single document or governing body to shape an entire community, but as the example with the Park District's basketball policy shows, even small governing bodies and their policies are fundamental to shaping the possibilities and images of a community. That one policy, taking down the hoops when an attendant is not on duty, has a huge impact on how the village is being used and represented. Creating an environment where basketball is hard or expensive to play, discourages participation in the sport. In the same way, making housing discrimination difficult and more expensive than alternatives, such as simply continuing to own the same home, leads to a seemingly natural reduction of discrimination and racism. In other words, enforceable public policy plays a large role in what activities and discourses are not only seen as natural, but also are able to circulate within a community.

Historian Robert Fogelson argues that suburban communities like Oak Park were originally appealing to white residents because of the rules in place. People were moving into the communities because they wanted rules that fit their conception of what a community should be,

how it should appear, and provided some assurance that the community would not change. These specific desires suggest that restrictive and often racist policies are actually constitutive for creating suburban spaces, as well as demonstrating the role policy plays in defining space and community (68, 69). Oak Park's origins as a white, suburban community helps to explain not only the policies in place, but also their impact on the community. The origins of the community constrain Village Hall's response to integration because the village must continually navigate the expectations of a suburban space, while also maintaining a type of diversity that will not spur white flight or increased housing discrimination, and in many cases the only way to do this is by appeasing the white majority, appeasing them by ensuring that the community does not seem too black (or that there are large concentrations of minorities in any part of the village) or too different from other suburban communities. The rules about the basketball courts are just one manifestation of these constraining dynamics. This example of the restrictions on basketball are a useful way of underpinning my argument that Oak Park's interest in diversity and integration are heavily based around assumed white needs and desires. It is the reliance on satisfying Village Hall's understanding of Oak Park's white, homeowner community that creates the vague notions of diversity that pervade and collide throughout the village and are also behind the areas and reasons that Oak Park has been unable to fully move beyond needing to continually monitor and manage integration throughout the village. Essentially, Oak Park's problem is one of discourse and rhetoric. Because Village Hall is either unable or unwilling to make their grounded, local, and community based discourses actually challenge the larger, national, and historical rhetorics of race, diversity, and integration, the village continues to struggle with diversity and integration because its financial incentive based integration relies on the very systems that create and support segregation and racism all over the country.

C. Governmentality and Community Development

As mentioned earlier, building a connection between integration, diversity, and financial health is one of the ways Village Hall has been able to influence the population in aggregate to accept diversity and integration. Foucauldian and Foucauldian derivative works are littered with examples of how governmental actions can be used to shape communities in an almost invisible manner, especially when they mix with the economy. While demonstrating the origins of modern governmentality, Foucault explains that during the 17th century a positive correlation was made between the health of the population and the health of the economy. This means that managing a population with the best interests of the economy in mind (ensuring that populations are safe, healthy, and mentally stable) is a way of promoting the economy that will keep the entire jurisdiction healthy and functioning (Foucault *Security* 351). Since the economy is now foundational to governed spaces, when a government is able to connect its logics to financial needs, it has a way to shape aggregate behaviors in a seemingly natural and beneficial manner. This does not mean that every person in a governed space agrees with the project; in fact there are and always have been those in Oak Park against integration and a focus on diversity. What “moving the population in aggregate” suggests is that despite the disapproval and uninterest of some, the goals of the government are still able to move forward because a large portion of any population is passive.

Village Hall has remained the dominant force in shaping Oak Park because village planners had the foresight to build a connection between their goals, the financial self-interest of residents, and the cultural capital of living in an integrated community. Planners in Village Hall saw that the underlying problem with integration was not just whites’ irrational fear of blacks from Chicago, but the financial aftermath of that fear, so they created a value-based response. By

remaining in the village, white residents were not only able to increase their home value, but were also given access to the cultural capital of living and participating in the creation of an integrated community. Frankly, Village Hall focused on making fear, white flight, and overt racism less attractive financial and social options than participating in its experiment in governance and racial harmony (West et al. 77, Sokol 130; Goodwin 159). Once this economic and cultural underpinning was created, Village Hall was able to more actively forge a stronger system of local governance that not only differed from the laissez fair methods of the past and neighboring communities, but also created community supported burdens (increased taxes and additional regulations) for property and homeowners (Goodwin 36; 207). Because the potential financial benefits were great, the difficulties of creating an integrated village were seen as acceptable and the Oak Park strategy created increased financial wealth and community stability through managing bodies and their circulation throughout the village.

The engineered connection between diversity and economics is ingrained and invisible to the extent that two distinct narratives about how the village integrated exist, but only one really circulates. The most widely publicized is that a visionary group of liberal residents demanded integration through protest and community activist groups, which led to the perception that Oak Park naturally welcomes diversity (Trainor 30-31). However, another, silent narrative shows that while community activists may have brought attention to the problem of segregation, it was policy, enforcement, and public relations campaigns that ensured that “integration” would become synonymous with Oak Park (Goodwin). Regardless of the exact methods used to create integration, by the 1980s Village Hall had declared integration a success (based on population statistics) and brought community non-profits, activist groups, and regular citizens under its control through grants, the creation of resident-staffed oversight commissions, and financial

support for property owners who participated in fair housing initiatives. In other words, Village Hall's campaign for diversity and integration has consumed and now controls almost all community activism and discourse regarding integration and diversity. This control over the discourse and practices regarding diversity and integration is one of the reasons that Oak Park's residents and government seem to be unable to understand why discrimination continues to be a problem throughout the community.

D. **Clarifying Integration**

A part of Oak Park's continuing problems with creating an increasingly anti-racist community lies in the difference between statistical integration and social integration. Population statistics are used as proof that integration has been successful, even as social segregation and housing discrimination continue to occur throughout the village. The other part of the problem lies in the inability of a governing body to actively critique and reflect on its own methods. Without the presence of voices outside the direct supervision of Village Hall, it is impossible for any real community activism to occur and for the government and community to realize that even if their methods were successful in the past, they can still be dangerous and harmful in the present. Without self-reflexive critique or easily available means for creating a response to current practices, groups outside of Village Hall (such as NGOs like the Regional Housing Center) that would normally work to provide alternatives to governmental methods and improve the community are tied into the very system that is limiting the community. While my assessment of Oak Park may seem overly critical and pessimistic, if more groups throughout the community were aware of the continual need for the government and community to revise their methods this kind of realistic pessimism could be productive enough to lead to growth and development (Foucault "Genealogy of Ethics" 256).

E. **Village Hall**

Since Village Hall's voice is ingrained in all aspects of diversity discourse throughout the community and it treats with the community based on its projections of the typical resident's desires, examining its logic makes it possible to understand how policy and public relations campaigns play a role in creating place, meaning, disciplinary norms, and a population that is supportive of Village Hall's style of governance. I am not suggesting that the residents of Oak Park do not have their own stories and discourses that would present an intriguing image of the community; instead, I am arguing Village Hall occupies so much discursive space that it is impossible to interpret the community without fully understanding how governance shapes everything within village limits. Oak Park is unique because of Village Hall's atypical managerial approach to integration, and how that approach has shaped **and represented** the community, cultivated residents, and moved different populations throughout the village.

Even something seemingly as commonplace as the story of exceptionalism needs to be filtered through an understanding of the reach of Village Hall. Oak Park is not unique in believing that there is something special about their plot of land; even those who live in the most damaged and destroyed communities often want to stay where they are because of their bonds with the people and the land, which David Fleming shows during his exploration of Chicago's ghettos. The difference between these communities with less governmental influence and Oak Park is that Village Hall has supported the story of exceptionalism (even including it in the village's diversity statement) to the point that it has rendered its own role in fostering and maintaining diversity nearly invisible.

Governmentality (the very logic of Village Hall) in the village is so seemingly natural that its invisibility makes sense and supports the understanding of politics as a type of silent

warfare, a way of shaping populations without ever needing to fire a single bullet. Decisions are still being made about how and where people can live and the quality of their lives, but the battlefield becomes an unseen part of the community and permeates local discourses. In other words, even seemingly innocuous events, decisions, and discussions are adversarial when governance is involved (Foucault *Society* 51-52). Yet, when events that might tarnish the image of the village occur, the silent war becomes more obvious. Most recently, this interpretation of politics, law, and enforcement as warfare came into play when the village board of trustees had the first public meeting regarding Oak Park failing a housing discrimination test. Trustee Adam Salzman, apparently disgusted by the Village Hall's lack of enforcement and overuse of discussion, argues:

This is not a matter of debating or considering policy changes because we have the policies, we just aren't enforcing them and we're not executing them. So when it comes to enforcement, to me that means, using our law department and our court system. When you have violations of federal law and local law, you need to have an enforcement mechanism with teeth and I think what we have, and what this report has uncovered, is that we have delinquent property owners that are making decisions to break the law because they believe it's in their economic interest. The only way to communicate that it's not in their economic interest is to make them incur some serious legal fees; that will cause those discriminatory practices to become more costly. (Board of Trustees)

Salzman's expectations are unlike the normal, non-punitive, presentation of the village where diversity is supported through silent funding initiatives, Village Hall sponsored diversity dinners (McCarey 15), and affirmative marketing. Instead of the norm, Salzman is openly discussing using the full legal force of Village Hall to punish those who break the law; he wants these

seemingly rational individuals to suffer. This use of governmental power to influence the livelihood of citizens is what Foucault recognizes as the silent war of politics; additionally, Salzman's desire to deal with enforcement through financial incentives and punishments is a fairly succinct way of outlining how Village Hall has managed to keep its work clandestine, while also promoting the idea that the community has moved beyond race.

Salzman's idea of raising the cost of discrimination as a way of curbing illegal and unethical behavior was brushed aside at the Trustees' meeting for the creation of a fifth citizen and Village Hall employee staffed commission (behind the Citizen Involvement Commission, Disability Access Commission, Community Relations Commission, and Housing Programs Advisory Committee) that would focus on discrimination. While the lack of interest in Salzman's plan might be surprising because it is essentially a re-hash of Village Hall's original financial incentive approach to shaping the community, his statements were probably too direct for the residents of modern Oak Park and the mechanizations that continue Village Hall's biopolitical intervention into village life. Goodwin noted the seemingly extreme methods Village Hall used to track residents in the 1970s (151), but these techniques have only become more sophisticated as time has progressed. In fact, the Oak Park approach to population management lines up almost completely with Foucault's description of the mechanisms of biopolitics, which include "forecasts, statistical estimates, and overall measures" with the goal of modifying behavior in aggregate, at "the level of their generality" (*Society* 246). By tracking the movement of bodies throughout the village and tying interventions to financial interests, and going after a small segment of the population who are actively violating the law, Village Hall is able to steer the population in directions it finds useful. But steering populations, in the case of Oak Park, is problematic because it allows the community to mistake governance and practices that foster a

population conducive to certain types of governance for political and ideological progress. Many citizens may feel that the community has overcome racism, but only because they are unaware of the level of continual management that goes into creating a population that is unaware of how their lives are being managed.

Public policy not only shapes discourse about place and the ways individuals interact with different spaces, but it also has an effect on the experiences of those living under that policy. As the example with the “No ball playing” signs and rimless basketball courts show, seemingly innocuous policy, when enforced, can have an effect on the way individuals experience race, community, and class. Policy can be a way of projecting a reality that does not currently exist, but is being coerced into existence. In the case of Oak Park, policy often has seemingly contradictory goals. While one set of policies is working to create an integrated community, another is working to limit the public presence of black children, teens, and families so that the area appears to be a more traditional, suburban, mostly white community. My project will continue along the lines of exploring the problems created when people living in a suburb, a traditionally white space, attempt to integrate the space while still holding on to the complex underpinnings of appropriate use of space, fear of change and racial others, and still adhering to the strong local leadership that many see as synonymous with “suburbs.”

F. **Methods**

My research on and about Oak Park began in January 2012, shortly after I moved into the community. I began by observing how different groups of people moved throughout the village; first by noting what kinds of people rode the trains and at what times, and later by noting where the predominately black and white parts of the village existed. As my research progressed, I moved into volunteering for a Village Citizen Commission, the Housing Programs Advisory

Committee. While the conversations of these meetings are largely absent from this project, joining that group provided a lot of insight into how small local governments operate, and provided many opportunities for me to further study and understand how the community was designed. As my research continued, I would observe and participate in public events such as community planning meetings, board of trustee meetings, cultural fairs, even beer and wine festivals, and visiting local landmarks and attractions. To keep abreast of local events and issues, I began clipping and organizing newspaper articles into categories that dealt with race, housing, crime, education, taxes, local events, and general community concerns. These events and locations all helped to show how decisions were being made about the community and who participated in the different events. My site research ended in May 2014 when I moved away from Oak Park. Outside of physically exploring Oak Park and its community, my research methods included a survey of literature and theory about rhetorical theory, Foucauldian methods, critical race theory, and urban planning. Within all of these fields, I focused specifically on works tied to discourse and the multiple perspectives created through communal living, works focused on integration and desegregation, and finally those concerned with social movements.

G. **Outline of Dissertation**

This project is split into six chapters, each with a focus on illuminating some aspect of Oak Park's history, community, conflicts, and common discourses. Chapter II outlines the theoretical framework for the entire dissertation, by examining the connections between community, race, discourse, Foucauldian methods, and rhetorical theory. The chapter begins by reasserting the project's central goal of completing a genealogy of diversity in Oak Park and defining key terms such as "race," "discourse," and "place" that can be traced throughout the entire project and the connections between these terms theoretically and within the context of the

community. In addition, the chapter also explains the role that Foucault's concepts of discourse, genealogy, and governmentality play in both building modern Oak Park and understanding it as a space built around a focus on diversity and integration. This exploration of Foucauldian methods includes an explanation of how Oak Park, as a field site, can be used to expand the discourse around race and critical race theory and examining the ways that Oak Park manages to both exist inside of and escape the usual and distracting class versus race debate. Finally, the chapter concludes by arguing that rhetorical theory is a way of containing the entire critique of the discourses that are both shaping and being shaped by Oak Park's government and community.

Chapter III is focused on providing both historical and contemporary context for the Village of Oak Park. Aside from providing basic racial demographics, population numbers, and locational information about the village, this chapter also explores the different narratives that circulate about integration and diversity. Specifically, this chapter explores the "origin stories" of contemporary Oak Park. One of the stories suggests that Oak Park integrated because a small set of liberal and progressive residents knew that integration was the morally superior option; this is the story that the community routinely celebrates. The other, silent, narrative begins with the same original push from a small group of residents, but ultimately focuses on the role of Village Hall in shaping policy, creating cultural and financial value for integration and diversity, managing black bodies as they moved into the village, and controlling the village's image through a carefully crafted public relations machine. Exploring the campaign for diversity and integration includes looking at the multiple ways that blacks were made presentable to their white neighbors, the community's response to Austin, governmental programs created to stem white flight and fears, and the way that some white residents were painted as other, so that their concerns about integration would appear unfounded and troublesome. In addition, this chapter

details modern programs for supporting integration and some of the conflicts that still exist within the village.

Chapter IV examines the role of community planning meetings and public outreach as they relate to the development of the community and continuation of narratives about community involvement and collaboration. This chapter uses the opening series of Oak Park's "Envision Oak Park" comprehensive planning process meetings and the surprising lack of community involvement to explore the different ways that Village Hall's projections of the community (which assume that there is heavy involvement or that residents are deeply concerned about diversity) are often disproven by the actual concerns and behaviors of residents. Compiled from a collection of my notes from attending these public meetings, the main goal of this chapter is to introduce readers to the types of residents likely to participate, the government officials who also attend, the often divergent concerns of both groups, and the ways that positive narratives of community participation were disrupted by low turnout. While these meetings were intended and required to get public input on governmental processes, the organization of the meetings and the comprehensive planning process also clearly fit into the tradition of community outreach programs where the public focus is more on the appearance of inclusion and collaboration. Since the meetings appear to be collaborative, participants and the larger community rarely notice that the meetings are crafted (around a series of predetermined themes) in a way that places governmental logics, concerns, and terminology into the community as opposed to seriously taking the residents often dizzying array of personal concerns into consideration. In addition, these meetings become a way to shift community discourse by placing constraints on discussion by deeming certain ideas to be outside the focus of the comprehensive plan (which is supposed to cover all aspects of the community) or giving them subordinate status to some other cause (for

instance, integration and diversity would be placed under housing concerns), and training volunteers to essentially reinforce Village Hall's goals. During the series of meetings, it quickly becomes apparent that even if some community input is being taken into consideration, it is the suggestions that fit in with the projects that the government is already interested in that carry the most weight.

Chapter V follows from Chapter IV by continuing to use the comprehensive planning meetings as a way to discuss issues within the community. This chapter, however, focuses on the different and overlapping discourses pertaining to the community's diversity. In particular, one example of where the deeper rhetoric of diversity did not match up with the measurable reality of diversity (in this case telling an almost entirely white group of residents about the community's diversity) is used as a way of exploring what diversity means to the community and how it is able to operate as a translator across so many different sites. Essentially, I argue that diversity is more than a term or an ideology, it is a network of translation that meets certain needs within the community, and even when these needs and desires conflict, a simple resolution is found in the way diversity is generally assumed to be something of benefit. For Oak Park, diversity is both an abstract ideology and an associated monetary value, which means that even when competing versions of diversity come into contact, the assumption that both versions are working toward benefiting the community stymies any chance of productive conflict over the direction, goals, and meanings of diversity within the community.

Chapter VI examines Oak Park's failure of a 2014 housing discrimination test, the way that Village Hall and the larger community responded, and how this failure is a reflection of Oak Park's limited discourse for addressing the broader scope of race and diversity. Specifically, this chapter focuses on the board of trustees' meeting presenting and responding to the housing test,

some of the response in the local newspaper, the response of the Housing Programs Advisory Committee, and some of the immediate actions that were taken to ensure that such problems did not happen again. I argue here that this problem occurred because, despite Oak Park's interest in integration and diversity, very little was actually done to shift discourses about Oak Park as a white suburb. When the community integrated, it did not become an integrated suburb as much as it became a white community with some people of color. The continual focus on middle-class white interests and fears created some changes and enabled the community to move beyond traditional segregation, but it did not socially integrate the community, which is what has caused the community to need continual management of diversity and integration. The constant need for diversity management is one of the direct reasons Oak Park failed its most recent housing discrimination testing. Specifically, the property owners within the community are never asked to question their motives only to make rational financial decisions, which often include discriminatory practices. Beyond the most recent housing test, problems with integration are likely to continue because Village Hall is incapable of articulating a better response than simply repeating what they have done in the past. The chapter continues by examining the work of those who have tried to move beyond traditional integrationist ideology as a way of comparing Oak Park's actual practices to some of the ideas presented by James Boggs and Michel Foucault. For instance, I examine the work of Boggs and his response to and rearticulating of black power as a tool for reconstructing communities and Foucault's skepticism as a way of demonstrating how the views of those traditionally on the margins of a community can be used to continually reevaluate the goals and progress of any community. Essentially, what the examples from Boggs and Foucault demonstrate is that a continual use of skepticism as a part of any community building project can be used as one way to ensure that reassessment becomes integral to the

development of a governed space. Skepticism, and not the obstruction of discourse, is what is necessary for creating a more nuanced approach to community building, creating new discourses, and allowing all members of a community to feel that they have a voice and a role to play in the development of their own living space. Finally the chapter concludes with an analysis of the village's completed comprehensive plan and the ways that the comprehensive plan is being used to keep the community and governance in stationary.

CHAPTER II: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

A. Introduction

Oak Park is a nice community and a good place to live, partially because of the progress the community and its government were able to make with managing integration and supporting the racial diversification of the community. The programs that Village Hall put into place were able to stabilize the community and its housing market at a time when similar neighborhoods in Chicago were facing white flight and unrest. The purpose of this chapter is to outline the key terms and concepts that are necessary for understanding how the discourse of diversity and integration were created by Village Hall and took hold in a predominately white community and how those discourses continue to remain relevant in the contemporary era. Examining the role of discourse in Oak Park helps to explain the ability for Village Hall to manage the flow of black bodies throughout the village during the pre-integration period, maintain integration and harmony in the contemporary era, and continuously cultivate its image of the community throughout all three periods of Oak Park's history. Essentially, I argue throughout this project that Oak Park's discourses of integration cannot be understood without a deeper understanding of how discourse, race, place, and rhetoric all intersect at the term "diversity" as it circulates throughout the village.

One of the goals of this project is to avoid the problems created by merely pointing out where racism exists. Instead I explore racism as a rhetoric. There is racism in Oak Park, like there is everywhere in the United States. However, I choose to focus on what Oak Park has done differently. Even if Village Hall's methods are not always effective, there is still something of value to be taken from the village's example. At the very least, the ways that the meaning of integration was shifted from something to be afraid of to something that is assumed to be of

benefit to the community is worth exploring. Oak Park's example shows that small shifts in policy, such as property management policies that assume the existence of racism or finding ways to work "diversity" into the identity of a formerly all-white community, can have a huge impact on the ability for different kinds of people to live near each other and interact. Oak Park's small changes, led to new ways of envisioning a suburban community. If nothing else, by tying diversity to the community's identity and financial health, Oak Park has found a solution to the problems of white mass-hysteria and flight when populations of color and lower economic status move in.

To formally begin the meat of this chapter, I will discuss discourse and its differences and similarities to rhetoric.

B. Discourse

I start with discourse because the study of Oak Park relies on a specific and local understanding of the languages, classifications, terminologies, and arguments that help to construct life in the village and the interactions that are possible in its socially constructed world.

In "On the Archaeology of the Sciences" Foucault offers one of his clearest explanations of discourse as it relates to his way of understanding how knowledge is produced. To help explain what he means by discourse and why it might be a useful area of examination, Foucault offers up two postulates that must be "renounced" to begin studying discourse in earnest:

The one assumes that it is never possible to find the irruption of a genuine event in the order of discourse; that, beyond every apparent beginning there is always a secret origin – so secret and primordial that it can never be entirely recaptured in itself. So much so that one is lead fatefully through the naiveté of chronologies, toward an indefinitely distant point, never present in any history ... Linked to this is the thesis that every managed

discourse rests on an “already said”; but that this “already said” is not just a phrase already pronounced, a text already written but a “never said” – a disembodied discourse, a voice as silent as a breath, a writing that is only the void left by its own trace. It is thus presumed that all that discourse happens to put into words is already found articulated in that half silence which precedes it, which continues to run obstinately underneath it, but which it uncovers and renders quiet. (“Archaeology” 305-306)

In this passage, Foucault is explaining that discourse is something that can be found in specific contexts. There is no need to search through history or try to uncover some hidden point of origin. Instead of digging around through past utterances, one’s time is better spent trying to understand how discourse is occurring in the situation being examined. Specifically, Foucault explains that:

Each moment of discourse must be welcomed in its irruption as an event; in the punctuation where it appears; and in the temporal dispersion that allows it to be repeated, known, forgotten, transformed, wiped out down to its slightest traces, and buried far from every eye in the dust of books. There is no need to retrace the discourse to the remote presence of its origin, it must be treated in the play of its immediacy. (“Archaeology” 306)

According to this passage, discourse is meant to be studied in the specific situation where it occurs because that context is where its meaning and purpose originate from. To further cement the understanding of discourse as taking place within specific contexts, Foucault explains that while discourse relies on language, it is fundamentally different from language because “language always constitutes a system for possible statements” (“Archaeology” 306). In other words, a language sets out what statements are possible to make in a way that others will be able

to immediately understand. In opposition, discourse “is the always-finite and temporarily limited ensemble of those statements alone which were formulated” (“Archaeology” 307). To understand discourse is to understand specific uses of language in unique situations, not looking to encompass the entire history and origin of some statement.

At a very base level, discourse is the framework “through which we come to” understand objects in our world (Veyne 6). Helen Davis explains that “discourses are concrete in so far as they emanate from specific points of view. They are historically specific, though sometimes their enduring quality makes a specific discourse appear to be both natural and transcendent” (165). The longer any discourse has been in use, the more likely its content is to become invisible and implicitly true, which suggests that the most powerful or important discourses are those we do not notice. Discourse is difficult to define and explain because of its role in mediating reality. Discourse appears natural because we do not usually notice how the role that our words and the truths those words construct are used in helping us navigate and shape the world. For instance, racism can be a discourse that works in and through multiple forms, places, and different people, but “racism is usually discussed as if it were a transcendent human condition afflicting all people in the same way” (Davis 165). The historical length of racism’s existence as a rhetoric is what adds to its virulence as a local and specific discourse. In other words, the different and often overlapping discourses of racism, are often observed as homogenous and natural because of racism’s long life as a historical rhetoric.

It is in this difference between the local and specific and larger and historical where I suggest that discourse differs from rhetoric. Maurice Charland speaks of the role of rhetoric in constituting identity when he discusses the push for Quebec to become a separate country from Canada and the way citizens of Quebec were represented as having a unique history and rights to

be their own people. Charland explains that rhetoric can be constitutive, that it can pull together alternate histories and narratives as a way of creating social subjects (135). Furthermore, Charland explains that:

Rhetorical claims for a sovereign Quebec are predicated upon the existence of an ideological subject, the “Quebecois,” so constituted that sovereignty is a natural and necessary way of life. Furthermore, and hardly surprisingly, the ultimate justification for these claims is the subject’s character, nature, or essence. This is so because this identity defines inherent motives and interests that a rhetoric can appeal to. The ideological “trick” of such a rhetoric is that it presents that which is most rhetorical, the existence of a *peuple*, of a subject, as extrarhetorical. These members of the *peuple* whose supposed essence demands action do not exist in nature, but only within a discursively constituted history. (137)

This passage gets at the heart of the difference between rhetoric and discourse for the scope of studying Oak Park. Very similar to the way that language creates the framework for potential discursive statements, rhetoric creates the potential for different discourses to occur. Another helpful way of understanding the difference between rhetoric and discourse is to look at Ralph Cintron’s description of democracy as “ontologized,” which he describes as meaning that “over a number of centuries democracy has acquired a certain primordial value, an automatic virtue, a kind of metaphysical rightness” (99). The understanding of democracy as ‘primordial’ and ‘metaphysical’ is an understanding of democracy as a larger rhetoric and the exact opposite of the specific and local nature of discourse that Foucault points toward. Through Cintron’s example we can see two things: first that the type of democracy that Cintron outlines lies underneath some of the more specific and local discourse of democracy. For instance when

conservative residents of Oak Park claim that they are under-represented and ignored, their discourse points toward the larger ‘ontologized’ democracy, but they are ultimately doing something that only works in the context of Oak Park. Second, Cintron’s discussion of democracy underpins how Charland explains the creation of the people of Quebec as their own sovereign nation. It is not until the “white paper” is created that offers a reason for the people of Quebec to be their own nation by appealing to the ‘primordial’ notions of history and personhood that they can begin to identify as a unique community and enact the local discourses that support their existence as a unique group. In the same way, it is not until the rhetorics of racism, segregation, and “maintaining” community enter Oak Park that discourses of diversity and integration become possible.

The ability to create a sense of homogeneity through shaping history is one of the strengths of historical rhetoric, which provides a framework for classification of divergent behaviors under a larger category. For instance, it is the larger economic and social rhetorics of suburban living that helps to render many homeownership practices and behaviors invisible and similar. Since rhetoric is so far-reaching and seemingly natural, it is often seen as disembodied and “appropriated within the ‘common-sense’ wisdom of the age” (Davis 165). Despite the clarity of discourse as a tool for interpretation local versions of larger rhetorical frameworks, understanding discourse as merely something used to interpret objects in the world is too clean and too simple, because such a reading ignores the messy nature of object-hood. For instance, if discourse were only based on understanding and classification, it would be impossible to capture that a single object can have multiple meanings and frameworks applied to it depending on the context and discourse communities, “yet remain robust enough to maintain a common identity

across sites” (Bowker & Star 297). In addition, discourse cannot merely be about understanding objects, because in many cases, discourse becomes an object itself.

Discourses are material in the sense that they emanate from specific classes or social relations and they have material consequences because they mobilise support for some actions and suppress others. The ‘war on terrorism’ discourse was already having an impact on the lives of millions of people worldwide long before an official state of war existed between these two countries. We could argue that the discourse itself had already generated sufficient power to make political and economic change possible, if not inevitable, without either side ever launching a single missile. When we make meaning, we create real effects in the material world. We therefore ignore the materiality of discourse at our peril.

(Davis 165)

Discourse and subjective reality are entangled. Discourse is created because we have a need to communicate and discuss our localized experiences, but discourse also helps us to shape and create the world we experience, our interactions with the world, and create ways of making certain ideas a seemingly physical part of the world. Discourse and objects are always in conversation, playing off of each other, and sometimes switching roles in circular fashion.

Essentially, discourse is more than just a framework. It is also a translation, a way of creating coherence out of the distinctive meanings, practices, and rhetorics attached to, or in the process of being attached to, an object in a way that help the object to make sense to distinct audiences or actors (Law 1). Annemarie Mol, in her ethnographic study of practices within a hospital, discusses the way that “objects have local identities” by showing how bodies, living and dead, carry different meanings as they travel through the hospital (55). Individuals do not always

get to choose an identity, “identity is in constant production and exists at the point of intersection between the individual and other determining structures and institutions” (Davis 162). Objects, bodies, and concepts are continually translated through context and the needs of each situation and community, which is why understanding the many roles of discourse becomes so important for understanding the strangely loose, yet specific meanings of race. For example, Mol points out the example of a leg as it moves throughout the hospital. In the simplest sense, a leg is always a leg, but the pathology department has a different set of practices, shared meanings, and uses for a leg than surgeons in the operating room, or a patient’s personal physician (55-56). Mol’s example with the leg parallels the use of race as an external and individual identity. We may see ourselves one way, but the way that we are treated and interact with the world is often shaped from outside.

While the connection between race and discourse is foundational to understanding contemporary Oak Park, understanding race as a discourse requires examining the larger historical systems, institutions, and forms of knowledge production that have given race materiality in the United States. Currently, with a black president and many respected black celebrities, some groups and individuals have put forth the idea that America is post-racial and that one’s race has little impact on one’s quality of life. This view, while positive, is deeply flawed. Post-racialism not only ignores the many inconspicuous systems in place that create race and ensure that it plays a role in one’s opportunities, and life expectancy, it ignores the salient images presented in the media. The “media bombard us daily with spectacles of racial violence and disturbing racist images that serve as evidence that race and racism are alive and well in the United States” (Lacy and Ono 1). Lacy and Ono are not only making an argument for how fictitious and negative characterizations of people of color can and do make life more difficult

for people of color in any number of ways. They are also arguing that one can turn on the news to see accounts of any number of horrible acts being performed against men and women of color daily, while they are being portrayed as the ones at fault. For example, the many cases of violence against unarmed black men by police officers in 2014.

In other words, post-racialism is a myth used to take up discursive time, space, and energy, which not only am I unwilling to support, but is also disrupted by the very existence of Oak Park and its continual systems for managing integration. If post-racialism were real, Oak Park would not be as interesting an area of study and Village Hall would not continue to be heavily invested in managing, supporting, and promoting diversity and integration throughout the community. Additionally, if post racialism were as real as its proponents suggest, then Oak Park and Chicago would be very similar communities, which is simply not the case. Other than post-racialism, race can become difficult to track because of its connection to so many different relationships of power and the fluid nature of race as a discourse, which allows race to shift continually to match “new technologies, discourses and logics” (Lacy and Ono 3). Race, despite its presentation as objective fact, is able to continually exist and because of its discursive nature; that it is an ideology that has been applied to the body through the arguments that are made about the meaning of race. Once arguments are being made about race, then facts are created that support the idea of race, which continually reinforces its existence. Outside of discourse, rhetoric and rhetorical theory are a way of understanding the connections between race, argument, and governance.

C. Rhetoric

As briefly explained earlier, rhetoric, like discourse, is a way of understanding the connection between language, arguments about the world, and the way that truth is produced.

The reason that this project leans more heavily on post-structuralist interpretations of discourse is that while rhetoric and rhetorical theory can be used to analyze specific utterances, arguments and situations, like those presented in Oak Park, rhetoric is often abstracted away from the material interactions it could be impacting. Discourse, on the other hand, requires actions, arguments, and local contexts to exist and is difficult to abstract from where and when it is being produced.

For instance, as John Muckelbauer notes, rhetorical theory and invention opens up space for rediscovery and “has oscillated between the ‘old’ and the ‘new’ (or the ‘same’ and ‘different’) in that invention has functioned both as the recollection of preexisting knowledge and as the production of new knowledge” (13-14). According to Muckelbauer, rhetoric is able to exist outside of time, which can be beneficial for understanding how knowledge production moves across eras and communities. In Muckelbauer’s framework rhetoric becomes incredibly useful for understanding ideas that seem to move throughout time and contexts. Even if a certain idea has fallen out of favor or is forgotten as an underlying idea of some new concept, as long as there is still space for exploration or another rhythm to run alongside some contemporary ideology, then rhetoric has a use for that. This ability to do more than work from a specific place, time, or position not only allows rhetorical theory to resurrect understandings of race and place but also become “not only an architectonic art for all modes of inquiry, but the schematic terrain for the enormous political, ethical, and philosophical project of reinventing the very nature of inquiry itself” (Muckelbauer 25). The weakness of Muckelbauer’s model is that he does not attempt to manipulate rhetoric in context. His analysis and desire to create a method for using rhetorical theory and invention to work alongside the dialectic are useful and interesting, but they lose impact because he does not provide any material examples. Muckelbauer’s methods differ

from the study of discourse because discourse is difficult to abstract away from the realities it speaks to and from.

In a way, Muckelbauer is dealing with the purely theoretical terrain of ideas and rhetoric and not the complete impact they can have on society and individuals. This weakness in Mukelbauer's framework is one reason it becomes important to explore fully the interdisciplinary nature of rhetorical theory. While rhetoric is a rich field of its own, much of the strength of the tools provided by rhetorical theory stem from the ability for rhetoric to weave between sites of conflict and areas where different disciplines come into contact. In fact, a part of the modern revival of rhetoric seems directly related to its alignments with post-structural and Foucauldian goals of understanding how reality is being projected through and by different discourses and positions of power, which lend a very grounded take on some of the more abstract aspects of rhetorical theory.

Despite the differences from discourse, rhetorical theory is still extremely useful for understanding the way that certain ideas can become attached to bodies and populations. For instance, rhetorical theory can clarify the interpretation of race as material or biological and the impact such an interpretation has on both individuals and populations. Briefly, the race as biology argument is rooted in the idea that concepts or ideas need to be grounded in something more or less 'real' for them to be worth studying. Therefore, if race is not real in a biological sense, then it has no ground to stand on and is a useless area of study because one will never be able to fully grasp the topic. While this interpretation supports the ideas of post racialists on both ends of the political spectrum,¹ it ignores the fact that much of what we see as natural and solid

¹ Linda Martín Alcoff, in "Who's Afraid of Identity Politics" leads a deep discussion of the way post racialism weaves through the political sphere and unites opposing ends of the political spectrum in blaming identity for "a host of political ills and theoretical mistakes" under the misguided idea that ignoring identity will create a stronger political union (313).

(places, economies, scarcities) are actually discourses **and rhetorics** that have become so ingrained in the social imagination that they appear natural and solid. Also, even though some discourses appear solid, their solidity is not what provides an intrinsic value. In fact, the fluid nature of discourses and the way they interact with each other and the rest of the world exposes the fact that much of our ‘solid’ reality is actually based upon continually moving and changing rhetorics. As Muckelbauer explains, “while so much attention has been directed at undermining foundations and unsettling grounds, we seem to have missed the point that the ground has never been anything other than change itself” (10). From Muckelbauer’s perspective, the very fact that discourses like race and place are in constant flux is the reason they need to become areas of focus and study. The fluid nature of these topics highlights the spaces of conflict, and confusion that are necessary for understanding how people interact, and discourses are created and maintained across populations. Muckelbauer’s interpretation of the world also demonstrates the ways in which rhetorical theory can be aligned with Foucauldian interpretations of discourse to move away from a search for absolute truth, to understanding that truth (outside of basic truths, like the need for food and water) is situational and created by conflict, place, and systems of power. Simply, reality is made up of competing and interacting discourses created by the needs and desires of different individuals and populations. Rhetorical theory offers a series of tools for navigating and making sense of these competing versions of reality. This transfers back to race by showing that through using rhetorical theory to look at the underlying rhetoric of racism that creates race, one can understand how to create new discourses that move beyond repeating the same ideas in the same ways. Creating new ideas is especially important when it comes to moving beyond traditionally accepted methods of discussing and interpreting race.

According to Michael Lacy and Kent Ono, “The study of rhetoric is well suited” for examining the connections between race, racism and discourse, specifically because of the broad scope that rhetorical theory has historically covered (6). As Lacy and Ono outline, the benefit of examining race or racism through rhetoric is that “a critical rhetorical approach ... examines race and racialized or racist discourse [through] multiple methodologies [as a way] of examining the changing landscape of racial formation” (6). Their approach uses the broad scope of rhetoric to discover and interpret the multiple realities that race and racism intersect with or create. For instance, Muckelbauer’s interpretation of rhetorical invention, based in some parts on Foucauldian understandings of discourse, argues that there is plenty to be gained by looking at situations where different understandings of reality run into each other. Muckelbauer explains that “[rhetoric] looks to the space *between* the poles, *between* opposing positions” (9) because it is in conflict that there is a chance to get at the very ideas or commonplace understandings (topoi) underlying the differing views. And those underlying understandings are where one can really begin to create new ideas, conceptualizations, or arguments without needing to discard the arguments, positions, and ideas that came before.

In a similar vein, Raymie McKerrow speaks of “critical rhetoric” which is concerned with exploring how power operates from a variety of different positions and relativities. In other words, critical rhetoric is concerned with understanding how conflict and systems of domination appear and operate from different positions and perspectives (91). More specifically, McKerrow builds a connection between rhetoric and Foucauldian critique by explaining that Foucault’s work seeks to understand the connection between power and freedom by using a method that critiques other theoretical perspectives while also being self-reflexive and turning “back on itself even as it promotes a realignment in the forces of power that construct social relations. In

practice, a critical rhetoric seeks to unmask or demystify the discourse of power" (91). In other words, McKerrow's critical rhetoric is interested in even uncovering its own connection to systems of power and validation. Foucault's work, as well, is skeptical about its own position as a producer of certain kinds of truths and discourses.

For example, Foucault explains the direction that he would like to see critiques of truth travel by stating, "the problem is to bring to light the conditions that had to be met for it to be possible to hold a discourse on madness—but the same would hold for delinquency and for sex—that can be true or false according to the rules of medicine, say, or of confession, psychology, or psychoanalysis" (*Biopolitics* 36). Here Foucault is not arguing that truth does not exist, but rather that truth is an agreement made between different parties. In this passage, Foucault can be read as saying that one must look beyond the discourses that take place in a specific situation and instead look at the rhetorical frameworks that are being used to create or support the discourses that are occurring. Here Foucault is shifting the focus from true and false to what is necessary for this truth to be important, useful, and legitimate and how that discourse of truth is being used to legitimate itself and those groups with power who are producing any number of truth discourses (McKerrow 93). In focusing on the discursive relationship of truth, Foucault circumvents the arguments about what is or is not true by explaining that truth is created by different systems, flows of power, and situations. In this case importance is not placed on what is or is not true, but what allows different ideas to become true or allows different systems to create truth. Foucault is not looking for the truth, but looking at how truth is created, why certain truths are created, and what happens when truth is being created. This search around the truth, and the ability to both move beyond while not entirely discrediting another argument is key to understanding that sites of conflict or converging ideas are productive for recognizing

how truth and discourse are both produced and shaping the forces, regimes, and communities that produce them.

A rhetorical interpretation of discourse creates an opportunity to encapsulate ideas and arguments instead of simply negating, refuting, or overcoming. For instance, Kenneth Burke speaks about his fondness of the term ‘advantage,’ which “is quite useful for rhetorical theory, in that it can also subsume, before we meet them, all possible ‘drives’ and ‘urges’ for the existence of which various brands of psychology and sociology may claim to find empirical evidence . . . Surely all doctrines can at least begin by agreeing that human effort aims at ‘advantage’ of one sort or another...” (61). Instead of focusing on the specifics of each action, Burke instead looks toward the base drive, which is the desire for some type of advantage. By assuming that advantage is what motivates discourse, Burke, like Foucault, is examining the way that power pools and flows and why certain decisions or utterances are made or even made possible. Again, there is a movement away from finding the exact or the empirical and instead an interest in what might make one search for the exact or the empirical. Muckelbauer lines up with the ideas of both Burke and Foucault by explaining that “an inquiry into the rhetoric of science, rather than simply noting the persuasive strategies used by scientists once they have made a discovery, might examine the contingent and contextual, rhetorical forces that enabled that discovery in the first place” (21). When rhetorical theory is used to examine a set of beliefs or series of arguments, it moves beyond persuasion and into interpreting or uncovering the underlying perceptions of truth and reality. Rhetorical theory is not only a tool for interpreting and creating different arguments, systems of power, and conceptions of truth, it runs alongside these concepts as well as in something that Muckelbauer refers to as ‘singular rhythms’ (thoughts or ideas that move within and around other frameworks). It is these singular rhythms that allow rhetorical

theory to advance beyond the traditional conceptual constraints of negation, while also creating space for understanding discourses as material.

Muckelbauer's singular rhythms are fascinating because they exist and work because of an understanding that the dialectic is inescapable. Similar to the understanding that rhetorical theory is most useful in sites of contradiction and conflict, singular rhythms provide a successful alternative to argumentation because they are dependent on traditional argument. Without traditional argument producing limitations, there would be no need to explore alternatives, or more specifically to find alternatives that do not simply recreate binary oppositions (11). The usefulness of an alternative to traditional argumentation is demonstrated through the post-racial arguments of someone like Walter Benn Michaels, who seems to believe that he is creating new ideas and alternatives to race, when he is actually constrained by his lack of imagination and the framework he is trying to critique. Michaels views race and class in opposition, and cannot move beyond placing class in opposition to race because he argues from the privileged position of a polemicist focused more on reasserting his right to speak on race than a desire to further discourse, and he is unable to mentally escape the continual need to negate. His perpetual cycle of negation keeps him from being able to respectfully take an argument to its furthest limit, or add another perspective, and begin work where it fails on its own criteria as a way of producing something new, something that polemics are inherently unable to accomplish (Foucault "Polemics" 382).

The need to work at the limitations of a certain framework is why Nikol Alexander-Floyd approaches the Black Nationalist critique of racism through a feminist lens. By adding in an additional framework, she not only reveals the limitations of the Black Nationalist framework, she also finds workable and productive contradictions. Similarly, by containing and moving with

the dialectic, rhetorical theory can circumvent the need to repeat the commonplace arguments in predictable ways and avoids the push toward to proving an absolute truth. Instead of working on negating ideas, Muckelbauer refers to his alternative as “an ‘affirmative’ sense of change” (12) because it focuses on working with arguments at their extremes and limitations as a way of finding new ideas and viewpoints. As Burke explains, “The *Rhetoric* deals with the possibilities of classification in its partisan aspects; it considers the ways in which individuals are at odds with one another or become identified with groups more or less at odds with one another” (22). This means that rhetoric is searching for places where problems arise as a way of producing useful analysis of a situation or particular line of discourse.

In a way, this all reduces to conflict and materiality. As long as there is some point of contention, some spot where different truth regimes run against each other, rhetorical theory can observe, analyze, and make unexpected moves. Mostly because it shifts away from proving something is false and into understanding what can be done with the arguments being made, their limitations, and how their epistemologies can be converted into new tools and heuristics. Rhetorical theory is always useful when it is used for looking at sources of conflict and examining what is created or how things are being constituted at that point of conflict, “nothing is more rhetorical in nature than a deliberation as to what is too much or too little, too early or too late; in such controversies, rhetoricians are forever ‘proving opposites’” (Burke 45). Since rhetorical theory is focused on looking at the opposite side, or the unstated, ignored positions, it becomes possible for rhetoricians to escape dominant discourses and ideological frameworks by encapsulating them and seeing what happens at the limits of a particular line of reasoning. Rhetorical theory is dedicated to moving beyond true or false dynamics and instead working toward understanding that different ideas or truths are heavily based in their own situations and

are in constant interaction with other truths and it is the interaction and co-existence of these competing truths that makes them useful for investigating the frameworks that are underpinning our social reality. Basically, “One need not privilege either objective truth or subjective perspective so much as recognize the ways in which subjects and objects are mutually constituted” (Muckelbauer 9). In the case of this project, that means understanding how diversity, class, and place are all mutually constituted because of their proximity and overlapping benefits within Oak Park.

Rhetoric as something that constitutes discourses, identities, or material benefits is another advantage of using rhetorical theory in conjunction with discourse to interpret what is happening in Oak Park. Charland explains that “the tautological logic of constitutive rhetoric must necessitate action in the material world; constitutive rhetoric must require that its embodied subjects act freely in the social world to affirm their subject position” (141). In Charland’s assessment rhetoric becomes useful for understanding how populations are created and how their creation leads to a series of actions and behaviors that would not exist, or be classified, without constitutive rhetoric binding disparate or overlooked discourses and practices. A rhetoric that looks at the material nature of rhetoric and discourse “sets up the possibility that the only thing that matters for a materialist rhetoric is the conflicts and contradictions associated with the position of the subject in language” (Greene 26). Greene’s passage suggests that rhetoric, material rhetoric specifically, offers the chance to explore how rhetorically constituted subjects come into conflict with the discourses and rhetorics that are supposed to describe and constitute their reality. In Oak Park this occurs every time that something happens in the community that is not focused on supporting the diversity and integration that Village Hall has projected as a part of the community and residents’ identity. Greene pushes this idea further by explaining that

material rhetoric can be used to understand how “a governing apparatus exists as a complex field of practical reasoning that invents, circulates, and regulates public problems” (21-22). This idea of government inventing and regulating public problems is at the heart of Oak Park’s public ordinance against rampant basketball playing discussed in chapter 1. It is never really clear if basketball is an actual concern for the community, but it is something that the government is concerned with and regulates, which manifests in a reduced community interest in basketball and the use of public spaces dedicated to basketball. Finally, Greene explains that “Instead of focusing on how rhetoric represents, we should focus on how rhetoric distributes different elements on a terrain of a governing apparatus. In this way, a rhetorical materialism will be able to focus on rhetoric as a technology of deliberation that allows a series of institutions to make judgments about the welfare of a population” (39). For Greene, and myself as well, rhetorical theory can be used to bridge the gap between governmentality, discourse, and the historical narratives that have been used and manipulated to give Village Hall the ability to shape and govern the community.

My point is that a stronger focus on rhetorical theory and discourse can offer not only a deeper framework for interpreting Oak Park, but also offer a set of conceptual tools for understanding racism as a force in larger society. In the same way that Muckelbauer outlines rhetoric as an architectonic, with its own commonplaces and terminology, racism is foundational to the way social life is regularly conducted. This does not mean that every single action or institution is attempting to be racist, but that racism can be seen as a material part of these institutions and their actions and often bleeds out of them in interesting ways.

Expanding the framework for race discourse provides a chance to move beyond explaining that racism is real. Proving that racism exists is still important, but rhetorical theory

and critique opens up a space that changes the results when someone attempts to shut down a discussion of race by mentioning that racism is not real, or that we can move beyond it. Instead of the response being, it is real and then quoting facts or examples, the response shifts to questioning what truth regimes and historical narratives allow this person to believe that racism does not exist, asking “what ideologies is this person looking at or working from,” “what systems is this person using that help to cover up the existence of race as a dividing line,” “what motives does this person have in making such a statement, and what ideologies need to be in place for this person to make such a statement?” Beyond shifting the kinds of questions asked a focus on rhetoric also moves the discussion toward finding the limits of the argument that racism does not exist by assuming that some aspect of it is true. Essentially, rhetorical theory offers the opportunity to critically examine race discourse by exploring what happens when competing arguments about race or racism are run through different situations and locations. Blending rhetorical theory with discourse and race theory seems for more interesting than trying to reprove that racism is real and affects the lives of individuals and populations in a thousand different ways, and it also opens up racial discourse in some new directions that may eventually end up consuming and moving past the current debates. Rhetorical theory also highlights what makes Oak Park an engaging area of study: the different truth regimes in play that have allowed the community to expand its understandings of race and diversity while being entirely dependent on the commonplace understandings it transcends.

As stated before, the overarching goal of this project is to understand what possibilities for expanded racial discourse Oak Park offers to larger society. Even with problems and failings, this small village has managed to shift the discourse on race just enough so that a different set of behaviors and concerns have taken place in the housing market. Instead of redlining, there is

statistical integration and co-habitation, which also plays a role in continually shifting the discourse about race and racism. Again, the point is not to suggest that everyone else working within a critical race theory framework is wrong or wasting everyone's time with the space their arguments and analyses take up, but instead that the problem with race theory is the lack of frameworks available. Combining an understanding of Foucauldian discourse with rhetorical theory and critical race theory creates a framework that is more adaptable and able to evolve because it focuses the slippery language that influences race as a discourse and race discourse. In other words, the problem with most race discourse is that it seeks out a positivistic foundation and solution to a fluid problem, instead of recognizing that searching for solid ground in a changing society is the same as asking for irrelevance.

D. Race as Blood

While the concept of race is constantly shifting and evolving, it has a fairly straight forward origin in a misunderstanding of the way that physical blood works. In the United States race has been traditionally based in the concept of "blood quantum," which means the parts of one's blood that ties him or her to a specific racial group. For instance, the idea of being half-black or a quarter-Asian is directly related to the idea that one has a certain amount of blood from different racial groups. In the US, this blood-based understanding of race is tied to and supported by the legal system, which played a role in cementing racial groups (Kauanui 2). Although the use of quantification, and scientific sounding ideologies, such as eugenics, and the legal system seems to suggest that race and blood share a connection, such a connection does not exist outside of the discourses that created it. As Karen and Barbra Fields explain, the concept of blood being related to a specific race stems from a conflation of physical blood, which runs through our veins, and "metaphorical blood," which is tied to groups of people anecdotally (50-

51). The conflation of metaphorical and physical blood occurs, partly, because of the use of mathematical and scientific sounding rhetoric to build the idea of race. The other part of the equation is a general reliance on commonplaces to interpret the world. Since the discourse of race is so older than the nation itself, common, and tied to some vague sense of the scientific, it appears to exist as a truth. The very ethereal idea of race because of its virulence and popularity not only has effects on and in the physical world, changing the ways bodies are classified, it also becomes material and measurable itself. In other words, race is a discourse that can be applied to the body and has a “material impact on the conditions and experiences of people who are rendered subjects” of racial discourse and are forced to live through the impact of the “social, economic, and political conditions” created by that discourse (Davis 166).

Since it is very difficult to see one’s blood as he or she moves about his or her day, and even harder to identify visually the race of blood, the understanding of blood representing one’s race is often transferred to the color of his or her skin. The visual marker of race is also easier to understand than continually explaining the difference between physical and metaphorical blood and why each matters. In other words, to explain the importance of metaphorical blood there needs to be a narrative and a type of rhetoric that appeals to the scientific or mathematical. To explain skin color, on the other hand, is easy: people are different because they look different. Again, this is another example of discourse creating race and having a physical impact on the world. The very use of skin color as a defining principle or as a marker of difference among people is created through discourse; namely, narratives and stereotypes that not only create meaning but also create the need for skin color as a classification. Despite the appearance of a measurable fact, race is more of a history of difference inscribed on bodies than it is something objectively real. Even though race is more discourse than physical reality, that does not mean

that the impacts of one's race are any less real or that declaring race a fiction ends racism.

Instead, I am arguing that every time the discursive nature of race is overlooked, the fiction of race and racial difference is reinforced as a reality because the premise of race as something that we should be measuring and tracking relationships to is never questioned.

Only demonstrating that race is a discourse is not going to immediately change the systems that are already in play. Instead, a truly effective approach to studying racism would require accounting for both the discursive sphere and the physical realities and effects of racism. For instance, when examining the criminal justice system and prison industrial complex, pointing out that race is simply a discourse is not going to put fewer black men in jail. At the same time, approaching race as exclusively physical hides the ways that physical race is created and played out through discourse, which causes understandings of race and attempts to transcend the limitations of contemporary race discourse stagnant. In other words, works that approach race as a physical reality end up re-inscribing that reality because they treat it as real and never question the role that actual racism, as opposed to the race of the victims of racism, plays in creating an oppressive system (Fields and Fields 16-17).

E. Race as Discourse

Examples of how race is constantly re-inscribed through works that are meant to bring about an end to racism frequently appear in some of the more popular and recent projects in critical race theory, specifically those that do not question the role of discourse in creating race. For instance, in the immensely popular *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Color-Blindness* by Michelle Alexander, the main argument is that contemporary mass incarceration is used to segregate black and brown men from the rest of society and create an intentionally overlooked Jim Crow-esque system of oppression. While this argument is both true

and a valid way to provide information to the parts of society unaware of the problems with racism, the limits of the argument become readily apparent as the work continues on to its conclusion. Since *The New Jim Crow* does not challenge the commonplace rhetorics surrounding race and relies heavily on mainstream knowledge of Jim Crow, Alexander's work is required to spend an inordinate amount of time explaining the difference between mass incarceration and Jim Crow segregation as it progresses toward its conclusion. Interestingly, the weaknesses of *The New Jim Crow* could be solved if Alexander's project focused more on the past of race's construction through discourse. For instance, Du Bois' understanding of psychological wages has many direct parallels to Alexander's work on how blacks are imagined as a criminal class.

Du Bois speaks about the way even white laborers are paid deference when they do menial labor or have stories about their criminal actives softened, so that even though they are poor and nearly at the bottom of the social and economic ladders, they still do not have to deal with the negative discourses surrounding black skin. They still get some benefit because they always have someone below them (Du Bois 700-701). *The New Jim Crow* is already heavily researched so pushing the argument further in a few areas, would probably have a negligible impact on the work's intended audiences and would leave a deeper impact on her readers. If Alexander took a more discursive route with her book, her work would move beyond the framework already in place, and she would be able to offer solutions and alternatives other than another Martin Luther King Jr. style "human rights movement" (Alexander 246), which is the same solution that has been posited for every racial injustice since the 1960s. The problem with this method is that the world has already adapted to the language and protest styles of the 1960s rendering them ineffective, so it is time for arguments about race and political movements to shift as well. Without moving into the discursive nature of race, *The New Jim Crow* ends up

another, albeit very successful and accessible, version of arguments that have been circulating since the 1990s². This means that the book becomes an informative conversation piece, but can never actually create the movement that it calls for. At the core level, a more intense focus on discourse would allow interlocutors to analyze the very systems they find constraining as opposed to simply focusing on systemic workarounds.

Similarly, there are other works that demonstrate the way that policy or legal systems are currently being used to oppress people of color, but by ignoring the seemingly natural discourse of race, they can only offer solutions that revolve around changing policy. An approach to changing policy is partially helpful, but is not a complete solution because racist ideas and ideals are already a large part of common discourse. Works like Randall Kennedy's *Nigger* appear to be tackling discourse, but are really just offering etymologies or historical accounts about how certain words or phrases have traveled through time. Likewise, *When Affirmative Action was White* became widely cited because it dealt in the controversy of Affirmative Action through the innovative approach of looking historically at governmental benefits that were only intended for whites through New Deal era policies. Brushing up against the discursive nature of race, Ira Katznelson demonstrates that a seemingly benign system of government support (similar to the Oak Park basketball policies) is directly tied to racism and the continued oppression of people of color, but never explores the underlying fiction of race. *White by Law* by Ian Haney Lopez, gets even closer to showing that race is a discourse by demonstrating the way that the legal system grants protections to whites that makes whiteness valuable, but it does not fully map out the connection between the legal apparatus and the other ideologies that have formed both race discourse and existed alongside race discourse.

² Some more recent examples are Angela Davis's *Are Prisons Obsolete?* and *Unequal Under Law*, by Doris Provine. Both works make very similar arguments to Alexander, but lack the Rhetorical flair of *The New Jim Crow*.

As discourse and Foucauldian methods become more important in the way academics try to untangle reality, there are works that focus on the fluid and changing nature of race and race discourse. For example, research projects such as *Racecraft*, *Real Black* by John L. Jackson, or *Reworking Race* by Moon Kie-Jung are useful because they try to understand formations of race as both a particular and universal; they look at “race” as moving and changing with the times and locations; they push the limits of the vocabulary about race and challenge assumptions of its meanings; they approach race through an interdisciplinary lens, mirroring its movement through space and time³. These authors also fundamentally understand that race does not operate in a vacuum, “class, race, ethnicity, and sexuality all function in relation to each other, as much as they do in relation to other identities” (Davis 168). The success of these works is that they understand that “any effective critique [of race or racism] must be able to change perspectives to see and appreciate the shifting historical contexts and racial formations, while being sturdy enough to unearth its rhetorical residue” (Lacy and Ono 3). In other words, these works demonstrate the usefulness of a focus on discourse because they understand that race operates as a discourse and can be most effectively interpreted and manipulated as such. Additionally, these authors understand that race discourses are tied to specific communities and time periods, while also aiding in creating the commonplace understandings of race. Jung, the Fields, and Jackson are particularly effective because they explore race in context. Basically, a focus on discourse, creates a stronger argument because it is a more accurate representation of how people interact with their world and can help individuals and populations to articulate their needs without relying on the very frameworks that both define and oppress them.

³ While these works are more academically focused than the more popular works, the focus on ethnography or historical narrative allows these books the opportunity to reach and effectively communicate with a more mainstream audience.

For instance, *Racecraft* argues that race operates in the same way as witchcraft, where proximity to occurrence is assumed to be causation. For instance, if there is a large population of black men in jail, then it is assumed that race is the causal factor of incarceration. The authors also explain that race and racism are used interchangeably, but this leads to the continuation of racism because it appears that one's race is the cause of his or her problems as opposed to systemic racism. The most important aspects of this work are that the Fields approach race as a moving and changing discourse that has a continual impact on daily life, and that they argue for the assumption that racism is an organizing force of society and race is a fictional byproduct of racism, so that work can be done to change its impact on society. The authors also cleverly redefine terms such as "race" and "racism" to differentiate their work from what came before and open their readers up to new ways of understanding race theory (Fields and Fields 16-17). *Real Black: Adventures in Racial Sincerity* takes a slightly different approach. Instead of trying to directly define race, Jackson shows how race has both a larger meaning for society, a locational meaning for a community, and a sincere meaning for each person. He looks at how race is preformed, interpreted, and created based on the actors involved. Like *Racecraft*, *Real Black* strives to demonstrate how race is not something solidly definable, but a system of shared and individual meanings and locations that are constantly, and sometimes contradictorily, in movement.

Finally, *Reworking Race* focuses on the way that three distinct ethnic groups in Hawaii were able to successfully build a union by changing their discourses about each other and the landowners. Through shifting discourse, the workers dismantled the hierarchy white landowners created to keep them working against each other. Through the story of these men in the 1930s and 40s, Jung argues that radicalized movements are possible for addressing the concerns of both

class, race, and equal opportunity or access to resources. The way that these three works move through race, location, and discourse illustrates what is possible when one explores the discursive foundations of race as a reality or focuses on the history of the truth regimes that produce race as opposed to the history of race struggle. These works also provide examples that show how beneficial a space like Oak Park is for understanding the way shifts in discourse away from historical rhetoric can lead to new ideas, frameworks, and living arrangements as well as the importance of paying attention to each community's unique discourses.

By shifting the focus on race from the effects of racism to discourse that creates race on a local and personal level, it is possible to understand how race comes into existence as a standard of judging difference. Following from Du Bois' example of psychological wages, David Roediger, shows that many of the seemingly natural differences between whites and blacks were created through the discourse of difference immigrant groups used to separate themselves from the work that they shared with blacks and, eventually, move up the economic ladder. Roediger explains that immigrants wanting to move away from having their forms of unskilled labor associated with "nigger work" were willing to use mob violence to punish any blacks who demonstrated socially acceptable or moral behavior. For instance, attacking blacks who held temperance parades because it might lead to the suggestion that blacks and Irish immigrants were equal or blacks were better (146, 154). These immigrant groups used violence to control the discourse about both their own and black bodies to ensure that visible evidence contrary to their fictive differences would not be readily available (147). Essentially, they used physical violence to create a relationship of power between themselves and black laborers, which in turn supported

the production of knowledge that inscribed the immigrant group's ideas about blacks on reality.⁴ By following and repeating this pattern, the unskilled labor market was separated into two distinct races: one deserving (with the power to shift discourse and gain economic benefits) and one undeserving (without the power to retaliate or re-center discourse) that were pitted against each other⁵ (148). These local discourses, due to their durability and transportability, would eventually work into the larger rhetoric of racism and come to serve as the foundation for many stereotypes that still affect blacks on a daily and often localized level. This example also serves to demonstrate how rhetoric and discourse are often in a reciprocal relationship.

In this case, if we look at the unskilled labor market in the late 1800s and early 1900s as one group of people, the poor, we can see the role that race discourse plays in separating this one group with similar goals and concerns into two incompatible races who are always in conflict. Moving away from a purely biological understanding of race and into the realm of discourse allows for race to be permeable and constructed through physical location, economic need, political, or religious difference. In the United States these differences are usually attached to certain physical markers, but they could be attached to anything that would help separate one group into two distinct races. As the Roediger example shows, the meaning of both black and Irish as 'races' change as a function of economic need, political power, and proximity (136).

⁴ Speaking of the power of certain groups to inscribe their knowledges on society, Foucault speaks of "truth regimes," which enabled groups in power "to say and assert a number of things as truths that it turns out we now know were perhaps not true at all" (Foucault *Biopolitics* 36).

⁵ Foucault explains that state sponsored race wars are not about finding different groups and placing them into conflict with each other, but instead dividing up one group of people into two races that can be defined separately. "In other words, what we see as a polarity, as a binary rift within society, is not a clash between two distinct races. It is the splitting of a single race into a superrace and a subrace" (*Society* 61). In this case the blacks and the Irish were a part of the same working class group and were forced into a type of conflict with each other that allowed for the wealthier groups to be spared from conflict with the working poor or being required to share their resources with them. It is the conflict created between the blacks and the Irish that allowed them to be defined as separate groups when in fact, they should have been aligned through their position at the bottom of the social and economic hierarchy. This splitting of the groups is what Foucault refers to as "state racism" (61).

Essentially, what we understand as race is really just a discourse used to help shape society through racism. By attaching additional meaning to physical difference or specific behaviors, race becomes a tool for creating a perpetual war that pits two groups against each other for the benefit of the group on top (Foucault *Society* 88). Essentially, race as a discourse becomes a way of understanding how power is flowing through society. Those with the positive discourses and the abilities to produce truth about other races are the ones with the larger flow of power (Foucault *Society* 61).

Another way of understanding the connection between racism and discourse is through rhetorical theory, which provides a set of tools and language for understanding the connection between discourse and the material world. Michael Calvin McGee explains that “Rhetoric is ‘object’ because of its pragmatic *presence*, our inability safely to ignore it at the moment of its impact. ‘Speech’ bears exactly the same categorical relationship to whether one conceives ‘rhetoric’ as a body of prescriptive principles or as an objective social interaction” (23). Racism as a rhetoric can be understood through discourse because the narratives, histories, and institutions of racism show their effects on very localized and individual levels. Rhetoric is at the base of many different frameworks and ideologies that underpin the discourses of race that are being studied. Material rhetorics can be understood as so pervasive that they often become invisible borders or walls that shape how we view the past, the potential future, ourselves, and the development and maintenance of relationships and social bonds with other groups or individuals. Since racism is foundational to creating social relationships, understanding racism as an architectonic can be used to explain some of the ways that blacks attempt to organize politically. Racism shapes how populations and individuals associate with each other; one effect of this was forcing blacks to live in close proximity and, often, share the same common enemies

(oppression, violence, discrimination, et cetera). This created the obvious response of blacks trying to work with each other to solve Jim Crow segregation. However, once this large problem was removed the pattern of political alignment along racial lines did not end. Instead, black groups continue to work through political solidarity without fully considering the differences facing each part of the black population and people's diverse motivations and needs (a middle-class black family in Oak Park has a related, but ultimately different set of concerns from a working-class black family living in Chicago's Austin neighborhood) even if the problems can all be grouped under racism. There have been too many changes to the country and the black population since the civil rights era for the same methods to work (Johnson 218), but the architectonical nature of racism makes it appear as if racial solidarity is the only answer.⁶ The paradox created by the need to expand political organization beyond racial solidarity and the need to continue organizing along racial lines can be explained through race serving one of racism's topoi or, as the Fields note, a part of racism's witchcraft. Cintron leads a long discussion of the history of topos / topoi where he explains that topoi were understood as a way of working toward a "universal method for making arguments," later a tool for inventing arguments, and eventually as tied to energy because rhetoric contains the energy of thoughts and emotions (Cintron 100 – 101). Eventually, Cintron explains that topoi can be seen as generative starting points because:

⁶ Alcoff, in *Visible Identities*, points to the example of the Combahee River Collective, a group of African American women who recognized the need to organize along their identity as African American and socialist so that they could formulate clear statements on the forms of subordination they faced and spend time organizing as a group to ensure their shared concerns are heard. At the same time, the Collective also understood that real progress would require collaboration with progressive groups representing other races, sexes, and political identities (15). This group serves as an example of the need to not only align along identity in order to respond to directly respond to racism, but also the need to reach outside of one's group to create new forms of organization and transcend some aspects of subordination.

Topoi, in order to move things, must preexist the motion itself, which suggests, to me at least, that the body politic can be described as already organized around its topoi. Topoi do not emerge out of the blue. If they did they would not be recognized, and it is their recognizability, a bringing-before-the-eyes, that makes them potent. So the ability to get things moving collectively is dependent on the fact that topoi constitute the body politic in a visible and highly public sort of way. (101)

I take this passage to mean that topoi are something that preexists the groups or conditions that are being referred to. In this case race is a topos because it is an idea or framework that exists and works as a tool for organization because of the way it is always enacted publically and as a commonplace and part of the political sphere. Additionally, viewing race as a topos makes it possible to account for the multiple ways people interpret and interact with their own race, how conceptions of race change based on time and place, and how it is likely for systems of oppression to continue in differing ways, but for all of these to exist under the category of race and racism.

Another way to understand the limitations of both academic and mainstream race discourse is by examining an argument made by a non-academic author. For instance, social commentator Touré, in *Who's Afraid of Post Blackness*, questions what it means to be black and argues that black is whatever a black person wants it to be and that blacks should move away from the 'blacks do this, but don't do that' framework (for example, blacks do not ski). Although, he ends up making an essentially capitalist, uplift argument by the end of his book, the point still stands: even mainstream commentators are noticing the limitations of the current racial discourse framework. Eduardo Bonilla-Silva continues along these lines by explaining that "racial classifications partially organize and limit actors' life chances, racial practices of

opposition emerge” (40), and since race is socially constructed the ideas attached to or classifications of who belongs to each race are based on what is happening in society at the time and who has power among the different groups (41). Although classifications seem to be helpful in explaining the world and human interactions, the act of classification cements an otherwise fluid and moving concept. In other words, since race is a fluid discourse/concept, it needs to be analyzed in a way that acknowledges its dynamic nature. Race, as a unit of racist discourse, does not operate in the same way it did in 1960 or even in 2007, and this shifting nature is why some ideas from rhetorical theory are aptly positioned to take advantage of this fluidity and the energy contained within ‘practices of opposition’ because rhetoric is, among other things, about understanding what makes conflict work and the frameworks that create limitations and responses.

F. Race as Rhetoric

Basically, the typical understanding of race is actually a commonplace set of ideas that run throughout American society. These ideas are in a continual state of flux, changing with eras and locations, but appear immutable because they are tied to seemingly unchanging physical traits. Race, as a rhetoric, can exist independent of bodies, but does not have any real impact until it is applied to a body, so if I think that I am white but people tell me that I’m black, the “black rhetoric” is then applied to my body and I end up living through the experience of that race.⁷ My personal feelings or decisions have very little to do with the way race is applied to my body, the only way around dealing with the topos is to be ignorant of it, which would mean that

⁷ In *Real Black*, John L. Jackson, recounts the story of half-black white supremacist Leo Felton, who passed as white because he believed that race was not actually material; instead he believed it to be a spiritual connection to one’s race and how he or she felt about it. However, as Jackson points out, Felton was fine giving himself leeway to decide his own race, but was unable to extend the same to the other blacks he committed violent acts against (19-21).

one would still face the effects of his or her race, but would probably classify it as a different non-racialized experience. Ultimately, one's feelings do not matter as long as the application is consistent with what is contained in the topos. Viewing race as a topos also helps to explain race as an organizing factor and motivation for action, because a part of blackness as a topos is the concept of community and the political and social history of the civil rights movement, Jim Crow, and slavery. Or as Linda Martín Alcoff explains, "identities must resonate with and unify lived experience, and they must provide a meaning that has some purchase, however partial, on the subjects own daily reality" (42). Race is often used as an organizing factor because it provides a point of unity and shared experiences across a range of, otherwise, unique individuals and blackness as topos and identity becomes something that contains social energy because of the shared experiences it represents. By invoking ideas connected to the topos, people can be roused to action. The connected ideas move from claims of racism, to saying something like "police brutality" and using the understanding of an utterance as pointing toward racism to gain sympathy, understanding, or public support. Additionally, understanding how race functions as a type of social energy can help to transition into another way of framing social movements.

The point that I am pushing through the connection between topos and race is twofold. First, the way that race is commonly conceptualized needs to change. As Gary Peller argues, "the basic boundaries of contemporary mainstream thinking about race were set in the early seventies [and] it is now time to rethink the ways that racial justice has been understood in dominant discourse for the past several decades" (128). While it is great that race is being discussed more openly and in many different arenas, unfocused conversation does not advance the progressively outdated and ineffective mainstream discourse that is too limited to account for the understanding of race as a historical discourse applied to bodies and racism as the agent that

attaches that discourse to bodies. In addition, it is becoming increasingly important to understand that “examining discourses of race and racism need not be limited by disciplinary myopia, perspectives, approaches, and questions, but augmented by insights from other fields of study, methods, approaches, and assumptions that emerge at the interstices of fields” (Lacy and Ono 5). The only way to understand how race operates is much in the same way one might attempt to analyze a specific field site, which can only be accomplished by applying a range of theoretical and methodological approaches. This multi-disciplinary approach is especially important for studying Oak Park because the limitations of the argument being made by Village Hall’s actions are directly linked to “the integrationist vision,” which has always relied on “the defensive rhetoric [of] ‘remedy’ or diversity,’ posed as counterbalancing factors to lack of merit... [which have] worked to legitimate the very social relations that originally were to be reformed” (128). In sum, the limitation of integrationist projects, like Oak Park’s is that they do not engage with the discourse underlying racist practices and racism and instead rely on superficial, surface level changes that allow racism to become more ingrained in the foundation of all systems and institutions.

The second point is that beyond understanding race as an entire system of symbols, locations, arguments, and actions that become attached to the body and shape the lives of individuals and populations, a focus on discourse shows the limitations of *New Jim Crow* style race theory, and the enhancements offered by Foucauldian and rhetorical theory for understanding the co-constitutive relationship of racism and society. For instance, some contemporary rhetorical theorists are exploring the link between location and meaning, specifically as it relates to how individuals identify and interact with each other, and the fluidity

of meaning in these locations.⁸ Even outside of the link between racial discourse and location, place plays a large role in worldview and the type of discussions that occur. David Fleming argues that as communities change, they change the types of arguments that can occur (xii). Fleming points to Chicago's ghetto as a place where argument and discussion dies because the communities are cut off from the outside world and each other due to street-level violence. Without a community engaged in discourse, the ghetto's residents have no voice to create a coherent narrative for or definition of their community and are constantly being defined and vilified by the surrounding communities (90). Fleming's insight into the way place shapes and is shaped by discourse mirrors the thoughts of Jackson when he explains that blackness in Harlem is defined by the residents of Harlem on both a community wide and individual level (Jackson *Harlemworld* 28). In other words, the link between place and discourse is very similar to the link between race and discourse. Both are fluid, defined by their proximity to other people and locations, and both meet the needs and desires of the communities that either create or are created as a result of them. In fact, if locations and races stagnate, they die off because they are no longer able to meet the needs of the changing world.

G. Place-bound Discourse

Since, race, place, and discourse all intersect in Oak Park, I would like to spend some time exploring the different ways that place is crafted through both discourse and practice. Place is unique because it seems to refer to a solid piece of land, a pure fact, but, like race, place is one part material and one part discourse being applied to the material. For instance, Nedra Reynolds draws a distinction between "the maps we spread out onto a dashboard or view on a screen" and "our mental maps, the images and associations of places that we carry around in our heads"

⁸ Examples of this include David Fleming's *City of Rhetoric*, Jenny Rice's *Distant Publics*, and Douglas Powell's *Critical Regionalism*.

(449). She explains that the physical maps are a discourse applied to the land that can be used to help us make sense of our movement through the world, where we will walk or drive, but our mental maps are tied to “feelings of residents or visitors or trespassers” (474). These mental maps are what actually create the sense of place or belonging that are tied to physical locations and because they are mental, they are individual and difficult to map in the traditional sense. Furthermore, Dolores Hayden explains that “‘Place’ is one of the trickiest words in the English language, a suitcase so overfilled one can never shut the lid. It carries the resonance of homestead, location, and open space in the city as well as a position in a social hierarchy” (15). Essentially, places do not have single, unique ‘identities’; “they are full of internal conflicts” (Massey 245). These conflicts are partially created by the fact that place is experienced through perception, which is both constitutive and constituted. When in a place, we not only feel it and are influenced by it, but we also have the ability to influence the place as well, to change it to fit our perceptions, practices, and discourse (Casey 19). Like race, place is both elastic and coherent to the extent that some places are considered the same or similar, while others are understood as being of different types, yet still places (Casey 44). Places are the result of both physical features, locations, and the discourse applied to, shaped by, and created because of the place. In other words, place is as much a production as it is a feature of the natural world.

Place can be both natural and produced because “the production of space begins as soon as indigenous residents locate themselves in a particular landscape and begin the search for subsistence” (Hayden 20). Place discourses are a result of the need for humans to explore and understand not only their surroundings, but the connections and identities that they build because of those surroundings. People and their bodies are always tied to specific places, and help to provide culture and identity (Casey 24, 34). People and communities identify with certain places

because “culture has to be embodied. Culture is carried into places by bodies” (Casey 34), and individuals exist on a local level, which means that knowledge, discourse, and the production of knowledge is directly tied to the places that one interacts with daily (Casey 18). Culture can be understood as what helps to create the link between place, people, and community.

This is not to suggest that place and community are synonymous. Instead it is important to note that communities can become attached to places and exist without them. Even the communities that are most strongly associated with a single place, for example integrationists in Oak Park, cannot completely encompass all the different communities that may intersect with or exist in a single place (Massey 243). In other words, it might be better to understand that place and community are connected through location. When a community is formed at a specific place, the community not only shapes the place but is also shaped by the place. Community and place are both separate and, at times, inseparable and “what gives a place its specificity is not some long internalized history but the fact that it is constructed out of a particular constellation of social relations, meeting and weaving together at a particular locus” (Massey 244). Place is as much physical location as it is a narrative tied to the location. The ways people experience a place are tied to the narrative history of a space, the communities inhabiting the place, and their own memories and experiences that are continually shaped by and shaping place. Reynolds explains that:

People move through space, in large part, very cautiously, particularly if their (visible) identity puts them at risk in certain areas or neighborhoods. Movement through the spatial world is determined largely by contested places and geographies of exclusion, by (invisible) markers of boundaries. In addition, even the finest maps--created via satellite and updated every twenty-four hours--cannot

capture the contested places that are difficult even for insiders to characterize or predict (449).

Places are defined by the way that both temporary and permanent residents use them and these uses can be impossible to track at times. Even the way seemingly permanent parts of the landscape, such as buildings and parks, develop and change through interaction with the community and the kinds of narratives or fears created demonstrate the fluid nature and constant interaction of both place and community.

Despite the fluid nature of the meanings and interactions attached to specific locations, places are able to remain constant because they have defined boundaries. Even if these boundaries are produced through governance and mapping in contrast to being based on changes in geography, they still help communities and individuals to create a clear sense of what makes a particular place unique and offer ways for a place to become differentiated from others. Place is created through the kinds of people who move through it and the networks and relationships they form within a demarcated space. These place-bound relationships and networks allow for the creation of links to the world outside of that space. The links to the world outside, further help to separate one place from another because they allow for comparison and discussion, which gives a place a way to uniquely fit within the state, country, or world (Massey 244). The character of a place can only be understood with regard to how it differs from another place (Massey 245). Oak Park cannot be considered a diverse place until it uses Chicago as a comparison. Without that comparison, there is no way for Oak Park's community to establish their place as doing something different or unique. Without something to compare the space to, a place simply exists.

This all ties back into the understanding of race as a discourse, because racial experience and racial discourse are directly connected to the discourses of place. Hayden, for instance,

speaks of the way that segregation in cities shaped the development of early feminist movements, with white women congregating in one space and dealing with their own concerns while “African American women sometimes formed their own parallel groups, with their own meeting places, to help working women and girls in their own communities” (Hayden 23-24). Since the two groups were separated by the discourses regarding who could use a place and why, one group that shared similar goals was split into two distinct communities, limiting the power of both groups and even fostering further division. In many ways, both race and gender play a role in shaping who can travel in certain places, for example, women being limited to movement in certain areas or times of the day because of the threat of physical violence (Massey 238). Reynolds uses the example of Hyde Park in England to show how interaction with places changes based on the person and even time of day:

[Hyde Park in Leeds] was often filled with people using the space in various ways; on a nice day, you could see dogs being walked, children on the playground, older teens on the skateboard ramp or basketball court, pick-up football matches, and many people just passing through on their way to and from the university or towards the Hyde Park bus stop on one edge of the park. However, at dusk or after dark, it took on a different identity, and for women, at least, even the streets surrounding the park take on a sinister quality. (460)

These interactions not only influence what it means to be a woman in a certain place, but also change the meaning of place because they affect how populations interact with a space, and the stories that they tell about the space. Additionally, like race, place is produced through connections to power, which influences everything from “planning, design, construction, use, and demolition of typical buildings, especially dwellings. While architectural history has

traditionally been devoted to stylistic analyses of the works of a small group of trained architects, recently more attention has been given to vernacular buildings and urban context. Buildings are rich sources for analyzing the material conditions of urban life” (Hayden 29). The fluidity of race and place is directly tied to the way discourses and classifications are applied to physical bodies and spaces as a way of creating reality. For places, the typical form of classification has been the map, which “has often been taken to epitomize the character of colonial power, and by extension the power of the modern state. The map signifies the massive production of knowledge, the accuracy of calculation, and the entire politics based upon a knowledge of population and territory that Foucault characterizes as governmentality, the characteristic power of the modern state” (Mitchell 9). The map is an attempt to solidify the meaning of a site, which it does in legislative terms, but the map cannot account for the fluid meanings that are created through use of buildings, physical space, and human fears and interactions.⁹

H. External Discourses

Being able to capture the fluidity of race and place is relevant because as concepts they have never been truly stable. Like everything else steeped in discourse, race and place have “never been anything other than change itself” (Muckelbauer 10). Instead of treating race and place as static it is more useful to understand the trends and patterns that they seem to flow through, so that it is possible to examine how their changes are constituted as a form of stability. Examining how patterns move not only ties in with a desire to understand how truth is produced,

⁹ Reynolds examines the rhetorical aspect of maps as well explaining that “Maps work metaphorically, but they also do rhetorical work: they provide information that influences action; they persuade users to try a new route or stick with the old one; and they communicate an image of place that may or may not hold up. Maps, like all texts, function in the between of metaphor and materiality: cartography is a useful and profitable 'skill' done with tools, but mental mapping is a swirl of memory and experience related to race, class, gender, sexuality, age or abilities. A geographical rhetoric, then, would not ignore longitude and latitude but would try to capture the layers of meaning and the *feelings* of residents or visitors or trespassers” (474). Maps help to create the very ambiguities that they are supposed to combat.

but also relates to the understanding that repetition and patterns are not consistently predictable, that they do not always lead to similar results. Often the very constraints of race or place are what allow meaning to travel in unknown directions, or to produce something unexpected or useful. Simply, understanding the ways that change is contained and the ways that patterns repeat is what allows the creation of fresh ideas and understandings. The desire to understand how patterns are created is at the center of understanding how truth is being produced about both race and place.

A desire to understand how truth is being produced is at the center of why Paul Veyne calls Foucault a “*sceptic* thinker” (1). Foucault disregarded the truth of ideas and instead focused on “the truth of facts” (1). Foucault was interested in understanding how certain truths had been created and instituted throughout history, or the way that truth became historicized. Another way of framing this is to say that Foucault was a skeptic because he understood the connection between systems of power, domination, and discourse. In this case, those with power can set forth certain discourses that end up producing material truth, and he did not want to fall prey to confusing the discourses that produce truth for the only possible truth. Instead, he was interested in studying discourses; for example, psychological discourse's role in shaping the way that society is organized and populations are changed to both validate and match the discourses being applied to them. Foucault also understood that discourse could become material, shaping and changing the way that we all interact with the world and discourse itself, which means that discourse can only be legitimately understood “when measured, directly and explicitly against the objects it purportedly describes and explains” (McGee 19). Examining the way that discourse becomes material and shapes the material world is the sole way to understand how it is possible for discourse to be used as the foundation for community building and developing systems of

knowledge production. The discourses that are produced by certain regimes are what continue to validate the materials and truths that are produced by the regimes. Foucault's skepticism is needed to explore properly diversity in Oak Park because diversity is quantifiable, over 30% of Oak Park's population is minority, but it is the discourse of diversity that sets the meaning of what counts as diverse and the limitations of when diversity becomes too extreme and problematic. Even if diversity can be measured, it is the discourse that continues to both shape and be shaped by the material diversity that occurs within the village limits.

Since diversity is as much discourse as it a measurable object, it is possible to see how it is merged with other discourses to help shape the community. Specifically, the economy. The economy is probably the most invisible of discourses because it appears to be "a material ground out of which the cultural is shaped or in relation to which it acquires its significance" (Mitchell 3). Money, like race, is often viewed as a natural aspect of objective reality because it has been ingrained in almost all daily interactions. One cannot even type out his dissertation from the comfort of his home without the ability to pay for electricity and food or the invisible mechanizations of the economy creating or detracting value from the degree that will one day be awarded. Relating to the idea of the economy as seemingly natural, Timothy Mitchell, studies how the economy, between the 1930s and 50s, comes into "being as a self-contained, internally dynamic and statistically measurable sphere of social action, scientific analysis, and political regulation" (4). In other words he wants to understand how the economy operates as a truth regime, but cautions that examining the economy as a purely social construction or a figment of social imagination is a limited approach because it creates a division between the physical world and interpretation of the world. There is little difference between "representations and the world they represent, social constructions and the world they construct" (4). Mitchell explains that the

problem is that assuming a hard difference between representation and the world “leaves the economists [or anyone] to carry on undisturbed, pointing out that they are not concerned with the history of representations, but with the underlying reality their models represent” (4-5) in contrast to understanding that the economy is part of the history of representations. For Mitchell, the economy operates in very much the same method (a fiction with physical and daily impact on lives) that I argue happens with race.

Viewing the economy as a part of the ‘underlying reality’ makes it easier to understand how Oak Park’s focus on the intersection of diversity and economic wealth through homeownership’ led to an expansion of middle class wealth and rising property values, which excluded, and continues to exclude, many potential new residents from the community (West et al. 116). However, the focus on racial diversity, and its economic benefits, has also transferred to an interest in creating economic diversity within the village, which is another goal of the Housing Programs office and HPAC. Through a connection between diversity and the economy, Village Hall could create a truth that is continually mobilized to make changes happen in the village. As Mitchell explains, the economy, as a truth, was not a renaming of processes that already existed, but a “reorganization and transformation” of already existing and new processes into something that had never existed before (5). “These ‘extraeconomic’ origins of the economy made possible new forms of value, new kinds of equivalence, new practices of calculation, new relations between human agency and the nonhuman, and new distinctions between what was real and the forms of its representation” (5). In the same way, the merging of diversity and the economy opened Oak Park up for new types of community building, economic growth, and social and governmental interactions.

Oak Park's example also demonstrates what an attempt to sidestep the commonplace class versus race debate (which views class and race as competing frameworks, where a focus on race trumps a focus on class and vice versa) might look like. What the class versus race paradigm fails to note is that in the real world, one can never get very far by imagining race and class as entirely divorced or in competition with each other. Not only are class and race not entirely separate, "it makes neither political nor theoretical sense to imagine an undifferentiated working class demanding a larger share of the pie, to be divided among them with the same rations of remuneration as currently exist based on racism and sexism" (Alcoff *Visible Identities* 27). In order to solve the problems of poverty and economic insecurity, both race and class have to be taken into account. The problem with the class versus race framework is that there is a heavy assumption that class and class interests are somewhat more real than race or racial interests and that people only care about what economic class they are in. Without even going into too much detail, the very idea of class as something one can change, shed, or disguise makes it a more difficult tool for organizing people than race. Why, for instance, would I fight for the rights of the poor when I feel that I can change my status as a poor person? Or if I feel that my race is what is actually limiting my success in life? Or when the American Dream tells me that with enough hard work, I can be in a better position? In the context of the United States, as Alcoff explains, "racism is not a diversion to class struggle but, [...] centrally necessary for the very possibility of class struggle. White identity was created as a recompense and distraction to white workers for their economic disenfranchisement. Class consciousness has been stymied in the United States more so than in any other industrialized country through the racial ideology of white supremacy" (*Visible Identities* 31). Again, it is race helping to create class and class helping to cement racial differences.

The example of Oak Park offers a slight inversion of class versus race by showing that integration can be managed by combining middle-class interests with anti-racist goals. Oak Park's method shows that a focus on race and diversity can lead to increased home value, which creates economic benefits for some. While demonstrating a link between racial integration and economic benefits is useful, Oak Park is also an example of the limits of focusing on class because its integrationist spirit is always surrounded by economic incentives for the middle class, which means that in areas, such as education or property management, where there is very little economic incentive to care about diversity initiatives, the community fails to meet its own managed ideals (Inkelbarger). In other words, the same approach that is used to create racial diversity has to be focused on class as well so that the benefits (economic, social, and resource based) of integration can be more evenly spread across the population

Still, despite its weaknesses the Oak Park method stands in almost direct opposition to literary theorists such as Walter Benn Michaels who attempt to continually reinforce the race versus class dynamic. Oak Park is outside the reach of Michael's argument because the community is heavily invested in managing both race and class or using race to improve class standing while also using middle-class interests to create integration. Essentially Village Hall's work is entirely focused on race and diversity, but it relies on the tools of class to accomplish its goals. Therefore, by putting race and class into a cyclical relationship, Oak Park offers up a refutation of Michaels' argument that class is more important than race and also the idea that focusing on economics can solve the issues of race and racism. For instance, Michaels states that "we would much rather get rid of racism than get rid of poverty" (12). Despite this statement, Michaels does not seem to actually have a problem with ending racism. Instead, he views a completely racially, sexually, culturally tolerant world as the end of political action and social

movements. He believes the discovery of social tolerance means the end of political action and a desire for change. He assumes that focusing on race will lead people away from ensuring class equality, which ignores that examining the problems created by racism can be a way of attacking class issues. This is especially true since racism is used to support the very class dynamics Michaels argues that he wants to see changed.

Demonstrating the connection between racial gains and increased interest in class equality, civil rights leaders made it known that “they viewed the eradication of economic inequality as the next front in the ‘human rights movement’ and made great efforts to build multiracial coalitions that sought economic justice for all” (Alexander 39). Fighting racism was seen as a way to build a foundation that could be used for challenging the biases of the American class system. In addition, Oak Park’s example of a system that attempts to manage class and race at the same time shows that a focus exclusively on class is not the way to go about solving the combined problems of race and class. In fact, it seems that some of Oak Park’s continued problems with housing discrimination and segregation in the local schools are related to the way that too much of Village Hall’s emphasis on diversity and integration are tied to protecting middle class interests.

The problem with arguments in a similar vein to Michaels’ is that they are often responding to specific cases or manufactured examples that cannot possibly encompass the rhetorics and discourses that create both national and local conceptions and practices of race and class. For instance, Michaels explains that in a perfect universe, race would not matter anymore than hair color because “no important issue of social justice hangs on not discriminating against people because of their hair color or their skin color or their sexuality. No issue of social justice hangs on appreciating hair color diversity; no issue of social justice hangs on appreciating racial

or cultural diversity” (15). So far, this seems like a fair distinction; it is not important that we really care for people’s differences, as long as we are not acting on the historic rhetorics that would suggest small physical differences have any natural or innate bearing on one’s character or potential. He also extends this argument further by lining up an appreciation of race with the creation of classism, which “is the key here because classism is the pseudo-problem that brings left and right, conservatives and reactionaries together . . . Classism is what you’re a victim of not because you’re poor, but because people aren’t nice to you because you’re poor” (106). Granted, here he is providing a thin understanding of classism,¹⁰ but it is still possible to understand that he wants the reader to consider that different frameworks are being invented to cover up what he sees as a true problem. However, his earlier explanation of where he is actually going with his argument is a little harder to accept. Essentially, he wants to suggest that left-progressives, like him, are “not content with pretending that our real problem is cultural difference rather than economic difference, we have also started to treat economic difference as if it *were* cultural difference. So now we’re urged to be more respectful of poor people and to stop thinking of them as victims, since to treat them as victims is condescending...” (19). This mention of respect as getting in the way of understanding the problems with society is a bit of misdirection on Michaels’ part.

First, Michaels ignores that racism is more than a system for oppressing people of color; it is also a system for providing benefits to whites. It is not diversity talk that gets in the way of class-consciousness and projects; it is the ever-present investment in whiteness that keeps class from coming to the forefront. In other words, it is not simply that blacks are excluded, but that whites receive tangible benefits that should be uniform across the population (such as lack of

¹⁰ One could argue that classism is used to underpin the idea that those in different socio-economic classes are different races with different rights.

harassment from the police and larger society, easier access to quality public education and social services, and safe neighborhoods). A part of what makes such an effective tool for oppression is that the white race seems invisible, but its invisibility provides access to a whole “host of public, private, and psychological benefits” (Harris 286). Contrary to Michaels’ argument that diversity projects are diverting away from class interests, Cheryl Harris explains that “white workers often identify themselves primarily as white rather than as workers... It is through the concept of whiteness that class-consciousness among white workers is subordinated and attention is diverted from class oppression” (286). The problem with race and diversity programs is not that they foster respect and appreciation, but instead that they ignore the benefits of being affiliated with the white race.

Second, Michaels’ argument neglects that appreciation (or respect) is the foundation needed for ending discrimination and building an interracial class movement. In other words, it is impossible to see how people will work together to solve problems that benefit them if they do not see each other as worthy of time and respect, or if they do not move beyond the commonplace conceptions of race and inter-racial interactions. For instance, Jung, when speaking about Hawaii’s successful interracial labor movement during the 1940s explains that “In Hawaii, the plantation owners specifically picked different nationalities for different types of labor (with different pay scales) so that they could avoid “collusion among laborers and ... secure better discipline” (73). A part of keeping the oppressive system in place was creating a situation where the labor class was divided by role and race, with Azoreans (people from a Portuguese Commonwealth) at the top, Japanese in the middle, and Filipinos at the bottom because this kept the groups from working together and having an opportunity to see each other as equals worthy of respect. And when these groups were unable to build mutual respect with

each other, their movements failed. Jung explains that for those crafting the successful movement of the 40s, “one of the enduring lessons of the 1920 strike, for instance, may be that interracial coalitions based purely on shared material ends are extremely frangible” (145). Basically, when the laborers shared the common goal of receiving fair wages and an improved working environment, but did not learn to respect each other, their movements fell apart. And this lack of respect and inability to collaborate across racial lines ended up serving as a lesson and reminder of what a successful movement needed to become.

Jung explains that the segregated movements of the past became a way for the successful movement to incorporate race “by contrasting the fledgling interracial movement to the various unsuccessful, racially exclusive movements of the past” (150). The failures of the past were used to remind the laborers of the course that needed to be taken. In fact, she explains that one of the main innovations of the movement “was the race-conscious election of leaders, what we would now refer to as ‘affirmative action’ . . . The union wanted racial equality in fact, not only in principle, and it did not want a re-creation of the racial hierarchy evident in the larger society” (164). Not only was respect important to the movement, but so was creating systems that fostered respect and representation. One of the reasons Jung’s arguments and examples are strong is that they reflect what is happening in contemporary society, because each of the groups shown have some opportunity for success and are still being exploited in ways that do not directly relate to the Jim Crow system. As Bonilla-Silva outlines “The fact that not all members of the subordinate race or races are at the bottom of the social order does not negate the fact that races, as social groups, are in either a superordinate or subordinate position in a social system” (38) or that one black president means the end of racism. Basically, the people outlined by Jung were dealing with a nuanced racism that required a more articulate response, and our modern

understanding of the influence of race in society needs to take on this same kind of nuance.

Michaels and those who may share his sentiments miss that racial difference is a discourse that creates difference, and respect is another discourse that can help individuals and groups to see through the fiction of race and focus on common goals, whether it is wealth creation or co-habitation.

Using the work that Nikol Alexander-Floyd in *Gender, Race, and Nationalism in Contemporary Black Politics* does with feminism and Black Nationalist movements as an example of trying to surpass the limitations of a specific framework, it becomes possible to find the problems with Michaels' line of argument. Michaels' argument is flawed because it recreates the same broken discursive frameworks that repeatedly examine race as a result of class and not the way the two discourses are in a reciprocal relationship. Looking at Black Nationalism, Floyd outlines what she calls the Black Cultural Pathology Paradigm (BCPP) where "although [black nationalists] framed the discussion differently than white conservatives, Black cultural nationalists . . . seemed to echo the same racist stereotypes about Blacks that many Whites did... The overwhelming public focus on young endangered men, however, reinforced the tendency to see Black families as the source of their own social and economic problems" (6). In other words, Black nationalists believe that they are assisting the black community by arguing for more hard work, and increased family values, but in actuality they are simply recreating the same arguments of white conservatives by not pointing out the flaws in patriarchy or relying on racial uplift arguments instead of fully exploring the flaws within the system that keep black men over-criminalized or unemployed. Just because the argument comes from a different position does not make it any better. In much the same way, Michaels claims that "The trick is to think of inequality as a consequence of our prejudices rather than as a consequence of our social system

and thus to turn the project of creating a more egalitarian society into the project of getting people . . . to stop being racist, sexist, classist homophobes. This book is an attack on that trick” (20), but instead his arguments serve as mostly a retread of commonplace political views about the importance of class above all else. He is trapped within the rhetorical framework of class vs race and this has limited his discursive options for offering a real solution for racism or income inequality.

Michaels’ refusal to articulate an argument that leads into some new understandings or opportunities is important because it shows a fundamental problem with discourse around race and class: the inability to move beyond the same set of arguments, envision unique arguments, or new ways of articulating racial discourse. He gets close by noticing that there needs to be some change in the discussion, but fails by mistaking a critique of diversity for one of the systems that actually give diversity its importance and power (namely racism). Looking to avoid the trap of a particular framework Alexander-Floyd attempts an escape by adding in a feminist perspective, which is initially illuminating, but does not extend far enough. Since race, class, and place are all heavily grounded in discourse, it makes sense to turn toward rhetorical theory for pulling at the foundation of these different frameworks. Rhetorical invention, specifically, offers up a sense of fluidity and a set of tools that can encompass and, in some ways, transcend the differing frameworks for discussing that race exists. Additionally, rhetorical invention can help to serve as a foundation for the development of theories regarding how race operates as a part of changes in society that could be used to guide research on the actual occurrence of racism. The goal here is not to use rhetoric to transcend race, but rather to give arguments for racial perspectives a fluidity that keeps the social energy of race intact, but hinders the chances of racial discourse being bogged down by frameworks and arguments that have already reached their logical end.

When speaking about her own line of research, Alexander-Floyd explains how the Black Nationalist framework is improved through the use of a feminist lens because of the way that feminist theory fills in the theoretical gaps of the patriarchal nationalist ideology (147). She correctly notes that combining a feminist framework with political science, or any field, will create new ideas and understandings and highlight limitations of both frameworks that might go unnoticed. Despite what can be created from this type of interdisciplinary study, she warns that “in spite of and precisely because of the resistance we encounter, we must above all else resist the disciplining of our work by the dictates of the very politics we are working to discredit and dismantle” (168). In other words, feminism and all other fields have their own agenda and arguments that they have to respond to, so utilizing any framework attached to a specific group of people runs the risk of being limited by what that argument is seen as responding to, very similarly to how she outlines BCPP’s failures, and the argument Michaels attempts to make about left-politics with regard to class. Floyd’s argument extends to critical race theory as a whole, which needs more of a focus on discourse because it extends beyond the limitations of constantly dipping into the problems of historical racism or solely focusing on the result of societally ingrained racism without acknowledging the role discourse plays in creating racist institutions. For example, Cedric Johnson argues that the way race is conceptualized within contemporary political circles is out of date because many activist groups rely on the same “modes of politics during the immediate postsegregation context ... and, in some instances, these practices serve as barriers to the effective pursuit of social justice” (218). From this argument, it is possible to see that the problem with race politics today is that it is disconnected from the present, and this disconnection keeps traditional race theory from being seen as a valuable way of understanding society, social actors, and social movements. Using rhetorical theory as a way

of analyzing the discourse that underlies the creation of race is one way to give critical race theory additional relevance in a continually changing racial landscape and society.

Creating relevant connections between disciplines is specifically why rhetorical theory can bring about a benefit to the understanding of race. Rhetoric, like Foucauldian discourse, is always already embedded in arguments and existing frameworks. Because rhetorical theory reaches across disciplines and discourses, it is most useful in situations where there is conflict and opposing views collide because it can be used to trace connections between seemingly divergent ideas. With regard to Oak Park, race discourse, economic interest, and rhetorical theory can help get to the discursive nature of conflict, truth, and governmental logic within village limits.

I. Conclusion

The clearest example of why it is important to develop an understanding of the interactions of discourse, race, rhetorical theory, and place in Oak Park comes from my first contact with Village Hall and its interest in diversity. In this one situation, I was able to see the ways that diversity seemed to be tied to the identity of the village while also having no clear meaning because of the way the ambiguity of diversity is integral to the discourse of Oak Park as a place. As explained in the first chapter, volunteering with Oak Park's Housing Programs Advisory Committee was crucial for analyzing and understanding the village. When I first heard of Oak Park's interest in diversity, I had unfairly assumed that it was more of the same generic post-racial discourse that many communities, universities, and workplaces use to try to disguise the racism inherent to their discourses, practices, and structures. In Oak Park, I immediately noticed that my block was almost evenly split between black and white families, but I did not attach any special significance to the demographics. Nor did I imagine how deeply ingrained

Village Hall's support and management of diversity were in the community's 40 year commitment to integration.

It wasn't until March 7th, 2012, when I had my first physical encounter with one of the village's commissions that I saw how serious a concern "diversity" is for Oak Park's government, how ubiquitous for residents, and how fruitful both "diversity" and integration would be as areas of study. On that day, I was at village hall interviewing in front of the Citizens' Involvement Commission (CIC) during one of their public meetings, for an opportunity to participate in one of the citizen commissions. The CIC, like all the other commissions is made up of several residents and at least one Village Hall employee who offers knowledge, advice, and assistance to the group. Every citizen who wants to participate in a commission is required to interview before the CIC. That day there were four people interviewing: one racially ambiguous woman in her mid-20s, myself, a black male in his late 30s, and a white male around the same age. The head of the commission decided that I would be the second of four people to interview, so as I sat down in a folding chair two rows back from the commissioners' U-shaped conference table, the young woman seated herself at the interview desk, with a microphone in front of her face, and prepared to speak.

The head of the commission started the series of interviews by asking the young woman to talk about herself and why she wanted to join one of the citizen committees. Instead of directly answering the question, she launched into examples of her commitment to diversity. At her job, she worked on loans for diverse people, who relied on her commitment to diversity for assistance. She said that it was important that the community remains diverse, and the committee members seemed to nod along every time that she mentioned "diversity." She also mentioned that she was born in Oak Park, had lived in the Chicagoland area, moved back to Oak Park three

years ago, and had been actively volunteering in the community before finding out about the ability to join a committee. Specifically, she mentioned volunteering in Oak Park's LGBT community. When she finished speaking, the committee briefly asked her a couple clarifying questions, thanked her for her time, and mentioned that they liked her enthusiasm, would be happy to have her serve on a committee, and then explained that she could stay for the whole meeting or leave without judgment. She chose to leave.

As a black man, I'm no stranger to "diversity initiatives" or the irony of having to answer open-ended questions about diversity at job interviews, when it is obvious the questions were meant to see if white applicants were going to be a racist liability, but this situation was a little surreal. Generally, "diversity" means race and "a commitment to diversity" usually means a series of policies that curb or disguise outright discrimination, but at this meaning, "diversity" had no fixed or easily discernable meaning. At no point during the interview did anyone clarify what they meant or even bother to explain what diversity was. Instead, everyone seemed happy to nod along with each utterance of "diversity." The commission and the woman seemed to like hearing and saying the word. I was also surprised to note that when I refused to mention diversity during my interview, the committee still mentioned diversity as something important the community to check and see if I was on board. It seemed that they needed to affirm my ability to work within their rhetorical framework before any of my discourse could be taken seriously. I left the meeting slightly confused about the meaning of diversity and what Village Hall and the community were doing with diversity. The only thing I could clearly gather was that diversity was considered to be positive, somehow beneficial, and directly tied to the community's identity. The 30 minutes I spent going through the interview process revealed the interconnected nature of

discourse, place, diversity, and governance in a way that would end up underpinning this entire project.

The March 7th meeting is what led to the central question for this project: “What is ‘diversity’ in Oak Park?” While “something positive,” is the most obvious answer, a deeper exploration reveals the genealogical nature of the question. In other words, throughout the rest of the dissertation, this project’s exploration of diversity will move beyond recording what is said and done and also study points of silence, what is being left undone, who is allowed to speak or act on behalf of diversity, how those groups gained their rights, and how diversity has become a seemingly natural facet of village life. In *The History of Sexuality vol. 1*, Foucault explores sexuality as an object and traces points where sexuality crossed through justice systems, religious practices, psychology, and familial interactions to demonstrate how systems for producing truth can create new objects to be brought under the domain of power (*Biopolitics* 35). Similarly, the Fields trace the development of “racecraft,” the ability for racist aspects of society to become hidden behind the myth of race, by examining how racism works through discourse and different social institutions. These works, like my study on the rise of diversity in Oak Park, rely on an understanding of how truth is produced through discourse. Specifically, this project will focus on exploring how the concept of diversity is produced by and becomes material through a governmental regime of truth production, relationships of power, and an understanding of what must be present in the village for diversity to become a focal point of the community and for diversity discourse to occur (*Biopolitics* 37). This work on diversity is foundational for supporting my larger argument that the inability to clearly define “diversity” and “integration” are at the root of Oak Park’s contained problems with housing discrimination.

CHAPTER III: OAK PARK

A. **Introduction**

A little over forty years ago, Oak Park was an all-white community carefully watching as neighboring communities quickly transitioned from white to black. More blacks were moving out of the inner-city and looking for safe, affordable, and decent housing for their families. Despite the similar desires, these black families frightened whites all throughout the Chicagoland area. White families who all fled further from the city, through misguided and racist fear, were creating the all-black neighborhoods that they feared. At that time, in the mid to late 60s, Oak Park was at the beginning of a crisis. The community and its government needed to decide if they were going to actively protect the all-white status quo, do nothing and hope the black families moved past them, or try something unheard of at that time: intentional and managed integration. While Oak Park's integration has not ended racism or created a perfect community, the village offers a respectable and desirable alternative to the many segregated neighborhoods of Chicago.

The aim of this chapter is to provide context about Oak Park and how the community transitioned from an all-white suburb of Chicago to a place that is one of only a few examples of communities that have successfully integrated through governmental intervention and management. The chapter is split into several sections. First, I will briefly discuss segregation, discrimination, and the creation of white suburbia. Second, I will explain the historical processes involved in creating diversity within Oak Park during the pre-integration period. Third, this chapter will discuss the creation and development of Oak Park's "Statement for Maintaining Diversity" during the integration era. Fourth, the chapter will explore how and why integration was understood as a type of "self-defense" for the village way of life. Finally, I will conclude the

chapter by examining the processes in place for the continuation of Oak Park's integration and diversity as the village looks toward creating and implementing its comprehensive plan, which will guide the next ten years of the village's development in the contemporary era. Essentially, this chapter will explore the ways that focusing on diversity and integration have allowed a once segregated, all-white, suburban community to participate in desegregation and create a space that provides an alternative to traditionally segregated communities that are the norm across the country.

B. Segregation and Suburbia

In late March 2012, I went on a tour of Oak Park's Pleasant Home (a huge mansion located at the intersection of Pleasant Street and Home Avenue) as part of my failed plan to infiltrate the Oak Park and River Forest Historical Society, which is housed on the second floor of the mansion. Currently crammed into a space too small to encapsulate all of Oak Park's and River Forest's history, the Historical Society's museum feels like walking through the home of someone who tries to be tidy, but cannot get over his or her urge to hoard. Even the man leading the tour, Frank Lipo (current director of the society and co-author of *Oak Park: Suburban Promised Land*) embodies this in his jittery movements, quick talk, and constant apologies for the state of the museum. Still, he swiftly points out that they are in the process of moving to a bigger space after having been in Pleasant Home since the Historical Society's inception in the 1970s. At the end of the tour, I noticed what appeared to be a gift shop—it was a spindle of books about Oak Park and some random clothing and memorabilia—placed in the corner against a wall. There I noticed a T-shirt with a drawing of a tree filled with colorful acorns that read “One tree, many nuts, Oak Park.” Aside from the obvious pun about Oak Park and Oak Trees, I was not sure if this shirt was speaking to the ‘quaint’ craziness of the people of Oak Park, or the

way that the village has billed itself as a diverse and integrated community. At the time, I figured that it probably did not matter since the interest in diversity and the nuttiness of the community might be one and the same. After all, there must have been something different about a community that allowed itself to discard the seemingly obvious stability of white suburbia for the turmoil of integration and racial diversity.

Despite the turmoil inherent to communal living, segregated all-white communities are normally assumed to be stable because they were originally established to appear static and have remained the normative ideal for many Americans. The image of the segregated suburban community, with its white picket fences, is the representation of stability in the American homeowner's dream. Changing the comfort of those types of community to build something different is seen as more disruptive than the invisible and inherent oppression required for such communities to exist. Oppression and separation are built into what is considered both normal and stable for communities throughout the US. Douglas Massey and Nancy Denton's *American Apartheid* explains that residential segregation not only supports, but also "binds" many disparate systems of racial subordination as a way of ensuring a perpetual underclass (8). By the end of their work, they argue that "race and class interact to undermine the social and economic well-being of black Americans ...that race operates powerfully through urban housing markets...to produce a uniquely disadvantaged neighborhood environment for African Americans" (220). Their argument, highlighting the connections between race, class, and the housing market underlines why Oak Park can provide an alternative to the segregation of Chicago. Namely, Village Hall's approach to integrating Oak Park originally focused on homeownership. By creating space for black homeowners, without letting white flight run

rampant, the community was able to partially dismantle the housing segregation that Massey and Denton see as the largest factor in the continuation of racial subordination.

While Village Hall's management has not brought about a full end to residential segregation and discrimination, the fact that Oak Park provides any alternative to some of the practices and discourses that are embedded in Chicago is what allows to the community to be successful. Cities and metropolitan areas, like Chicago, are "indisputably segregated by race" all the way down to the city block; even planning processes, such as zoning, were "invented in part to keep minorities away from non-Hispanic whites" (Massey and Denton 125). Despite the effort put into ensuring segregation, some level of it also occurs without governmental support; for instance, blacks and whites have different tolerances and preferences. Both blacks and whites have tolerances for the level of integration they are willing to seek out and accept in a community, and these tolerances affect their movement patterns (126). The private real estate market also has a huge impact on the ways that communities have been segregated through directing people to where their race is dominant, while banks have employed redlining and high-rate mortgages to shape where minorities can own property (126). This discriminatory ideology has been with suburban communities since their beginnings as well. When suburbs were first being created as an alternative to crowded cities, "developers of affluent suburbs increasingly wished to exclude potential buyers on the basis of race, religion, and social class" so that the middle class could separate themselves from the "industrial world they themselves were creating" (Hayden *Building Suburbia* 69).

Since discrimination is integral to both the creation of cities and suburban areas; it might be too much to expect for one community to solve the problems related to racism in the housing market and the way it intersects with the systemic effects of racism that continue to plague the

country. Still, I argue that the work Oak Park has been able to accomplish is directly related to the way that Village Hall managed to link economically suburban goals with integrationist attitudes while also cultivating a community that matched its fears about white flight and desire for integration. Oak Park's accomplishments have allowed the community to provide an attractive alternative to neighboring Chicago for many homeowners.

Oak Park lies on the western border of Chicago and is, in many ways, an extension of the city, sharing major street names, architectural styles, and even the Chicago Transit Authority's Green and Blue lines, which run right through its middle. The biggest difference between Chicago and Oak Park is that Oak Park's community appears to have solved the interconnected problems of racism, housing discrimination, and stable integration through its rigorous commitment to diversity. While Chicago is seen as a city of racially segregated neighborhoods, Oak Park is seen as a place where integration worked. Jay Ruby, an anthropologist who studied the village in the late 1990s and early 2000s, explains that "Oak Park has reached a level of success [with diversity] where the really serious problems now appear. Most places don't get to that point" (Trainor "Return" para. 1). For Ruby and the community at large, Oak Park has moved beyond other areas of Illinois and the United States because its community has actually committed to diversity as a way of enhancing the community.

It makes sense that Oak Park's work to protect its community from the white flight and segregation that has plagued cities nationwide would come to be understood as a victory against racism and segregation. Racism and property have a long interconnected history in American society, with the interaction between both forces playing "a critical role in establishing and maintaining racial and economic subordination" (Harris 277). Furthermore, the racism fostered by housing segregation puts "a clear drain on ... time and resources" (Yinger 4), which makes

the benefits of solving even a small portion of the problem even more apparent when put in the context of neighboring communities (Katz 5). Massey and Denton argue that the most widely seen and felt effects of American racism have been directly tied to a long-standing campaign of racial segregation. For instance, seemingly racial problems, such as crime, educational achievement, systematic unemployment, and a lack of cultural capital are related to continued housing segregation, specifically in and around the black ghetto. As their argument progresses, Massey and Denton explain that the solution to America's race problem is bringing an end to housing segregation. Whether intentional or not, when Oak Park's government decided in the 1970s to commit to integration, the community became an example of how long term integration can be successful and also tackle the complicated problem of diversity (Yinger 124).

C. **Historical Context**

Oak Park was formally founded in 1902 after succession from the town of Cicero (Sokol 21). Many residents come to Oak Park because of the quality of its public schools and proximity to Chicago's Loop, which is directly east of Oak Park and connected by Lake Street, a major employment hub for Chicagoland's population. Oak Park offers many of the conveniences of the city, but with the 'charm' of a smaller suburb. Currently, the community houses just over 50,000 people and its borders are made up of four main roads. To the north, Oak Park shares a border with Chicago through North Avenue, to the east, Austin Boulevard, which is also bordered by Chicago's Austin Neighborhood, to the south Roosevelt Road separates the village from Berwyn, and to the west by Harlem Avenue, which borders both the Forest Park and River Forest communities. The village is about 1.6 miles from east to west and 3 miles from north to south. These distances can be walked in either 30 minutes or an hour, respectively, which is important to note because many parts of the community have been laid out with the ability to walk

comfortably in mind. Additionally, because Chicago and Oak Park share a very similar architectural style, it is easy to travel between the two places without immediately noticing the transition. Regardless of directional approach, most of the village's nicer homes and buildings are located toward the middle and northwestern border.

As stated earlier, the largest difference between Chicago and Oak Park is the community's attraction to diversity and its history of integration. Oak Park has told its story about housing desegregation for so long that it has actually become a permanent fixture of the community's discourse and identity. In fact, local newspapers often print and reprint stories about Oak Park integrating or interviews with people who lived through the process of integration and have remained in the community. Such articles usually begin with preambles such as, "This is a story that needs to be told—and retold..." that continually add to the esteem the community gets from its history (Trainor 29). Ken Trainor, longtime writer for the *Wednesday Journal* provides a fairly succinct version of the Oak Park integration story that places most of the onus for integration on the larger community and downplays the role of the government in maintaining diversity, a perspective that is more community focused than Carole Godwin's *The Oak Park Strategy*.

In his article, Trainor explains that the start of integration in Oak Park came from the appointment of black violinist Carol Anderson to the Oak Park River Forest Symphony Orchestra, an action that did not sit well with some members of the community. In response to the backlash, a small group of citizens publicly affirmed their support of integrating the orchestra in several Chicago papers. It was this incident that prompted Village Hall to create the Citizens Committee for Human Rights to aid in integration efforts throughout the village. When Village Hall showed support for some community members' interest in integration, the Committee for

Human Rights went on to release a public statement thoroughly asserting their interest in integration and having a “community open to anyone willing to share in benefits and responsibilities, regardless of race, color, creed, or national origin” (29). This statement, paid for and signed by 1000 residents, would go on to serve as a type of draft for Village Hall’s first official document affirming government sponsored integration. While Trainor continues on by describing the struggles of protestors and the initial black families who moved into the village, examining the community sponsored integration document offers a transition into Village Hall’s increasing role in the process of integration (Trainor 29 -31).

While some members of the community were interested in integration during the 1960s as a way to “avoid the fate that befell the entire west side of Chicago—inexorable resegregation, block by block...” (Trainor 30), Oak Park’s commitment to integration did not fully solidify until Village Hall adopted its statement for “Maintaining Diversity in Oak Park” in 1973, which outlines the village’s commitment to diversity and was the “first formal statement of an official policy of ‘dispersal’ (Goodwin 157). The dispersal policy, in this case, outlined that:

Efforts to achieve diversity are nullified by the resegregation of neighborhoods from all white to black. We, individually and as a community, have worked long and hard on behalf of open housing in Oak Park; we must not succumb to Big-City-style residential patterns.

A free and open community—equal and diverse—can only be achieved through dispersal: a mixture of racial and ethnic groups throughout the Village. (157-158)

As the connection to the official policy of dispersal shows, the statement for “Maintaining Diversity” was not only a public relations move, it was an outline of how Village Hall planned to approach integration and necessary for the small governing body to set forth a series of

mechanizations that would change the way the government interacted with the community.

Interestingly, the statement for maintaining diversity was met with some turmoil when introduced because it was not seen as going far enough to ensure integration in the village.

Despite the title, the document had little to do with actually maintaining diversity:

When it was first issued, the community relations director had assailed the board's 1973 resolution on dispersal as a disguised appeal for maintaining not diversity, as the document said, but the status quo. 'Maintaining' integration, he argued, was impossible because Oak Park was not yet integrated—it was a white community. He, in turn, was sharply criticized by a trustee for allegedly failing to follow the board's directive on dispersal. (Goodwin 159)

This astute observation from the community relations director makes sense in light of the fact that suburban communities were created as a response to ethnic encroachment on cities, and that they are continually a representation of both the discourses and wants of white populations who have traditionally inhabited suburban spaces (Fogelson 24; Peller 139). One way of understanding the creation of the statement for “Maintaining Diversity in Oak Park” was that it provided a base for integrating the community without disturbing the historical discourse of exceptionalism that surrounded the community. With this statement Oak Park was not violently changing like the rest of the country, it was maintaining what previously existed; it was working to protect what made the community special, and it just happened that integration was a part of what made the community special. The documents fostered the idea that the village was already integrated so that the fears of white residents regarding change would ease, stifling white flight, and providing a sense of stability and continuity with the past. Essentially, the document served two purposes: outlining the village's process of integration and serving as the cornerstone of a

public relations project easing change by suggesting that the upcoming changes had already occurred and were a natural aspect of village life. The importance of this document lies in the way it outlined the logics influencing Village Hall in the 70s and the actions the village was willing to take with regard to managing the community.

As Carole Goodwin explains, “the emphasis on integration was more than a reflection of the values held by the leadership. It was of considerable strategic significance, founded on the belief that long-term neighborhood stability depended upon attracting whites who were seeking integration and not, as sometimes in the past, fleeing racial change” (169 -170). Village Hall recognized that it needed to control the influx and outflow of black and white residents, respectively. Without proper control, or dispersal, black residents would fill certain areas of the village while whites fled from fear that reinforcing desegregation would not work and the village would become too black for their tastes. In other words, the statement for maintaining diversity and the dispersal policy were a way of protecting the community and its borders without out too aggressively fighting the changes that were naturally occurring.

D. Managing Integration

Without the benefit of being a smaller community and increased interaction between the community and its governing body, it would be extremely difficult for Oak Park to have undertaken the integration project. Rhetorician David Fleming argues that a community sized between 50,000 and 100,000 in a relatively small area is perfect for ensuring that “such a district would be characterized by relatively circumscribed territory and a measure of geographical-cultural identity, a social setting small enough that individual residents feel they belong to it and have a reasonable chance to be seen and heard in it, but large enough to allow for a measure of both diversity and power” (56). He also points to Chicago’s 77 wards, with a rough population of

75,000 people each as an example of communities that meet his mold (57). While it is true that these communities are about the size of Oak Park, since they rely on the larger Chicago governing body, they are also limited by how much weight their discourse and community desires can accomplish before bumping into city politics and bureaucracy. Essentially, while I agree with Fleming's assessment that communities of a certain size have a healthy amount of community discourse, I recognize that it is also important that each community have its own governing body so that it can accomplish goals that fit with local desires. Oak Park's statement for "Maintaining Diversity," which opens by stating that Oak Park is a place to live, a way of life, and a place where diversity is a strength ("Comprehensive Plan" 10), could not exist without the compact discourse, afforded to a small community and the involvement of Village Hall in and around the community's discourses about itself and integration.

Understanding the connection between the people of Oak Park and Village Hall shows that the biggest part of managing integration is also managing discourse. In order for the community to integrate, there was not only a need for the changes to the village to fit into the community's history as a suburban space, but also to explain that Oak Park is a community of like-minded individuals all working toward a common goal. Being suburban and reaping the benefits of such a community allowed both residents and Village Hall to continually shape the community without fear of losing its identity or losing the accoutrements that make suburban spaces attractive (Goodwin 11). Following from Fleming's example of mid-sized communities having control over their discourse, suburban communities have historically had the ability to shape the meaning of their place and space because they tend to have enough power to advertise their communities, set up a unique identity (usually in opposition to that of the nearest city), and shape who moved into the community (Fogelson 24). In addition to the ability to craft an identity

through discourse, integration was also aided because of the community's amenities, such as good schools and location, that also helped to sway some who might have opposed the direction the community was moving (Yinger 129). Essentially, between size, connection with government, local amenities, and opposition to Chicago managing integration was set to work well on a very conceptual level. The community had everything it needed to pull off integration on the larger scale, so the work of Village Hall had to function on a more individual level.

One of the ways that Village Hall was able to foster integration was through management of fear, namely moving that fear from black residents, to the prospect of falling to the fate of Chicago's Austin neighborhood. As explained above, while the smaller size of the village made Village Hall's desire to manage integration easier than in the vast expanse of Chicago, in both a physical and bureaucratic sense (Elsaffar 19), Oak Park historically relied on problems in Austin to motivate support for integration in the village. Until fairly recently, many of the changes Oak Park took to preserve its community stemmed from the fear of turning into another version of Chicago's Austin neighborhood. In 1970 Oak Park had around 130 black residents (.2% of the population) while Austin was close to 50% black and continually increasing; the explosive growth of the black community was attributed to Austin's inability to protect the interests of its original, white community because of its reliance on the larger Chicago governing body (Goodwin 39, 109). Demonstrating the weight the demise of Austin held over the people of Oak Park, *The Oak Park Strategy's* chapters even switch between showing the positive choices Oak Park made to protect its community and the inability to act properly that caused Austin's decline into the horrors of white flight, black 'ghetto expansion,' and a dwindling financial base. Goodwin explains that "No single term summarizes the important organizational distinctions between Oak Park and Austin better than 'local community control'" (Goodwin 207).

One of the best examples of how Village Hall exercised its abilities as a small governing body overseeing a modest population was through the development and implementation of new methods for tracking the placement of people throughout the village. Goodwin explains the development of the modern methods the village used to manage an influx of new black bodies in its space:

As Oak Park residents and leaders increasingly perceived and reacted to black immigration in the southeast sector of the community, the community relations staff's communications, coordination and record-keeping functions became more important. The staff was available for continuous monitoring and for immediate intervention in tension-producing situations. It handled inquiries and attempted to quell rumors. It was able to coordinate activities and programs relating to racial stabilization among other village departments and official bodies. At least until 1973, it kept up-to date records on black move-ins. (151)

By tracking and controlling the ways that black bodies moved and settled throughout Oak Park, Village Hall was able to control some of the fears and perceptions of white residents who may have left the village if integration happened too quickly. To ensure that this plan worked, blacks were tracked when and often before they moved into the village. Village Hall often met with black families who wanted to move into the village to guarantee they would not disrupt the system that was being put in place. "In the fall of 1971 [Oak Park] began its counseling program, intended to discourage blacks from moving into blocks where other blacks already lived and where white anxiety over racial change was judged to be high" (151). This level of government intervention, was accepted because it managed white fears by controlling the perception of change in the village. As Goodwin outlines, "it should be clear that actual events associated with

racial change and people's perceptions of those events are not identical. The events and the perceptions interact in a continuous process of mutual modification or reinforcement" (105). In other words, the village needed to manage the placement and perception of its black population because it was necessary to keep white people's imaginations in check. Without a campaign to control perception, a single black family moving to a single home on one block turns into fear of infestation and out of control white flight.

Despite the seemingly positive aspects of managing perceptions of integration, not all of the village's residents were interested in the changes and images being promoted by Village Hall. One of the strengths of the village and the Oak Park strategy was Village Hall's ability to control the image of the community outside its borders, and "the research suggests that suburban imagery, civic culture, and, especially political organization strongly affected the conduct and outcome of Oak Park's strategy to control racial change" (Goodwin 11). The first step of controlling racial change was building a division between what Oak Park was and what the government and influential residents wanted it to become:

By 1970, significant inroads had been made by what was frequently called the "new Oak Park": younger, progressive, involved, and issue-conscious. Nevertheless, the social life of Oak Park was still heavily influenced by the upper strata.... Actually, the distinction between "old" and "new" Oak Park was less a cultural split among its residents than a change in imagery. Oak Park's oldest leading families were found among the most avid backers of the 'new Oak Park' style. (35)

There was no real change when integration began; there was only a shift in discourse and presentation. In this case, it was both a set of residents and the village government that supported a change in perceptions of the village. As noted earlier, Village Hall wanted the village to be

seen by residents and the outside world as a liberal and progressive community so that it could attract new residents who would buy property in, what was then an experimental, integrated community without succumbing to race based fear (160). Because the village was being billed as progressive and liberal, those who did not agree with the new Oak Park, either would not move into the village or would move out after being labeled racists in the community's consciousness. Once whites who did not agree with the village's progressive politics were labeled racist, mass hysteria and white flight could be more carefully regulated.

From the vantage of the present, it is very clear that Oak Park's government in the 1960s and 70s had a very strong understanding of the interplay of discourses circling the community and its influence on the community. The village government understood that "the community is socially constructed in a continuous and dynamic process that involves the interplay of individual perceptions, shared knowledge and beliefs, and the definitions formulated by local leaders and institutions. This process shapes the image, identity and sense of integrity of the community as seen by residents and outsiders" (Goodwin 105-106). And this understanding allowed the village government to launch a new perception of its residents who did not agree with the campaign for integration.

With regard to acceptance of integration and diversity, the difference between Oak Park and Austin is not necessarily the quality of the individuals, but the ability of the Village Hall to make and implement quick decisions that would serve its interest in protecting the value of the community, the ability to protect the community through rapid and focused governance was something that Austin, under the larger, Chicago, city government, was unable to do. The best example of this commitment to rapid restorative decisions was "the strategy pursued by the Oak Park leadership [in 1974, which] was not to withdraw investment in southeast Oak Park [an area

that had a lot of black in-migration], but to commit even more resources there. The most dramatic manifestation of this commitment was the relocation of the village hall in a new civic center in southeast Oak Park” (Goodwin 124). By moving the city government’s headquarters into an area that was beginning to symbolize the community’s eventual loss to black encroachment, the village government could show its white population that it was committed to integration and protecting the economic value of the community.

The combination of small size, nimble government, and active citizenry are what made it possible for Oak Park to “maintain” diversity before the space was actually diverse. It was not until 1980, that the village was able to muster a 10% black population (Yinger 127). Through management of discourse by creating documents that dealt with integration and diversity Village Hall was able to manage perceptions so that it was seen as diverse and could cultivate a population to the village who wanted to participate in the development of an integrated community and benefit from the associated cultural capital and increased communal amenities.

E. **Educational Integration**

While Village Hall was focused on integrating the community, a separate governing body was equally focused on integration of the public schools. Matching the state of the community before integration, Oak Park’s schools were entirely white. As integration became a part of the community, it became increasingly important for district 97, which is responsible for the elementary and middle schools to manage the dispersal of black students throughout the district (Trainor “Racial Balance” 27). Before integration was completely underway, the school board and administrative body were able to manage “racial change as it began to occur, instead of responding only when the black enrollment reached a high proportion” (Goodwin 92). Essentially, school officials could use the small minority population to anticipate where and

when racial imbalances might occur in the district (Goodwin 92). This was important because federal law mandated that no individual school could have more than a 15 percent deviation in any direction from the district's average (Trainor "Racial Balance" 27). Despite the administration's efforts, in the mid-seventies, there began to be some schools with a disproportionate black or white population. "By the 1975-76 school year, for instance, Hawthorne School (now Julian Middle School, then a K-8 elementary) had a minority population of 33 percent while Mann had only 6 percent" (Trainor "Racial Balance" 28). Mirroring the response to integration in Chicago, some white families had retreated to parts of the community that would allow their children to attend whiter schools.

To combat the growing discrimination, the school district created a "representative as possible" citizen and staff committee, the "Committee for Tomorrow's Schools" that would work to create proposals for solving racial deviations (Trainor "Racial Balance" 27-28). For instance, the committee created a proposal that would ask white parents to redistribute their children voluntarily, so that schools would balance out. This plan, however, was rejected because it was neither mandatory nor district-wide. When the district finally came up with a reorganization plan in 1976, it was met with threats, hate-mail, and calls from the KKK. Like most of the racial turmoil in Oak Park, this passed and the entire school district is now fully integrated at the statistical level, even as some complaints continue about inner-school segregation and the inability for the district to work towards a common goal persist (Trainor 28, 29; Dean 10).

F. **Financial Integration**

While some narratives suggest that the village integrated because of its exceptional residents who simply could not stand to see racism occur in their community, financial

incentives also played an equally important role. The financial motivations of integration also explain why it was necessary for Oak Park to have undergone rapid integration, and why Village Hall is infinitely more focused on maintaining statistical integration while the community remains socially segregated in many respects. Finally, the financial motivations of integration are one way of understanding why the village seems to contradictorily speak of inclusion while also openly excluding some from its community and integrationist project.

The protection of property value was an ever-present reason that the village decided to integrate and the reasoning behind moving the village hall to the rapidly darkening southeast corner (Goodwin 77, 124), and why it continues to actively manage diversity. Property values are valuable to all communities, but they took on additional importance in Oak Park because the village leadership understood that the most difficult aspect of integration is managing white fears, and they realized that the simplest method for controlling these fears was through finding ways to ensure that integration would not erode the tax base or lead to unintended economic problems (Sokol 130). Moreover, by managing property value, Village Hall could create a management style that made diversity appear to be stable while continuing to actively manage integration and diversity. For the larger community, diversity came to represent steady or rising property values, but for Village Hall diversity has continually been a project of management that works because of the handle on ensuring that property values do not decrease. As David Sokol explains, “maintaining economic and racial diversity became the twin pillars of public policy” (Sokol 144).

Increased economic prosperity and diversity were not innately matched to each other; Village Hall had to work diligently to control white fears about the costs of integration. This was especially important since the dangers of white flight were two-fold: first the community

property values would plummet, disrupting the services and amenities that make the community attractive in the first place. Second, once the community had become majority black, the new residents would have to work hard to try and reinstitute the community resources and services that no longer existed. This meant that the community would have a complete break from its history and would no longer be what residents remembered or expected (West et al. 77). To combat this type of thinking and fear, Village Hall made a couple of drastic moves. First, as mentioned earlier, they moved Village Hall from a central location to the southeast corner of the village, where it still remains. As Sokol explains:

Though the placement [of the new village center building] along Madison Street between Taylor and Lombard Avenues necessitated the removal of a block of homes, it was deemed that having the seat of local government in that location would signal the commitment to a community that was not prepared to write off a key section in the face of perceived racial change and business disinvestment.
(Sokol 140)

In order to ensure white residents that the government was willing to protect their interests, it moved village hall to one of the portions of the village with the highest black population. This served to show that Village Hall was ready and willing to manage the influx of black residents directly and ensure that the village protected its borders from too much Chicago ghetto expansion.

In 1977, Village Hall also created the “Equity Assurance Program” which was suggested by a local feminist group, and “for the cost of an appraisal, one could buy into the program, with a guarantee from the village that it would pay the enrollee 80 percent of the difference between the appraised value of the home and the highest offer that failed to meet the appraised value”

(Sokol 142). By offering this program before integration had spread throughout the village, white homeowners could feel that the value of their home would be protected regardless of the outcome of integration. Although fewer than 200 people would join the program, the increase in property values during and following the period of integration ensured that no one would ever actually call in a claim from the village. While it went unused, the program is an excellent example of the way that Village Hall directly intervened in, and managed, white fears by showing its support for the housing market (Sokol 142).

Aside from fears of decreasing property values, Village Hall also attempted to manage white fears about potential and current black residents. A part of managing fears of new black residents included some white residents and Village Hall supporting the idea that the blacks who moved into the community were somehow more exceptional or interesting than those who did not live in the community (Goodwin 110). This was probably fine while it happened on the level of local discourse, but became problematic when practiced as a part of actual policy. This policy took the form of move-in-memos that new black families were expected to distribute to their neighbors. These memos included information about “the personal and professional accomplishments of black families” (West et al. 86). However, black families were provided no comparable information about their white neighbors, leading to some discomfort. While well intentioned, the memos and many of Village Hall’s actions show that the community was quickly moving into uncharted territory and creating makeshift policies and partnerships that would ultimately end up reshaping the way the community operated and the mechanisms that the government could use to ensure it kept the village moving smoothly. Basically, Oak Park’s maneuvers through integration show conflicts inherent to dealing with a “desire for justice—but also by a desire to ensure stability of population and community institutions, and to maintain

housing values. Since there were few models for such an experiment, community leaders began to develop strategies that included public-private partnerships and collaborations” (West et al. 77).

It was the strategies focused on fostering connections between the citizens, the government, and the private sector that led to creating a resident-staffed group for providing oversight to Oak Park’s housing programs. The HPAC (Housing Programs Advisory Committee) is a seven-member group that was created in the 1980s concurrently with the Housing Programs office to provide community support, input, and oversight for the Housing Programs office. Housing Programs “administers programs that provide loans and grants to eligible multi-family and single family properties, and helps eligible applicants purchase a first home. The division also sponsors education programs for multifamily building managers, and condominium and townhome associations” (“Housing Programs”). The HPAC’s mission to “enhance the quality of residential properties, attract an economically and racially diverse population, develop and maintain affordable housing options, and increase the value of residential properties” is seen as a larger part of the village’s understanding of itself as being at the forefront of integration (Village of Oak Park). For example, the housing programs’ description of the village explains that “for more than 30 years, the Village of Oak Park has been a leader in ensuring stability of the community through a commitment to integration and fair housing” (“Housing Programs”). It is through the HPAC and the Housing Programs Office that the motivation to emphasize diversity, community, and economic prosperity all intersect and influence the goals and direction of the entire village.

The current version of the Housing Programs Office is made up of four members, each with a slightly different job such as housing policy and management, sewer management,

construction management, or loan and grant management. The HPAC has seven members from the community, and the meetings are also attended by two staff liaisons from Housing Programs, one elected official from the village Board of Trustees, and one member from the Citizens Involvement Commission. Tammie Grossman, manager of the Housing Programs and staff liaison to the HPAC, explained that Housing Programs and HPAC were developed to unite all the disparate programs, services, and community groups that were serving the community and “avoid segregation, white flight, and promote Oak Park’s historic charm” (Grossman 4-4-2012). Normally, Housing Programs would be unable to make any decisions without the direct approval of the Village Board of Trustees, so the HPAC was developed to as a buffer for the board. Basically, no Housing Programs proposal can be presented to the board until it has met with HPAC approval. The HPAC and Housing Programs work closely together to provide zero interest loans funded by the village to eligible homeowners based on income and review grant applications, and these decisions are passed onto the board for final approval. In Oak Park, groups like HPAC and other community commissions give community members a place to feel like they have a direct involvement in the process of governing and helping the village to manage its different forms of community outreach without actually giving citizens actual power over governance.

In other words, Oak Park has a population of people who, in order to keep the systems in play that have been operating for over 40 years, need to be cultivated and promoted through both public relations and general governance. And both aspects of cultivation are directed toward maintaining and managing a population who will continually choose to support and replicate the systems that are in play. In the beginning, this meant bribing residents with mortgage reimbursement if property values decreased as a result of integration (Sokol 142), but in recent

years has meant the vast majority of the population automatically believing that the village needs to continue its efforts toward diversity (“Community Survey” 68). In this case, the logics used by Village Hall have remained successful because they have become tied into the community’s norms and discourses about housing and diversity.

G. **Present Problems**

Despite the innovative partnership with members of the community and the history of weathering turmoil, Oak Park continues to have problems with integration and diversity. Most frequently lamented is the struggles of both Oak Park school districts to overcome the racial achievement gap. “The issue is somewhat polarizing, with many black families citing institutionalized discrimination and lower expectations for black students and many whites claiming that the students are treated the same way but are not acting the same way” (Sokol 186). The school system is a continual source of race-based tension in the community even while the school districts are at least publicly appearing to work on resolving the issues. For instance, both districts engage their teachers in constant equity training and teaching workshops intended to help teachers teach to a broader student body (Dean “School districts” 10). Beginning in 2012, District 200 has also established “goals to address such sensitive issues as racial equity and school culture, [and] the administration has created specific ‘action steps’ to implement and monitor the school’s success in achieving those goals” (Dean “Refocuses” 16).

Outside of the schools, many parents are also actively trying to ensure that the needs of their students are being met by the district. For instance, the parent group APPLE (African-American Parents for Purposeful Leadership in Education) has been working with the district to ensure that an African History class that was dropped from the schedule due to low enrollment can be brought back. APPLE argues that the class had low levels of enrollment because Oak

Park River Forest High School was not putting any effort toward promoting the course. Still, it will take time before the parents and the school can reach an agreeable resolution (Dean “African History” 18). In addition, programs, such as Rising Readers, supported by both the school and the community, work to ensure that students will not fall behind in their reading skills during the summer by providing reading camps at convenient locations throughout the village. While this program will not solve the problems with the achievement gap, it shows that both the school districts and members of the community are attempting to work toward solving the problem (Casey 18).

There are also smaller complaints that float around in the community’s discourse. In April 2014, the village board of trustees decided to switch from a 100% green energy provider to a more common mixed energy provider with the hopes of saving some residents money. This led to the next week’s *Wednesday Journal*’s letters to the editor section being full of complaints about the impact this decision would have on the community’s image and leadership in the green movement. Green energy has become so ingrained in the community that one of the *Wednesday Journal*’s staff writers, John Hubbach, exclaimed: “I never thought I would see the headline in last week’s paper: ‘Oak Park scraps green energy program.’ It was like seeing: ‘Oak Park dials back diversity’ or ‘Gays made to feel unwelcome in Oak Park’”(21). So called “brown energy” is such a detriment to the village that it is somehow equivalent to being racist or homophobic.

Dialing back diversity has been another problem attacking Oak Park in the past year. In February 2014, it was reported that several of Oak Park’s landlords had actually failed a housing discrimination test. The test, ordered by the village and conducted by HOPE Fair Housing, used paired housing applicants (sending black and white applicants or disabled and non-disabled applicants to apply for the same building and seeing if they receive equal treatment) and

discovered rampant discrimination against blacks and even worse discrimination against the disabled. Reeling from the shock of having found discrimination in the rental housing market, the board of trustees ordered the creation of another commission (made up of members from the community, members from other commissions, and several village officials) to generate solutions to the problem and present their ideas to the board by the end of the year (Rockrohr 11). Whether or not this committee will be enough to solve the continual problems of housing discrimination is up for debate, but it still shows that the village is committed to integration and diversity.

Regardless of the commitment to diversity in Oak Park, the village's politically conservative groups routinely complain about unfair treatment and victimization. Usually, this group is unseen in the village, but jumps into the spotlight around every major election. For instance, during the 2012 campaign season, an article explained that:

In the last three years, John and Mary Howell's Grove Street home has been egged and toilet-papered several times. They've discovered flat tires on their vehicles, had lawn ornaments and an American flag stolen from their property, and been called racists and other epithets by neighbors and passerby. And they know it's because of their political views. The Howells are conservatives, living in the largely liberal community of Oak Park, but that hasn't kept them from expressing their opinions. (Devin 16).

The article continues with the Howells explaining that they were afraid of speaking up, but had to because if they did not, then those who opposed them would win. They also explained that they did not understand why such a small group would arouse so much vitriol from the community. For instance, in 2004, they claim that four men were in their yard tearing down their

four foot by six-foot freeway facing Bush / Cheney 04 sign (Lothson “Republicans” 10). Still, there is no need to worry for this group, as the one community conservative activist explained, they despite the struggle, will continue the good fight and have even had some success finding younger conservatives in the community following the 2012 election (Tibensky 27).

H. **Envision Oak Park**

As a part of managing the problems currently facing the community, Village Hall is continuing to work toward renewing its goals and building a stronger community in the future. Currently this is taking place as part of the nearly two year-long process of developing and implementing a new comprehensive plan to replace the over 20-year-old document completed in 1990. The comprehensive plan is “a guiding document that the village board, staff and the boards and commissions use to determine how to determine how the community is developed” (“Public Sought” 11). It should be noted that the comprehensive plan is federally required to involve community input if the village wants to receive federal funding. The current plan is:

aiming to address 21 categories, which includes community development, community design, transit orientation, energy and green building (including life cycles of materials), housing, transportation, public facilities, historic preservation, land use planning, economy, child care, elder care, public safety, diversity, education, environmental justice and sustainability, public health, arts and culture, tourism, parks and recreation, and public participation. (“Public Sought” 11)

The push for this effort began in October 2012 with the creation of a website, a series of poorly attended public workshops, which were then extended to include mail-in workshops for people who could not make the actual workshops, six workshops for students held at different schools in

the village, and a large and widely attended “kick-off event” for the community announcing the official start of the project as a way of gathering more support, information, and ensuring members of the community believe they have a voice in the project (Houseal Lavinge Associates “Statement”; Lothson “Envisioning” 1).

As Houseal Lavinge Associates, the independent contracting firm behind the community outreach explain, the comprehensive plan:

provides a great opportunity for residents to communicate what they believe to be the strengths and weaknesses of the community, and to prioritize what issues are most important for the Village to address in the near term and in the future. The planning process is designed to promote community involvement and encourage citizen participation. Community outreach is included throughout the entire planning process. We know that the success of this planning effort will depend on engaging the Oak Park community. (“Statement” 1)

Basically, the project planners are doing their best to ensure that members of the community feel that they are needed for the process to be successful. As the project has progressed, the community participants were divided into 11 different groups that roughly match up with the purposes of the Village Hall citizen commission groups. These groups focused on topics ranging from art to community health and safety, but I will focus on the group working with neighborhoods, housing and diversity.

This group, like all of the others, had three meetings spread over three months and at the end of the three months, the group came up with a statement for the importance of their topic, a vision statement, and a few goals that they believe to be of importance to the comprehensive plan and the village as a whole. This group’s statement of importance explains that “When people

hear ‘Oak Park,’ it evokes notions of high community character, quality housing, and a welcoming and diverse population” (Houseal Lavinge Associates “Statement” 1). The group continues by explaining that neighborhoods can be understood as a type of microcosm that can be used to develop larger plans for the community and reaffirms the village’s stance on diversity and further suggests that the village is a local and national leader when it comes to residential integration and diversity.

The five goals that the group outlines follow suit from the statement of importance. The goals are “maintain and grow the diversity of the Oak Park community,” “Ensure that all Oak Park neighborhoods foster social interaction and inclusiveness,” “Provide housing that is accessible for and responds to the needs of Oak Park’s diverse population,” “Maintain the long-term viability, quality, and character of Oak Park’s housing,” and “Provide a healthy mix of housing and strong neighborhoods options to ensure Oak Park is competitive and desirable for existing and potential future residents” (Houseal Lavinge Associates “Statement” 2-4). These goals are interesting only in the fact that they are simply the continuation of the general goals and activities of Village Hall and the larger community since the 1970s. These goals could almost have been pulled from any of the different diversity statements that the village has ratified over the years.

In fact, the group’s vision statement for Oak Park in the year 2030 is pretty much contemporary Oak Park with more mature versions of the same mindset, community programs, and diversity. The benefit of this approach is that the village clearly has a plan in mind and its active residents are inline, which suggests that continuing to follow the already successful path will not be difficult. The downside is that by simply enhancing current plans and continuing to

present the village as having become post-racial, there are areas for development being missed that could improve the village's goals for diversity and integration.

CHAPTER IV: ENVISION OAK PARK

A. **Introduction**

Oak Park is a well-intentioned, but imperfect community. Village Hall and the community's residents clearly want to build an accessible community, but the village seems too trapped under its own narratives of integration and involvement, as well as widely circulated discourses of race and post-racialism.¹¹ One of the main community traits revealed by the "Envision Oak Park" comprehensive planning process is the continual, but working, contradictions created by the community's narratives and discourses coming into contact with the need to make concrete plans for the village's future. Oak Park's leadership struggles with separating the ideas that it circulates about the community (such as the belief that Oak Park is post-racial) from the need to actually continue and support programs that might make the idealized version of Oak Park a reality.

In late 2012, I attended several of the "Envision Oak Park" public comprehensive planning meetings. These meetings, which will be discussed at length in the second part of this chapter, provided insight into the difference between Village Hall's projection of community involvement and the complacency typically demonstrated by residents. Throughout the course of the community-wide meetings, I was surprised by how few people attended or participated in the apparent chance to help guide the direction of Oak Park's government over the next 20 years. Oak Park's citizens are frequently described as heavily invested and involved in the community and their governance. While it is frequently stated that Oak Park's residents are heavily involved in the community, the types of involvement often offered to residents and the activities they

¹¹ In chapter II, I discuss the idea of race as a discourse applied to the body, but it is also important to note that post-racialism works in a similar manner. Instead of being applied to the body, post-racialism is a discourse that can be applied to certain practices and populations.

choose to participate in reveal a deeper, unstated, complacency. In other words, the community's rhetoric of involvement is often used to obscure the level of inactivity and complacency present in the community; something the proceedings of the Envision Oak Park meetings demonstrate. Residents seem more than happy to let Village Hall continue whatever it is doing as long as the taxes don't get too high and the parking is plentiful. Frankly, the residents are not as interested in participatory governance as the community's rhetoric might suggest, but this does not mean that community input and involvement are irrelevant in the context of the village's continual development.

In fact, one of the most important ways community building occurs in Oak Park is through Village Hall's attempts to cultivate community input on and involvement in governance. This is evidenced through not only the amount of information the village includes about its processes (newsletters, e-mails, publicly available recordings of most board and committee meetings), but also the creation of citizens' commissions and the continual dialogue such groups open up. Of course, involving the public in governmental processes is not a purely altruistic desire of Village Hall. Involving the public in governance actually leads easier opinion management. For instance,

Effective public administration [demands] control over the public mind. Thus planners advised each other to reveal to the public only simple facts with obvious implications and appeal. Public officials who later had to accept or reject the plan should be given something to interest them lest their indifference work against the plan's successful implementation. (Boyer 188)

In other words, the desire of Village Hall, and other governmental bodies to involve the public in their administrative tasks is a result of their need to keep the public out of the way of the creation

and enforcement of basic policy. Essentially, allowing the citizens to feel that they have a voice in their own governance, makes them more complacent when changes start happening.

Understanding that asking for input and including citizens in policy making can pacify a population makes it clear that the vast majority of governmental public outreach programs are geared toward slowing the difficulties an energetic, but ignorant citizenry can wreak on even the most mundane aspects of governance. Local government planners are continually trapped in a cycle where they must rely on votes from residents, which in turn can be used to influence politicians, to advance certain agendas, but the only way for them to sway the public is to speak with groups of citizens who have power. As M. Christine Boyer explains, “The weakest link in the planning chain was stated to be the public’s general lack of understanding of city and regional planning—its purpose, its methods, its advantages, its costs, its legitimations” (188). In this passage, Boyer is arguing that city planning is often unable to complete its most simplistic goals because average citizens are unable to understand the long-term impact of their needs and wants, which can cause them to rally against programs, such as integration or school redistricting that would be uncomfortable at first, but benefit the community in the long run.

Some municipalities responded to the difficulty of working with an uninformed citizenry by creating citizen committees, such as the Housing Programs Advisory Committee (HPAC) in Oak Park, that “aligned with planning commissions” and were essential for building a bridge between the general public and planning groups because:

They could initiate city and regional planning work long before it was generally appreciated by the public at large, they could guide city planning once a program had been made, and by keeping the proposals before the public they could help city government put across projects approved by city officials... Volunteer

meditative groups were superior to public administrative groups; they could initiate and experiment where public officials could not, they could represent minority opinions and limit their monetary gifts to special interests while public authorities must not (Boyer 188).

Citizen commissions help to speed along the city planning process because they can provide preliminary feedback, create informed citizens who share information with others, and give citizens a chance to believe that they are helping to improve their communities. In addition, the citizen commissions are instrumental for establishing and reaffirming certain disciplinary norms, such as fair housing practices, that are pushed by the government and used to keep municipalities intact.

In *The History of Sexuality, vol. I* Foucault speaks about the normative processes of governance as a continuation of control over the body, a type of “regulatory control” that extends from rules placed on the individual to those that affect the entire population and are “the organization of power over life was deployed” (139). Essentially, a city planner’s need to involve members of the general public in the planning process can be understood as an extension of political control over the body, which then using the same set of tools and ideologies becomes one of the population management tools of governmentality (145). Through involving the community, city planners are able to shape the discourse about their projects and the larger community. According to Boyer, this focus on population management begins with the planner’s documents that ignore “motives and conflicts” behind the decisions being made so that the planners can focus on providing a “normative resolution of what the American city ought to look like” (68). By creating a vision for what cities ought to look like and how they ought to work, planners are continually plotting out the ways that people should behave and interact with the

cities as spaces. The planners' recorded vision of the city allows their work to expand to actually creating disciplinary norms for bodies inside of cities. In other words, the cities are actually built in a way that fosters the discourse that shapes the disciplinary norms of individual bodies and populations within the city (Boyer 70-71). The connection between city planning, discourse, and disciplinary norms outlined by Boyer holds a pretty strong connection to what Carole Godwin outlines as the Oak Park strategy for management of integration and diversity.

As explained by Godwin, the original plan for integrating Oak Park¹² involved four unique steps:

First, there was expansion of the community relations function, its duties, and its staff... Second, there was an elevation of the formal and informal status of community relations workers and of the community relations function within the government hierarchy... Third, there was an expansion of the mandate assumed by the local government... Finally, increasing rationalization of the community relations function was evident in its full incorporation into the administrative bureaucracy, in the increasing use of formal controls, and in the replacement of informal local ties by professional expertise as primary personnel qualifications. (162-163)

The first step's focus on community relations follows what Boyer outlines as useful for city planners, pulling in some residents from the community so that they do not get in the way of the plans being made. Again, the second step, promoting those working in community relations, shows that the focus within Village Hall began to shift toward actively shaping the types of

¹² Specifically, Goodwin refers to the process of integration as "The evolution of the official response to the growing perception of threat of racial change" (162). Goodwin's phrasing suggests that the process of integration was more focused on managing white fears than my summation of her words, which is accurate, but unimportant to the focus of this chapter.

discourses that occurred within the community. Shifting the discourses about integration and diversity became especially important as the village managers needed to combat the commonplace discourses surrounding white flight and fear of potential black residents. Like the community relations focus of the first step, the last two steps are focused on solidifying or formalizing the role that community relations and management would play in the process of integration. Without reaching out to residents as a way of shaping their norms and discourse, it is entirely possible that Oak Park would just be another segregated suburb of Chicago, like its wealthier neighbor River Forest.

Comparable to Goodwin's four step analysis of the Oak Park strategy, Boyer outlines four steps necessary for establishing disciplinary control within city spaces:

First, [disciplinary control] begins by classification of entities and their distribution into appropriate locations. Next it creates functional sites that support the process of production. Third, it focuses on each movement over time, especially on adding up and capitalizing time. Finally, it composes these movable parts into an efficient and productive machine. (71)

Boyer's outline is almost an exact reproduction of the way Village Hall tracked black bodies and attempted to distribute them throughout the village through building up a governmental and non-governmental regime around the tracking and dispersal of black bodies. In fact, Oak Park's 'efficient and productive machine' included having Village Hall staff "available for continuous monitoring and for immediate intervention in tension-producing situations. It handled inquiries and attempted to quell rumors. It was able to coordinate activities and programs relating to racial stabilization among other village departments and official bodies" (Goodwin 148, 151). Outside of continually monitoring the presence of blacks in the Oak Park, Village Hall would also turn its

focus more directly toward managing the types of discourse that surrounded the character of the village and integration. Specifically, Village Hall focused on ensuring that Oak Park's mission and character were publicly understood as maintaining an integrated community. Village Hall officials correctly guessed that presenting the village as already integrated would help ease the transition from nearly all white to integrated, since it many of Oak Park's white residents would not question blacks living in an integrated community the same way they would question blacks moving into a white community (Goodwin 205).

B. Village Hall and Public Relations

Since Village Hall has a large role in shaping Oak Park's discourse, its need to involve the community in its governance not only fits within the history of city planning, it has also become a part of the community's character and traditions. Outside of diversity, another aspect of pride for the community is the belief that the residents play an active role in molding the community and governance. The narrative of civic engagement also plays a large role in shaping how planners approach the community, which can be either beneficial or detrimental depending on the project, its importance, and the level of interest shown by the larger community. This chapter will focus on the opening series of public comprehensive planning meetings intended to solicit feedback from members of the community about the direction the government should take over the next 10 to 20 years. Although these meetings were required by the federal government and not one of Oak Park's homebrewed outreach programs, the meetings still illustrate the divergent ways that members of the government and residents interact with each other and understand the village. Additionally, the meetings provided an opportunity to see what happens when the projected concerns of the village and the actual concerns of residents are in direct conflict.

In the middle of October 2012, Village Hall began the public relations portion of its comprehensive planning process with a series of community forums under the title “Envision Oak Park.” The meetings, legally required by HUD [US Department of Housing and Urban Development], were intended to give the public a voice in guiding the focus and goals of the village’s new comprehensive plan. Over the course of roughly four months, I ended up attending two out of four general population meetings, one meeting geared toward those working for Village Hall or volunteering for the village government, and the widely attended “kick-off” event in February. Originally, I believed that these meetings would serve as a chance for me to see how public and governmental discourses interacted with each other, but because many of the meetings had extremely poor attendance, the meetings also became a showcase for how village planners, and their associates, navigate the narratives that circulate about the community. In the specific case of these meetings, the most readily apparent of these myths was that the residents of Oak Park are all concerned about governance and politically active.

To organize the events of the public meetings, I have focused on specific themes or ideas and have organized the discussion of the meetings along these ideas. Aside from outlining the ways that these meetings worked, some basic demographic information about those in attendance, and the kinds of conversations that occurred during these meetings, this chapter provides examples of the different ways that discourses interact in Oak Park. Additionally, this chapter contributes to my larger argument that Oak Park’s greatest failure is the inability of Village Hall and the majority of the community to challenge the discursive and economic systems that the village depends upon. Those within the village operate from the understanding that the village is always doing something exceptional or moving in the right direction and rarely challenge the larger national and historical discourses about integration, diversity, suburban

spaces, and community building that are foundational to Oak Park's successes and the causes of its failures.

C. **The Meetings**

The four Envision Oak Park meetings were held at several easily accessible sites within the village, with additional sites used for the two meetings that I was unable to attend. The October 16th meeting and February 20th “kick-off” meeting (a summation of the findings of the original series of meetings) were both hosted at the 19th century club at the intersection of Lake Street and Forest Ave at 7 PM. This location is on one of Oak Park's main roads, Lake Street, and next to a large parking garage¹³. The 19th century club is a large mansion style brick building with glass paneled wooden doors. Both meetings were held in a large room, which looked like it would normally be used for wedding receptions. The room had clean and bright white walls, a springy red carpet, and a raised stage. There were two sections of wooden white folding chairs, one for each side of the room. Sadly, the room wasn't as pristine as it seemed because I saw a cockroach sitting in one of the chairs I wanted to use when I first went to sit down. The second meeting that I attended was on October 30th, 2012 at 2 PM in the afternoon. This meeting was held in the Oak Park Arms, a retirement center with an equally large ballroom, which had been decorated for one of the retirement center's Halloween parties. The room had 4 rows of 20 chairs with the chairs split right down the middle making an extra isle. In front of the chairs was the second level, about a step and a half from the ground, which looked like a more proper dance floor. It also looked like it could be used as a stage. Finally, the third meeting, specifically for village hall volunteers and employees, was held January 14th, 2013 at 7 PM was held in village hall's council chambers. This room looked like a cross between a stadium and a traditional

¹³ Slated to be torn down and replaced with an apartment tower / shopping area and new parking garage.

lecture hall with long benches in escalating rows all pointing toward the center area. Behind the center area was the trustees' normal seating area and a wall decorated with words that are meant to represent community goals. Recently updated, this wall had large words such as "Sustainability," "Illinois Green Fleet," and "Reusability" in dark translucent gray on a lighter gray background.

Each of these meetings followed a very similar format. Upon entering the room, participants were handed a half-sheet demographic form that asked for some basic demographic information. At the top of the half sheet of paper, the form asked for the participant's name, email address, home address, and age. Below that, it asked for the participant's race (in the same style as a census form), and gave selections for household income ranging from "under 25K" to "over 100k." Finally, the form asked the participant was a home owner or renter and for his or her marital status, with the options "married, single, or living with partner." Second, with the exception of the village hall meeting, participants were asked to mark their home on a large map of Oak Park with a colored sticker. Once the meeting started the moderator would introduce himself, his colleagues, and his firm, and then he would hand out another sheet of paper that had four questions/prompts:

1. Five most important concerns you have about Oak Park
2. Three most important issues that we have discussed so far
3. Three projects you would immediately undertake if you had infinite funding
4. What are the strongest aspects of Oak Park's community

At the meeting for those working for Village Hall or volunteering, there were two additional questions added to this sheet:

1. What does your commission need to do its job more effectively?

2. What are three specific strategies the village could use to improve your commission?

These questions were filled out during specific points of the presentation and helped to guide discussion. After each section was filled out, the answers were shared with the group and then written down on enormous post-it notes so that they could be placed around the room for everyone to see easily. This was generally followed with a short question and answer section about the previous activity before moving on to the next section. The final prompt was intended to end the meetings on a positive note, but seemed mostly unnecessary because the meetings never became heated. After all of the prompts were complete and discussion exhausted, the meeting would end, but the moderator and his colleagues would stay behind to answer questions and clean up.

Each meeting would open almost exactly the same way with the moderator explaining his role, the consulting firm, the goal of the project, and the overall purpose of a comprehensive plan. While the format was always the same, the information provided would usually change depending on the audience. For instance, for the October 16th meeting, very little was said about the firm or the comprehensive planning process. To begin the October 16th meeting, John Houseal, acting as moderator, introduced the group to himself and his associates. One man, named Doug Hammel was in charge of taking notes and passing out paperwork, another man, whose name I cannot recall, and never saw again, looked very relaxed and mostly lounged in a metal folding chair. Houseal introduced his firm as Houseal Lavigne Associates and explained that they were an outside consulting firm hired to head up the comprehensive planning process and present their findings to Village Hall and residents through the Envision Oak Park website and press releases. He then launched into a description of the demographic form, stating that it was being used to determine who was not attending the meetings. For example, if very few

renters attended meetings, the firm would try to meet with them in a different venue or individually. He explained that renters were a good example of the need for the forms because renters often feel that their concerns are unimportant since they do not own property, which makes them less likely to attend meetings about long-term planning or issues involving local property taxes. The relaxed man explained that he had already conducted 25 interviews with small groups or individuals to try and make sure they had even representation of opinions. Houseal continued by explaining that this was the first set of a year and a half of plans to probe the community on how the village was going to change in the future.

The second meeting provided more detail about the reason for choosing the specific location and some of the goals and problems for the comprehensive planning process. He explained that the nursing home was chosen as a site because they wanted to hear from the residents, but there were many events happening (namely their Halloween festivities), so they were not expecting a large turnout from them either. Doug explained, this time, that the firm was working in partnership with the village of Oak Park and the US Department of Housing and Urban Development, which is why they are collecting demographic information. He explained that his firm was going to provide a technical report to Village Hall about what they saw, what was said, and what they believe that the village could improve. He also went into more detail about the comprehensive plan, explaining that the comprehensive plan is hooked into all aspects of village governance or that it tries to create a place where everything else can connect. However, he also explained that the plan addresses a broad range of issues, but it does not directly include schools or parks because they are under the control of separate taxing bodies. Despite the lack of control, there is still a strong need for cohesion, so their firm would be meeting and speaking with the different organizations that have control over the village. The

main change between the first and second meetings was that the consulting firm did a better job of explaining to the audience why the comprehensive plan mattered and why they needed community input.

It was the third, January 14th, meeting where Houseal went into the most detail about the firm, and its accolades and qualifications, as well as taking the time to compliment the community. This was probably a direct result of the presence of village trustees who made the decision to hire the firm. To start this session, Houseal explained that his firm had taken on 48 of these projects around the country and that their firm had won more awards in the past five years than any other "... in the Midwest" (he kind of let that last part silently trail off). He spoke about the government, HUD, funding that was used for the project, and explained that HUD required these community input meetings. He said that the meeting today was designed specifically for commissioners because commissioners have a deep pulse on the village and that are the front lines when it comes to representing the community's needs and desires. He drew a comparison to other communities where there might only be one commission, but in Oak Park, there are 25 or so, showing a deep commitment by residents (even if few showed up to the previous public meetings). He continued by explaining that commissioners are not only the voices of the village, they also hear the voices of the typical resident when people come to the different commissions for help or insight. He also said that he knew that some commissions had a hard time because the community didn't understand what they did. For example, he said, people dislike the historical preservation society because they believe that they are only concerned with keeping people from being able to paint their homes. Out of the four introductions that I witnessed, this was my favorite because Houseal spent the most time pandering to the audience.

The final meeting on February 20th was entitled a “kick-off” event even though the real start of the project was 4 months ago in October, but the exciting title seemed to have the desired effect because it was the most widely attended event since the project began. To begin, Houseal offered a very brief introduction to his firm, the project, and the goal of the meeting. Instead of doing the usual introduction, his focus seemed to be on making those present feel like they were involved in something really important. He highlighted the work that his group had done (at this point they had conducted 4 large community meetings, 4 business community meetings, 8 neighborhood meetings, several special interest group meetings, and had many participate in do-it-yourself group surveys) in the community and some of the difficulties that his group had faced, but he kept an overall positive tone. He then went on to explain the voting remotes that were provided to participants, which would be used to record participant responses about demographics (replacing the half-sheets of paper) and responses to pre-determined topics that would be appearing on the projected screen. This seemed to be a way of keeping the group interacting with the moderator without having to rely on the hand recorded responses of the previous meetings, which would have been difficult given the size of the audience.

D. **Meeting Demographics**

The voting clickers were especially important because of the meeting’s attendance, which was somewhere between 100 and 200 people. With a group this size, it would have been impossible to record responses on post-it notes in a timely manner. By comparison, the first meeting had only 4 people (counting myself) in attendance and, with the exception of myself, all of the attendees were middle-aged white women. For that first meeting, Houseal seemed somewhat surprised by the low turnout and told the group that usually, no matter what size the community was, they normally got 30 to 80 people at these kinds of meetings. It didn’t matter if

a town was 2 million people or a little village of 200 people they averaged 40 people who were engaged and excited. The turnout was so low that the meeting was delayed by 10 minutes in the hopes that more people would show up. At 10 minutes after 7pm, they decided to start the meeting. Houseal explained that “if anyone else shows up, we’ll just fill them in...” Sadly, no one else showed up. They expected up to 80 people, but only got four.

My second meeting, the last of the four community-wide meetings, had better attendance, but there were still only a total of six people (two black men, two white men, and two white women) including myself. I had waited to attend meetings under the hopes that the attendance would improve and my continued presence would not be distracting to the moderators, but this did not work. In fact, both Houseal and Doug noticed me attending the meeting again and told the same exact joke about me being “back for more.” When I asked Houseal about attendance at the other meetings before the start of this session, he said, “Not attended as well as they should have been.” They were so used to the low turnout, that Doug, operating as the moderator, opened the meeting by joking about there being more chairs than were needed before explaining that there was a scheduling problem, holiday parties that led to the lack of desired presence from the nursing home community.

Since the January 14th, 2013 meeting involved people who worked for the government or volunteered on citizens’ commissions it was not surprising that there was a decent turnout. I counted around 70 people in the council hall, which was not enough to fill the room, but enough to ensure that the room did not appear empty. Of all the attendees 5 of these people, including myself, were non-white. There were two black men, a black woman, and a Latino man and woman) However, because this group was more involved in the governance processes, Houseal opened up more about difficulties with the project when asked. Specifically, he spoke up about

the low turnout explaining that the lack of involvement was both frustrating and surprising. He said that Oak Park has a reputation for being active, but they just haven't seen it. They sent home children with flyers, they sent Email blasts, and they even put up flyers around the village. He said that the meetings where they planned to have hundreds of people, they would get 1 or 2. He said that there was a lot of space for meeting in the village, like the 19th century club or the Unity Temple or Oak Park Arms, but that the space was a lot less beautiful when it was empty. A man asked him why he thought that this happened and John explained that he felt the timing was bad and there were too many options. He said that because they offered 18 different chances for people to attend, they kept getting put off and eventually none of them were attended. There was also a problem because of the presidential debates and people wanting to see those instead. He said that Oak Park's schedule is so full that he would hold an event on the same day as the school or a church and those events had 300 and 600 people respectively, while he got 5. He also said that a problem was the lack of specificity, the meetings were about what people thought and not specific topics, so it was harder and harder to get a turnout, but this would change once the meetings began to focus on specific topics. These were newer complaints than what I heard at previous meetings, so it appears that they were either asked to or conducted research on their own about what went wrong. Houseal seemed exasperated when talking about the failings of the community outreach process, but it also appeared that he had rehearsed his response or at least prepared for the possibility of being publicly questioned.

When asked about what was going to be done, Houseal explained that they had developed DIY kits to help people conduct meetings on their own with their clubs, groups, and neighbors. He said that 30 or so of those had been sent out to various groups and individuals and that if any one of us wanted one, we could sign up on the website (envisionoakpark.com) or ask

for one and they would send it out. He said that they had already gotten a few back and the results looked good. He also said that they were trying to go more grassroots by working with community organizations; he even listed a group that he belongs to and is now trying to get to participate more. He said that meetings, like that night's, were an example of the kind of leverage that they were trying to work out. He also said that spreading the word about the website and its ease were an example. For instance, he explained that the survey online could be done from a smart phone and it only took about 7 minutes. He told the story of a woman who left a meeting to "make a call," but came back and said that she did the survey on her phone in 7 minutes. The board of trustees found out about this and filled out their surveys on their phones at the next meeting as a way of encouraging the village to do so as well.

The final meeting on February 20th had a turnout that I counted as around 200, but a reporter for the *Wednesday Journal* placed at closer to 100 (Lothson), and was the most widely attended of the meetings, but that came with its own problems. First because of the size, the audience barely spoke, and had to rely on their voting devices to share opinions. Second, the size of the crowd seemed to mask the lack of minority presence until the group was asked to vote on their racial demographics where the audience was shown to be 92% white, 6% black, 1% Native American, 1% Latino, and 1% other, which was somehow more than 100% percent. This caused some momentary discomfort for those at the meeting, which is something that will be discussed in more detail in the following chapter.

E. **Meeting Discussions and Lists**

The main goal of these meetings was to hear the concerns that members of the community wanted Village Hall to focus on, some of this revolved around the village's diversity, but a lot of it was related to problems with inadequate or confusing parking throughout the

village and concerns about the high taxes. The original plan for the meetings was to have everyone fill out the questionnaires and then provide one issue from their lists, but the only meeting that followed this format was the January 14th meeting. As a direct result of low turnout, participants were instead asked to share their entire lists one item at a time. The list sharing then stopped when everyone's list was exhausted or people started making repeated suggestions. This meeting organization was seemingly designed to foster discussion and also make it difficult for the group to get stuck on a single idea or topic. For instance, at the October 16th meeting we were instructed to follow the first prompt, list the "Five most important concerns you have about Oak Park." This led to the following being written on giant post-it notes after a round robin session of answering:

1. Proper crosswalks at all major intersections
2. Housing for seniors
3. Taxes
4. Proper support for all schools including private schools
5. Business development
6. Early childhood programs
7. Affordable rental housing
8. Better parking management (signage)
9. Businesses for tourists
10. Support for small businesses
11. Fixing up Harlem and Austin so that they represent Oak Park
12. Safety
13. Support for private schools

14. Additional parking spots

15. Government funding for churches to help with rehab and programs

After seeing the completed list, Houseal explained that just from the four of us we had come up with a list of 15 topics, so we could easily imagine what the list would look like if the meeting had 200 people. After this, Houseal prompted each member of the group to pick their three top concerns and re-write them as actionable statements. For instance, I re-wrote “proper crosswalks” as “ensuring that all crosswalks are in working order,” which was shortened so that it could be written quickly on the big post-it notes. Houseal explained that under normal circumstances, participants would be asked to pick another set of concerns unrelated to their first and share those before anything was written down for the entire group.

Once the group finished with this second list, the following was spread across several mammoth post-it notes:

1. Visual consistency
2. Fixing cross walks
3. Rehabbing older buildings
4. Funding for churches
5. Education
6. Paving Oak Park Ave in bricks
7. Oak Park Parks District support (Buildings on Ridgeland) and Parks in general
8. Fixing buildings on Harlem and Lake
9. Development in empty lots
10. Support for private schools
11. Increased parking spaces

After briefly examining the list, Houseal told us that the purpose of this part of the process is to make it easier to build a connection between concerns and actions. With a list of desired actions, it is easier for the team to make proposals and complete tasks. Throughout these meetings, Houseal would continually affirm that the results and ideas from the meetings would have an impact on the actual comprehensive plan and the way meetings worked in the future.

For the final part of the meeting, Houseal asked the group to focus on the strengths of the community, “the things that we didn’t want to lose at any cost.” He said that this was important because of Urban Renewal projects that happened in the 1960s where, as he explained it, the government came in and decided to put in roads, malls, and other things that would boost economic development, but really just ended up hurting the communities. “Then, 30 or 40 years down the line, they want to reintroduce the community that was destroyed.” He explained that they did not want that in Oak Park. After he spoke, the group began work and created the following:

1. Community involvement
2. Community character
3. Community planning cohesion
4. Resident support for business
5. Diversity
6. Housing diversity
7. Safety
8. Architecture
9. Resident pride in Oak Park
10. Schools

This question was interesting because it seemed intended to calm down some of the anger that could be formed during these meetings, but it was unnecessary, so while it was a nice way to end the meeting, the question rarely fostered much discussion. Instead it seemed like it was an opportunity for the moderator to make closing statements, such as Houseal explaining that his favorite part of living in River Forest was the proximity to Oak Park and a way to get others to encourage others to attend the meetings. After this, participants were thanked for attending and then the meeting adjourned.

While these lists provide a sense of the topics that were covered at the meeting, they miss the dialogue and stories that the group shared. To highlight the ways that the participants' concerns and discussion played off of each other and the moderators, I will outline some of the more interesting aspects of the October 16th, 30th, and January 14th meetings. Specifically, for the work of this project, the most interesting aspects of these community meetings is how little of the meetings actually focus on diversity and integration, something that runs counter to the type of discourses that circulate around the idea that community members are deeply invested in diversity. In fact, during the meetings, the only times these ideas ever arose were when they came from the mouth of someone who was already working with the village or was a representative of the governing body. It was after this point that typical residents begin to nod along or follow suit, not before. This is not to say that residents in the village are uninterested in diversity, but rather that they need continual prompting from the government to keep it fresh in their minds and a part of their discourse.

A lot of the ground that got covered at these meetings were the kinds of very general concerns one would expect from a general citizen input / complaints session. People were worried about topics such as taxes, parking, and education, but as the discussion progressed it

became clearer that some residents attended with specific agendas and that Oak Park residents, despite the discourses of community exceptionalism, are just regular Americans and rely on the government to set the discourse about the community, if they discuss the community at all. In other words, they are completely average suburban residents and without the presence of some representatives from the government or local non-profits that work with the government, these meetings would rarely extend beyond each resident's personal concerns.

The discussion about the first list at the October 16th meeting arbitrarily started with one of my pedestrian ideas. When asked to speak, I said that I wanted to see the intersections in the village properly marked for pedestrians. I explained that I frequently use the crosswalk on Harlem near the blue line stop daily and it is dangerous because the crossing sign is hidden, there are no crosswalk markers, and without markers, many drivers do not care about people crossing. Village Trustee Colette said that her number one concern was early childhood education programs, which have been a pet cause for her since becoming a trustee. A woman of advanced years said that her main complaint was property taxes, because her children could afford a home in the village, but they could not afford to pay the taxes¹⁴, so they had to live elsewhere. She would come back to this point a few times, later lamenting the lack of economic diversity in the village because of housing costs.

Finally, the blonde woman spoke and explained that her main concern was complicated. She said that she came with an agenda for supporting some of Oak Park's schools, but mainly their private schools and religious schools that are good schools, but lack the funding to do well. The moderator tried to get her to narrow this down, but Doug, who was writing our responses on gigantic white post-it notes simply wrote down something about supporting all schools in the

¹⁴ Oak Park has an "effective property tax rate of 3.31%," which is the third highest in Cook County and "Cook County property owners pay higher property tax than in the collar counties" (Wendorf).

village. The same woman then went on to complain about the schools in Oak Park having a funding surplus. Colette chimed in and said that this only happened at Oak Park River Forest High School (OPRF) because they found a loophole in the tax levy process that allowed them to ask for more money than they needed and that they were sitting on a pretty huge fund of money. The blonde woman responded by mentioning the recreation center that the school wanted to open with that money, saying that it could be better spent elsewhere. Colette said “I wouldn’t advocate this in my professional role, but the only way to stop them is for a resident to file a complaint.” She then went on to explain that the village had no control over what was going on because it was all a different tax stream. The village is completely separate, tax wise, from the two school districts, any levees, the Oak Park Parks district, and so on. Colette then apologized for derailing the meeting so quickly, which both she and Houseal found amusing. The blonde woman was allowed to express another concern, which she said was village support for private schools.

During the final round of answers, the older woman said parking, which launched the group into a very excited discussion about the lack of parking and odd parking signage in the village. Since I did not drive and had a parking space attached to my apartment, I had not known or noticed any problem, so I was mostly silent. Houseal immediately said that Oak Park is a bit ridiculous with the amount of ticketing that goes on and that he wished apartment building owners would partner with the iGo car sharing service so that their renters would not need to have a car, which would open up a lot of spaces. The older woman complained about the confusing signage and Colette, a Village Hall trustee, said that there are places where she is still not sure if she can park. Houseal told the story of the woman who attended the business meeting in the morning who said that she had to try two different areas before she could park because the signs didn’t make sense. The first area was metered parking, but only if you had a sticker that

said you could park in the metered area. When she got to the second spot, she asked another driver if she could park there and the woman said "I don't know, I need to read the sign first." The older woman complained that even near her home, she can't park at times and she paid for a pass. She felt that any resident of the village should be able to park in any parking spot they want. After the parking topic died down, the blonde woman spoke again, saying that she wanted to see more done for safety in the village. Houseal asked if she meant increased police patrols, but she said nothing. This part of the discussion was interesting because the group immediately became passionate about issues that it seemed would have been overlooked on an individual level.

When the group was asked to explain three tasks they would like to see undertaken that would improve the village, the responses were interesting because of the way that they were essentially matters of personal preference or misunderstanding of what role the village government is actually allowed to play in shaping the appearance of the village or where it can legally allocate funds. He started with Colette and then worked his way back to me. Colette said that she wanted to see development in educational programs, renovation for empty lots and fixing up older buildings for business¹⁵. The older woman spoke about more parking, money for fixing up the sports center on Ridgeland¹⁶. She continued by explaining that she wanted to see more consistent new development in the village and then talked about the building that might go up in the empty lot on Forest Ave¹⁷. She said that she doesn't have a problem with the tower, but

¹⁵ This building rehab idea was repeated, with some slight variation by almost everyone at the meeting.

¹⁶ At the time, the sports center, originally built in 1962) was old and rundown, but had a popular ice rink. The "Ridgeland Common" was recently renovated and reopened on June 14th, 2014. It now includes a new pool, ice rink, and free Wi-Fi (Farmer).

¹⁷ In 2012, an empty lot next to the 19th Century Club, at the intersection of Lake and Forest in downtown Oak Park was approved by Village Hall to be turned into a high rise apartment, condo, retail building, but the project has continually stalled (Stempniak).

that it is just too tall. Then she and the moderator lamented Mills Tower¹⁸ because it stuck out like a sore thumb. She also said that she wanted to see Oak Park Ave done over in bricks, like what had been done for Marion Street. The blonde woman said that she wanted funding for churches to fix up their buildings and asked why the village doesn't have a funding source for this. Houseal told her about a community group that could be really helpful, but she kept pressing that the money should come from the government. She also said that she would like to see more funding for private schools, specifically religious schools. At this point, my responses, which were slightly strained because I had not expected to speak, were mostly uninteresting and have been omitted.

The final part of the discussion provided an opportunity for Houseal to explain a little more about what his group was trying to do and avoid, gave a glimpse into the different ways this small group of participants used the village, and involved the only time that racial diversity came up during the meeting. Houseal began this portion with the same description of urban renewal that he had provided at other meetings and shared the same fears about the damage a comprehensive plan without community input could cause the village. After he spoke, we all started writing down what we came up with. He started with the blonde woman who said that she appreciated the different church architecture and the community character. I said that I really liked the community involvement, the cohesiveness, and the different architectural styles. Colette said that she liked the pride in the community, the diversity¹⁹ (the older woman chimed in at this point and said "oh yeah."), and the safety because the community is safer than the other ones around. The older woman spoke up and said that she agreed about community pride. The moderator said that his favorite thing about River Forest was living near Oak Park. Finally, the

¹⁸ A towering gray retirement center on Marion Street next to Mills Park and Pleasant Home.

¹⁹ The only time diversity was mentioned in this meeting was by a village trustee.

older woman added that she liked that people in Oak Park are proud to say that they are from Oak Park, she also liked the architectural history, and the unique character of the community. That people were always willing to speak their minds and fight for things that they like or believe. Unsurprisingly, the list of things everyone liked about the village did not generate as much discussion as the focus on frustrations with the village.

From the October 30th meeting, I will focus on the instances where diversity became a topic of discussion, since the other topics tend to relate to general governance or are very personal in nature. This meeting, with six participants, had a longer opening list of concerns, but ultimately focused on fewer of the topics as the discussion went on. The list was as follows:

1. Property taxes
2. Auto congestion
3. Access to local food
4. Building code enforcement
5. Sustaining diversity (this got several nods. Doug noted that he had spoken with “at least 12 people this week who all said something about diversity, it’s a recurring theme”)
6. Affordable housing
7. Improve community outreach
8. Increased bike paths
9. Promoting small businesses
10. Not enough parking
11. Retraining business tenants
12. Aging housing stock

13. Crosswalks

14. Citizens, not consumer in language / discourse (The older woman who offered up this point explained that the village needs to work on communicating that the residents are citizens, not consumers, and that language should be used to attract businesses and new residents. Doug said that he was happy to hear her say that because that human focus gets lost.)

15. Conserving green spaces

16. Focus on the East business district.

17. Promoting a healthy life style. Houseal spoke about “Healthy community initiatives” which focus on how the government and the community can work together to promote health throughout the village. For example, providing better healthcare or promoting walkability in city spaces.

18. Neighborhood public/green spaces

19. Improved access for the disabled

20. Updating the village infrastructure for green initiatives. To write this last suggestion, Doug had to pull out a third colossal post-it note, so he said “I feel bad about using this big sheet of paper for this one suggestion.” Both he and the woman making the suggestion found this humorous.

Unlike the 16th meeting, diversity was immediately brought up as a discussion topic; however, like the 16th meeting, it was brought up by someone representing the village. In this case, Rob from the Citizens Involvement Commission and the Oak Park Regional Housing center, of which he serves as director. Interestingly, once we voted on the different topics, no one picked property taxes, which was popular at the last meeting, but 4 people picked sustaining diversity. It seems

that since diversity was brought into the discussion sooner, more of the residents were reminded of their own thoughts on the topic and this interest in diversity bled into the discussion as well with the black gentleman who attended the meeting starting off the discussion.

When the group moved into discussing the actual projects that we would each like to see the village undertake, the black man said that he wanted to see Oak Park further commit to supporting diversity and diversity programs by opening a diversity center that would focus on providing resources for the community and serve as an exposition site for Oak Park's history regarding diversity. He said that he frequently hears about Oak Park's history with regard to integration and diversity, but this would be a place where the community could really show that history, which suggests that he notes the disconnect between some of the discourse about Oak Park being diverse and the way the community actually operates. Following this suggestion, Rob spoke about Oak Park's two favorite kinds of diversity: economic and racial. On the economic front, he asked about working toward attracting and retaining a more diverse pool of retail outlets to the community. Then he said that he also wanted to see more done about the "integrated diversity of residents," but he did not explain what this meant. Instead, Doug piped up and said that this was one of the defining aspects of Oak Park, that diversity "is more than a number, but it's actually about community and how people interact with each other." I would argue that Doug's statement is actually incorrect, since the Village Hall mostly works in statistical diversity, but that meeting was not the appropriate time to begin the discussion.

Diversity arose again at the end of the meeting when, Doug began closing the meeting by asking participants what they liked about the community, telling the same story about Urban Renewal that was told last time. The middle-aged guy spoke immediately saying that "The people of Oak Park care about it and they are passionate about it." He then listed three of the

most positive aspects of the community, the diversity, the location, and the rapid transit. This use of diversity as another kind of community amenity is important because it highlights how intrinsic diversity appears to those living in the community. One of the reasons diversity is always first mentioned by a member of the government is probably because the discourse about diversity and Oak Park has circulated in such a way that it seems natural and unworthy of mentioning, but this attitude leads into some of the community's problems with moving beyond being a white space with some people of color in it. Without more of the work regarding maintaining diversity being revealed to the community, it is impossible for a healthier discourse about integration and the meaning of diversity in the community to exist.

Finally, "diversity" arose a few times during the January 14th meeting when one participant complained about the lack of diversity on the different Village Hall commissions and shortly afterwards when another man bemoaned the lack of diversity in South Oak Park. The man complained that the area was becoming older, changing socioeconomic status, and becoming more homogeneous. Since he didn't offer any specifics and the village housing charts suggest that the entire area is still over 50% white (which does not say how much over) it is hard to tell if he's saying that older and poorer minorities are moving or that the area is becoming too white and wealthy. It was interesting to hear "south Oak Park" because this naming was something that the village had fought against in Oak Park because that naming lead to white flight in Austin. The last instance of diversity at this meeting took place when one woman mentioned that she liked the Roger's Park neighborhood in Chicago because of its diversity, which caused Houseal to jump up and start talking about how much he loves Rogers Park and the diversity. "Seeing Korean fishermen on the pier, middle easterners on the corner selling things, walking to the corner store and meeting people from 5 different countries and everyone

just getting along.” He mentioned that Oak Park is like the suburban version of that, which is more an idealized than real version of Oak Park, but it did not stop the other commissioners from getting excited and continuing their discussion of Roger’s Park for the next 10 or so minutes. Interestingly, this was the only time that real discussion was able to take place during the meeting and it probably only occurred because the meeting was close to ending anyway.

One of my critiques of Oak Park as a community is that despite some of the narratives that suggest the village is actively engaged and working toward integration, it is very clear that the contemporary focus on diversity is promoted by Village Hall. Additionally, the reliance on Village Hall to make arguments and set the discourse about diversity, forces the community to never actually challenge the meaning of race, understand the way that racism is shaped by public policy and discourse, and ultimately to allow the community to self-correct when problems with racism arise. Also, since the discourses about diversity are never directly challenged or explained, the times when different uses of diversity or race intersect, there is a disconnect created between the groups (such as the government and residents) that can only be solved by openly revealing the amount of work Village Hall puts into maintaining the image of stable integration and continual discussion of the meaning of diversity. The next chapter, which will focus on the final meeting to take place during the initial sequence of community meetings, the February 20th “Kick-Off” event, will focus on some of the puzzling uses of diversity created by having so many loose definitions circling in the community and the overbearing role that Village Hall plays in making diversity appear to be an innate part of the community, despite the relative disinterest in the topic shown by mainstream residents.

CHAPTER V: MAINTAINING DIVERSITY IN OAK PARK

A. **Introduction**

There are two kinds of integrated communities, those racially integrated through management and design and those integrated by circumstance (Nyden et al. 19, 23); both types of communities have their own strengths, weaknesses, and contradictions. Oak Park's unique strengths, weaknesses, and contradictions regarding racial integration and diversity exist because of its approach to managed integration. For the past 40 years, the village government has been waging an ideological war over the meaning of diversity as a goal for the community and the best ways to cultivate support for diversity among its citizenry, while also projecting an image of stability that meshes with the common conception of a suburban community. The political campaign that was launched in the 1970s to racially integrate the village was about more than allowing blacks into a white community, it was about redefining what Oak Park represents and what kinds of people represented the ideal residents.

Starting in October 2012, Oak Park became publically engaged in a comprehensive planning process, which is intended to set the agenda for governmental action over the next decade. To help fund the comprehensive plan process, the village accepted US Department of Housing and Development (HUD) funding, which mandates that community input is used as a part of the comprehensive plan. As a way of soliciting community feedback, Village Hall has staged a series of community events titled "Envision Oak Park." As explored in the last chapter, these public meetings quickly became sites where the conflict between the rhetoric of diversity and the village's projected image are often contradicted by the actions of the community. For instance, at the largest meeting, the Envision Oak Park "Kick-off" Event:

The moderator, John Houseal, spoke about Oak Park as a diverse community before asking the audience to punch their ethnicity codes into a set of RF receivers, which would then display the audience's information in aggregate form. When everyone finished inputting their information, the result was that 92% of the nearly 200 people present were white. Before moving on to the next slide, all Houseal said was "we'll have to do something about that." (Houseal Lavigne Associates 2013)

This small, public discrepancy between the village's racial diversity and the nearly all white population at the meeting, highlights the way that Oak Park exists as a site of contradiction filled with overlapping narratives, discourses, and interpretative measures. Specifically, in the example of this meeting and the lack of participation from a racially diverse group of residents (Oak Park is nearly 35% minority²⁰), one can see the way the community's statistical integration often hides the lack of social integration between those of different races and economic backgrounds,²¹ and the village's normally unseen, but heavy investment in continually managing diversity within village limits. The contradiction between the projection of the community as post-racial and the continued social segregation is directly driven by Oak Park's history as a white suburban community that integrated through governmental design, management of fear, and the desires of white homeowners to protect their property values.

Despite the above contradiction, Oak Park is still able to thrive. As Houseal's quick aside about needing to fix the lack of diversity at village events shows, these discrepancies do no damage to the village's image in the minds of most residents because discrepancies and

²⁰ See Appendix A for more census data.

²¹ In addition to 92% of those at the meeting being white 82% were homeowners (Houseal Lavigne Associates 2013).

contradictions are a natural part of living within the village. I argue that Oak Park's ability to continually exist in a state of contradiction regarding race and integration is not only necessary for the community's prosperity, but is also a direct result of the village's history with managed integration. To support this argument, this chapter will follow three interrelated threads. First, through examining the changes to Village Hall's diversity statements over time, I will trace the development of Oak Park's discourse of diversity and the governmental project to create an integrated community through managing the fears of an all-white community and placing integration at the center of the community's identity. Second, I will explore the way that "diversity" becomes an object that is being continually shaped by and also shaping the community through discourse. Finally, the chapter will explore the ways that diversity works as a form of economic value and incentive.

B. Maintaining Diversity in Oak Park

On April 9th 2013, Oak Park celebrated the 40th anniversary of the 1973 adoption of its statement for "Maintaining Diversity in Oak Park," the official statement of how Oak Park's government intended to support integration within the village. The origin and continuation of 'diversity' as a project that the document represents offers several clear examples of how governmentality can develop in a small community and how power moves through individuals (Foucault "Society" 29). The campaign for integrating the village, the "Oak Park Strategy," was not solely a top down regime being forced on the people of the community. Instead, 'diversity' is one aspect of a reciprocal relationship of power with citizens, special interests, and governance in the village. 'Diversity' was also a response to the fear of unmanaged integration, of Oak Park rapidly transitioning from an all-white to all-black community. Because of the white residents' fear, Village Hall was able to create a set of disciplinary norms focused on containing and

redirecting the fear of the population away from those who looked different and toward those who thought differently. In other words, it is impossible to fully understand the impact of diversity without understanding the connection to governmentality²². As will be explored throughout this chapter, examining governmentality requires a set of tools for interpreting the mentality of the government, the way that power is being cultivated, and the relational identity of those being governed and their role in shaping the government (Walters and Haahr 5).

One path into understanding the ‘diversity network’ (relationships, negotiations, institutions, individuals) within the village is through the 1973 creation of the official statement for “Maintaining Diversity in Oak Park” and its contemporary evolution, Oak Park’s “Diversity Statement,” which both explain how Village Hall understands the role of diversity in the community and the path to integration. The 1973 document is credited with ‘maintaining’ diversity in the village, but “When it was first issued, the community relations director...” complained that the village’s plan to disperse minorities throughout the village not only misrepresented the whiteness of the village, and its lack of integration, but he also drew attention to the fallacious nature of claiming that an all-white community could ‘maintain’ diversity (Goodwin 159). While, the community relations director was correct in noting that the village could not maintain a diversity that did not exist, he missed the mentality behind the claim that integration and diversity were being maintained. The Board of Trustees created “Maintaining Diversity in Oak Park” as a way of fostering the idea that the village was already integrated as opposed to a village in the process of change. The document thus served two purposes: outlining the village’s process of integration and serving as the cornerstone of a public relations project that would help to create a sense of stability throughout a period of potential turmoil by

²² William Walters and Jens Henrik Haahr in *Governing Europe* take a very similar approach to understating the governmental processes used to develop the European Union.

suggesting that racial diversity already exists within the village and that the upcoming changes had already occurred (Fogelson 24).

The idea of diversity as an already and always occurring phenomenon is foundational to the way that the village was able to reconstruct itself through community revitalization and processes of governmentality. Tracing the development of the village's "Statement for maintaining diversity" over the past 40 years reveals how diversity has been shaped by both the goals of village hall and the desires of the community.

C. **Diversity Statements**

Since 1973, the statement for 'maintaining diversity' has either been symbolically re-adopted or updated every few years by the village's President and Board of Trustees. The most recent iteration of the document is simply titled "Diversity Statement." The differences in the way the historic and contemporary documents represent diversity is almost immediately apparent from their opening paragraphs. For instance, the 1989 adoption of the original document states:

The people of Oak Park have chosen this community, not so much as a place to live but as a way of life. A key ingredient in the quality of this life is the diversity of these same people, a broad representation of various occupations, professions, lifestyles, and age and income levels; a stimulating mixture of racial, religious, and ethnic groups. Such diversity is Oak Park's strength. ("Comprehensive Plan" 10)

The most striking feature of this statement is the almost tame and simplistic, by the village's more contemporary standards, conception of diversity. In this statement, diversity is limited to broad, vague, and socially acceptable categories of integration such as employment and religion.

This simplistic conception of diversity stands in direct contrast to the most recent (2007) version of Oak Park’s “Diversity Statement,” which has a far more specific coverage of the different bodies of diversity that now interest the community and the community’s motivation for integration:

The people of Oak Park choose this community, not just as a place to live, but as a way of life. Oak Park has committed itself to equality not only because it is legal, but because it is right; not only because equality is ethical, but because it is desirable for us and our children. Ours is a dynamic community that encourages the contributions of all citizens, regardless of race, color, ethnicity, ancestry, national origin, religion, age, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, marital and/or familial status, mental and/or physical impairment and/or disability, military status, economic class, political affiliation, or any of the other distinguishing characteristics that all too often divide people in society (“Diversity Statement” 1).

In comparison to the previous document, the ‘diversity statement’ clearly lays out the village’s expanded understanding of diversity. The difference in length between the two documents is mostly an extended listing of the types of diversity the village is concerned with. A part of this specificity is the inclusion of groups that may have been either invisible, ignored, or too controversial in 1973 or 1989 for the Village Hall to comfortably associate with itself and the community. For instance, communities such as those focused on “sexual orientation” or “gender identity” are now considered an integral part of the village’s diversity. This expansion of diversity over time is demonstration of the shift in norms in the village. At first, the very idea of a black and white integrated community was shocking and dangerous, but in a present where

racial diversity is the norm, the community and government have, following the same pattern as racial integration, developed new norms that have created a desire for increased diversity and the benefits that have been associated with the development of diversity. In a way, it is also possible to suggest that the desire to tackle other forms of diversity demonstrates that Village Hall sees themselves as having surpassed, or solved, the problems of racial integration, which has created space for working on other types of diversity.

Outside of each document's opening statement about the types of diversity within the village, the posturing used in each document reveals the village's confidence with managing diversity. For instance, the first document covers much of the same material as the later document, but less confidently places it after a statement that puts Oak Park's intention to maintain diversity inside of "our proud traditions of citizen involvement and accessible local government [that] give us a unique opportunity to show others that such a community can face the future with an attitude of change for the better, and yet preserve the best of the past" ("Comprehensive Plan" 10). By placing statements regarding Oak Park's move from the legal and into the moral, such as "...Oak Park has committed itself to equality, not only because it is legal, but because it is right..." after the statement about tradition, the Board of Trustees signal that they are moving into unknown and experimental territory. This betrays the defensive public relations motions that the document needed to make.

In contrast, the contemporary document looks back on what had already been accomplished and makes a bolder statement, also couched in the need for creating a certain image of the village, but now more focused on promoting the positive aspect of the village and highlighting the ability of the village's community to serve as an example for others:

Oak Park's proud tradition of citizen involvement and accessible local government challenge us to show others how such a community can embrace change while still respecting and preserving the best of the past. Creating a mutually respectful, multicultural environment does not happen on its own; it must be intentional. ("Diversity Statement" 1)

While the first document is looking toward an uncertain future and defending against detractors, the new statement looks back on what has already been accomplished and how the decisions of the past have created the current "mutually respectful" present. Now the 'challenge' for Oak Park is not defense, but 'showing others' how to become like Oak Park. This is a full transition from defense to promotion. Additionally, the Board of Trustees uses the document to reaffirm the desire to actively integrate and continue managing integration by claiming intentionality is mandatory.

Another relevant difference hinges on the outlining of the village's intentions and methods as a way of pre-emptively answering concerns about integration. In the original document, the entire fifth paragraph is dedicated not only to speaking about the need to manage integration, but also fully outlining the village's plans. For instance, the document states:

A free and open community—equal and diverse—can only be achieved through dispersal; a mixture of racial and ethnic groups throughout the Village. Oak Park is uniquely equipped to accomplish this objective. Not only do we possess a varied housing stock at all price levels and in all parts of the Village, but more importantly Oak Park has the resources of all its people...a people whose chosen social and ethical goals include integration, not re-segregation. ("Comprehensive Plan" 10)

In this section, the village not only speaks of the need to manage integration, but also provides their method and a fairly detailed explanation of why Oak Park is properly suited to manage integration and eventually be successful in the project. Instead of focusing on the types of diversity that will fit into the village, this document explicitly outlines the specific processes that are needed to make diversity work as a way of defending and protecting the decision to integrate.

In contrast, the modern Board of Trustees, no longer needing to defend its practices, relies on more vague statements about diversity that substitute for process. Stating:

Oak Park is uniquely equipped to accomplish these objectives, because we affirm all people as members of the human family. We reject the notion of race as a barrier dividing us and we reject prejudicial behavior towards any group of people. ("Diversity statement" 1)

Gone is the interest in a detailed explanation of defenses against failure, replaced with discussion of the 'human family.' In addition to the 'human family' as a substitute for planning, the modern document puts a deeper focus on the role of the Board of Trustees, stating "To achieve our goals, the Village of Oak Park must continue to support the Board's fair housing philosophy that has allowed us to live side-by-side and actively seek to foster unity in our community" (1). The focus is taken off of the traditions of the village and placed onto the shoulders of the board. This change from the focus of the traditions of the community to the guidance of the board is a representation of Oak Park's intersection of both the Board of Trustees as a type of sovereign and a larger project of governmentality. Submission²³ to the community's laws, along with a

²³ As Foucault explains, "... the public good is essentially obedience to the law, either to the earthly sovereign's law, or to the law of the absolute sovereign, God. In any case, what characterizes the end of sovereignty, this common or general good, is ultimately nothing other than submission to this law" ("Security" 98). In other words, a "good" citizen and a "good" community can be understood as either a place where the law is followed or a person who follows the law in spirit and practice.

connection to morality is what underlines a portion of Oak Park's transition toward a governmentalized community. In other words, this trust in the board and their creation of laws regarding fair housing is, unlike the original document, unexplained because these processes have become normalized and are no longer in need of defense.

D. **The Oak Park Way of Life**

Regardless of the differences between the two documents, both are touching on the same idea of Oak Park as "a way of life" ("Comprehensive Plan" 10, "Diversity Statement" 1).

Namely, that Oak Park as a collective (government, citizens, trees) is choosing to do (or is in the process of doing) something the collective understands as unique, something moral, something worthy of praise and emulation; and, at the same time, demonstrating the way that self-defense, fairness, and self-promotion are related and overlap in a manner that often makes them indistinguishable from one another.

For instance, speaking of self-defense with regard to Oak Park is a little deceptive because of the village's history as a small and white suburban space able to control its own image. Being suburban was a boon²⁴ to Oak Park's transition to an integrated community because suburban spaces have historically been a safe haven for whites and the kinds of regulations that dominate these spaces represent their fears and concerns (Fogelson 24). The point is that Oak Park as a suburban space, was actually in very little need to defend its image from the outside world; instead it needed to promote and cultivate a certain image that would distinguish the community from Chicago and other suburbs. It was always being positively

²⁴ Speaking of Oak Park, Carole Goodwin explains that "research suggests that suburban imagery, civic culture, and, especially political organization strongly affected the conduct and outcome of Oak Park's strategy to control racial change" (Goodwin 11). Additionally, Robert Fogelson explains throughout *Bourgeois Nightmares* that one of the advantages of suburban spaces is that they are small enough to define themselves consistently and in opposition to the negative aspects of their nearest city

compared to the worst parts of Chicago and was therefore automatically given a defensive advantage. Instead of focusing on the outside world, defense in Oak Park needed to focus on managing the fears of its residents and promoting those who were unafraid of change. Managing and contorting fear would be one of the best ways that village hall would be able to get residents to embrace the changes desired for fostering the survival of the community. Basically, the fear of black residents would have to be transformed into a fear of white racists that was situated in fairness and self-promotion.

The management of fear would not only take the shape of fairness, it would also help to create, and give power to the rise of, the “Oak Park Strategy,” the processes through which Oak Park’s government would attempt to reorganize the village as integrated, and the mentalities that would support their management of integration. Foucault’s conceptions of governmentality and sovereignty offer a direct approach for understanding the Oak Park Strategy. While these two concepts appear to be in contradiction, in the case of Oak Park, they can be understood as a timeline of progression. Sovereignty is a form of power that is tied to fear and the fears of those below the sovereign provide the power necessary for governance and control (Foucault “Society” 96). In other words, before Oak Park’s government was able to create and maintain a system of governance that the populace actively participated in, they had to cultivate power from the fears of the community and use the management of those fears as a way of controlling the development of the community. As Carole Goodwin explains, “No single term summarizes the important organizational distinctions between Oak Park and Austin better than ‘local community control’” (207).

E. **Managing Fear**

The power to control and to create a network of diversity was directly tied to the presence of fear. It is the push of fear that allowed Village Hall to take a stronger position in the control of life within the village, create programs such as the “counseling program, intended to discourage blacks from moving into blocks where other blacks already lived and where white anxiety over racial change was judged to be high” (Goodwin 151), and support community organizations, like the Oak Park Regional Housing Center, that were seen as supporting the government’s community supported agenda.

With the fear of the rapid change from white, to white flight, and eventually a majority black community that happened in Chicago’s Austin²⁵ neighborhood weighing heavily on Oak Park residents (Goodwin 108), and a desire for a more progressive community by newer and younger residents (35), Village Hall was able to reshape the fears of black encroachment into a communal strength founded on fairness and decency. As the original diversity statement explains:

Since the passage of its Open Housing Ordinance in 1968, this Village has tried to abide not only by the letter of the law, but by the spirit of all appropriate legislation and court decisions guaranteeing equal access in the sale and rental of homes and apartments. Oak Park has committed itself to equality, not only because it is legal, but because it is right, not only because equality is ethical, but because it is desirable for us and our children. (“Comprehensive Plan” 10)

²⁵ Originally, Oak Park and Austin were very similar communities; however, unlike Oak Park, Austin was trapped within Chicago’s government and could not make quick changes that could have stemmed white flight (Goodwin 44). Goodwin explains that Austin’s transition from all-white to majority black, carried “a meaning to Oak Parkers that they might find difficult to explicate fully, but its referent was unquestionable” (108).

The concern was not just about being legal, it was about being fair, about providing opportunity for everyone because it would have tangible benefits for the present and the future (the children).

One of the ways that the village created this fairness was by tracking black bodies that moved into the village (Goodwin 151), not just for the counseling about proper placement within the village, but also as a way of humanizing blacks for white residents. One of these plans involved requiring black families to provide information that would be distributed to their future neighbors as letters containing details about their jobs, education, age, and other information that was deemed relevant (West et al. 86). These documents served to allow white residents to view their new black neighbors as different from commonplace stereotypes, and separate these black families from the fears that black residents would destroy the village. After reading these letters, white residents were able to understand the presence of their new black neighbors as a part of the village's focus on morality and integration (Goodwin 110). This method of introducing blacks to village neighborhoods helped to cement the idea that the village was integrated and "probably retarded panic by white residents" because respectable blacks in a community that believed itself to be integrated were less dangerous than those invading an all-white community (205). And once diversity was a core component of Oak Park's character and tied to the strengths and morality of the community, those who were against the program could be defined as deviant or at the very least against the 'choice' of living in the community.

F. **Against Integration**

A perfect example of how those against integration were painted as being a potential source of problems for Oak Park's community, and how their exodus was painted as making the community stronger, occurs in the story of Richard Vanek, a longtime resident of Oak Park, who explains:

Newcomers were literally moving in as others were leaving the village because they disapproved of Oak Park's "social experiment" or feared declining property values. In 1997, Richard Vanek recounted the advice he had received in 1969 from a fellow member of his church: "Don't buy a home in Oak Park. This place is going to 'go' in about five years." Vanek ignored the coded advice about racial change and moved from an apartment to a four-bedroom home he purchased; it doubled in value in less than ten years. "The only thing that's 'gone' in Oak Park is that fellow in church and bigots like him," said Vanek. (West et al. 105-106)

Instead of understanding the exodus of whites as a natural and proper occurrence to the presence of blacks in Oak Park, the village's campaign for integration was able to convince residents that those whites who chose to leave were racists, whose absence made the community stronger.

Another longtime resident, and anthropologist, Jay Ruby, shares a similar sentiment explaining that he left Oak Park for nearly 30 years, and while he was gone "the people I disliked in Oak Park got the hell out of here quick. They were the white-flighters, replaced by very liberal, educated people in the '70s. The character of the place changed drastically because of that" (Trainor "Doing" para.14). In Ruby's version of integration, those who remained or moved into the community are cast in a positive light as opposed to those who left, who are understood as being problematic for the community if they would have remained.

Both of the above examples highlight the way that Village Hall was able to represent its goals as moving outside of the purely legal and into the realm of the moral, an idea that is repeated in both the statement for "Maintaining Diversity" and the "Diversity Statement." The creation of the moral as supporting diversity by these documents is a part of the normative project of the village. This project is underpinned in the understanding that "Oak Park is

uniquely equipped to accomplish these objectives [of creating an inclusive community], because we affirm all people as members of the human family. We reject the notion of race as a barrier dividing us and we reject prejudicial behavior towards any group of people” (“Diversity Statement” 1). Under the board of trustees, the village is no longer following the law, instead it is “uniquely equipped” because of community norms. The shift from law to norm can be understood as an aspect of disciplinary normalization, where the goals of the village are to protect the community, and to actually understand the community as its own ‘race’²⁶ separate from other races and those who choose not to participate in the village’s norms. Sovereignty in Oak Park involved understanding the residents of the village as their own race and protecting them from others who do not share the same views and understandings (“Society” 82). In other words, the integration project not only served to change the community’s composition, it also allowed an opportunity for Village Hall and the white citizens for integration to define themselves as a ‘unique’ race of people. A group that needs both protection and promotion. As a part of this process, it became possible to redefine the blacks moving into the village as of a different quality of those who were the source of fear and crime (Goodwin 110), since the incoming blacks were participating in the project of diversity.

G. **Exclusion through Normalization**

While the contemporary “Diversity Statement” explains that the community rejects “prejudicial behavior towards any group of people,” this has some caveats that support the idea of Oak Park developing as a unique race of people (1). For instance, the next line explains that “We believe residence in this Village should be open to anyone interested in sharing our benefits

²⁶ This use of ‘race’ leans heavily on Foucault’s definition of race as a split between one group of people (this can happen along color lines, religion, dietary needs, or any attribute that can be used to separate individuals) into two groups in order to protect the community and livelihood of the stronger group (“Society” 61).

and responsibilities” (1). In other words, the village is open to anyone who is willing to agree with and participate in the project of integration and diversity. This is also where the ideas for self-promotion and governmentality come into play²⁷. In this case, governmentality was not only the project to keep the population safe from outsiders, but also to divide the original population into those who were for and those who were against the norms regarding race and diversity in the community. The village defends the rights of those who are for the program and is unsupportive of those who might disagree by creating an environment so soaked in diversity and ideologies of diversity that those uninterested either leave, silence themselves, or never move into the village.

Oak Park has a population of people who, in order to keep the systems in play that have been operating for over 40 years, need to be cultivated and promoted in both the public relations and livelihood senses. And both senses are directed toward cultivating a population who will continually choose to support and replicate the systems that are in play. In the beginning, this meant bribing residents with mortgage reimbursement if property values decreased as a result of integration (Sokol 142), but in recent years has meant the majority of the population believing that the village needs to continue its efforts toward diversity (“Community Survey” 68), even if the general population is unaware of the amount of work required. In this case, the project of governmentality has remained successful specifically because the norms supported by Village hall have been adopted by the people, shape the views of current residents, attract future residents who already value diversity, and are now circulating in the community without much reinforcement.

²⁷ Foucault explains that one of the aspects of governmentality is “the ensemble formed by institutions, procedures, analyses and reflections, calculations, and tactics that allow the exercise of this very specific, albeit very complex, power that has the population as its target, political economy as its major form of knowledge and apparatuses of security as its essential technical instrument” (“Security” 108).

These norms work because they are supported by a regime of disciplinary normalization, which provides a model (for diversity and integration) that is focused on cultivating residents who can fit into the model by separating residents into those who can conform to the model, and those who are incapable of conforming to the model (“Security” 57). The way of fostering conformity to this model was through financial incentives, and increasing property values (West et al. 116), and by creating community volunteer commissions, such as the Housing Programs Advisory Committee, that take part in supporting and providing citizen input in the oversight of government actions²⁸. Essentially, these groups could carry out more specific aspects of the project of governmentality feeling that they were directly representing the will of the community they came from even when the government would have struggled to take similar projects on its own. The responses of residents, such as Vanek, Ruby, and the participation of residents in community volunteer commissions, show that Oak Park has transitioned from a completely fear-based sovereignty to a more governmentalized system of disciplinary normalization where residents actively assist in replicating the systems that manage the community.

H. **The Diversity Network**

Behind these mechanizations of governmentality and community shaping is the often nebulous term “diversity” that seems to permeate the community’s image, public policy documents, public relations campaign, and history. Until this point, “diversity” has been explored as something invoked and shaped by the village community and government, but the nebulous nature of “diversity” is also partially by design and need. In Oak Park, diversity is more than a term or object, it is also a network of negotiations, relationships, and translations that are

²⁸ As M. Christine Boyer explains, citizen committees in collaboration with government groups fill a gap between planning and the community because they can assist in planning before the larger community is concerned and can initiate and experiment where public officials could not, they could represent minority opinions and limit their monetary gifts to special interests while public authorities must not” (188).

most commonly related to race, but also expand to encompass any type of difference that might forward the village's integrated spirit and goals (as evidenced by the most recent Diversity Statement). The diversity network is also continually being shaped and redefined by the village, while also shaping the village and its residents in the same way.

Describing diversity as anything less than a network, ends up limiting the impact and role of diversity in the community. Limiting diversity to a term that is passed around by the community, to either classify or represent reality as a terministic screen, ignores the way that diversity is also shaping the discourse and community around itself. For instance, Kenneth Burke, might consider diversity a "god-term," a term that comes to represent everything it is related to, because of the way it expands from being a term for black people in a white community, to also including the poor, the differently abled, and eventually a representation of the entire village (Burke 24, 26). While this expansionist and representational approach seems accurate, it ignores the material nature of diversity. It is more than a representation of reality, it is shaping and being shaped by the reality it is supposed to represent.

Examining diversity as material is to study the different ways that it has an impact on, creates motivation and action for, or is completely ignored by the community (McGee "Materialist" 18). This would include examining the impact diversity creates when invoked or witnessed by members of the community or village government and how diversity is shaping interactions and responses within village limits or the ways that it is translated into something demonstrable. For example, many manufactured processes, such as residential segregation, seem to be completely natural because they can be ignored. It is not until they are properly packaged for consideration by the mainstream population that they become important (McGee "Materialist" 23). Bruno Latour, calls this way of packaging the seemingly natural so that it can

become an object of interest and spectacle for the larger population the “theater of the proof”²⁹ (85). In Oak Park, diversity is kept in the mind of the community through the theatrics created by proximity to segregation (and problems caused by it) in Chicago, village hall’s statistical information and studies about diversity, and notoriety the community receives for being diverse and integrated. In other words, the material nature of diversity pushes toward the understanding of diversity as a network because it focuses on the force of dealing with diversity and the methods used to constantly reaffirm diversity as something important and worthy of study, or the way it operates as a tool of normalization.

Viewing diversity as a material force offers up a way to reinterpret the history of the village’s project to integrate, but it does not fully account for the way that diversity is able to exist in a series of overlapping contradictions. First, for example, looking at the role Austin played in forcing change in Oak Park. Austin’s rapid change from all white to majority black created a swell of fear in Oak Park that the village would suffer the same fate and, as explained earlier, this fear was used to create the system for managed integration (Goodwin 163). While the village may have been able to ignore change in any other situation, Austin’s proximity (bordering the village) made it operate as a theater of proof, there was no ignoring what was happening in Austin and there was no way of stopping residents from fearing the same would happen to them.

Second, even now, the presence or absence of diversity is being used to both affirm and change policy regarding diversity in the village through its uses as a term and observable nature as a material. For instance, the residents of Oak Park may speak of diversity, usually in a post-racial sense, but the government is heavily involved in tracking, measuring, and bragging about

²⁹ Latour traces the theater of the proof as a part of a larger study regarding the rise of pasteurization in France.

it for public relations purposes. At the January 16th, 2013 Housing Programs Advisory Committee (HPAC),³⁰ the committee members were shown a color coded map that the village uses for tracking the integration of apartments, the dispersal of race throughout the village, and the presence of segregated blocks. On this map we could see where everything was, and there was even another form, for internal use, that included a more specific gender, racial, and age breakdown, something that was mostly ignored, but shows how closely the village tracks each resident. While we all spoke of diversity at this meeting, invoking its god term-like qualities, we were also being given a firsthand demonstration of its materiality. It was being measured, quantified, and studied in a scientific manner; we saw the work that was being done with diversity regardless of its status as an object, term, or theater.

One way of further clarifying the need for diversity as a network is through the idea of ‘boundary objects,’ which are objects, discourses, or ideas (sometimes all of the above) that often reside in different areas and practices and stretch to meet the needs of the different communities, but remain similar enough across the different situations that they are always identifiable as belonging to the same family (Bowker & Star 297). For instance, at the HPAC meeting diversity was operating as a boundary object because it was able to work as a term and an object that could be measured and quantified and there was very little need to reconcile the tangible, measurable, and observable nature of diversity with its use as a general stand-in for race or economic status or sexual orientation. Diversity is able to remain fluid.

In some instances, such as the speeches delivered by candidates for office in Oak Park or casual situations, the speaker can get by using diversity as a ‘god term,’ because diversity is

³⁰ The HPAC is a group of seven community volunteers and two staff from the Village’s Housing Programs Office who review community loans and funding projects to ensure that village funds are being dispersed according to program policy and helping ensure the quality of housing in the village. I am a member of this group.

being used to encompass everything one might associate with the good in Oak Park as a way of motivating an audience to feel or participate in the community and the immeasurable, the lack of specificity are important for the argument being made. At other times, a sloppy use of diversity can highlight some of the community's contradictions.

I. **The Problem of Diversity**

If we look again to the February 20th "Kickoff Event" discussed in the chapter's opening, Houseal's attempt to mobilize diversity, in a situation that lacks the racial diversity the community prides itself on, is more complicated than it might appear. First, Houseal is attempting to mobilize diversity as a non-specific god-term, yet, he is also literally measuring diversity. He is speaking of it as a term, but also using it as an object, and in this case these two forms were not compatible. The event had a clearly quantifiable diversity (something other than a 92% white audience), so his usage was confusing and potentially damaging to the community's self-image, which was illustrated by his brief response, "we'll need to do something about that." This situation also illustrates the limitations of diversity as a boundary object. Boundary objects may be able to meet different needs in different situations, but there is a break in using multiple versions of an object in a single situation. Houseal's use of a measurable understanding of diversity and the audience's use of diversity as a feel-good, promotional topic did not match up. Yet, they also did not phase the audience and he was able to quickly recover.

The meeting was able to continue on despite the momentary unveiling of the weakness of statistical diversity³¹ because diversity as a network included translation, which allows all occurrences of diversity to be seen as beneficial. Translation is an important part of the diversity

³¹ In the sense that for all of the demographic data and maps about dispersal, people of different races and economic groups move in different social circles and spaces within the village. Also, most village events are heavily segregated and the community is mostly represented by able bodied, heterosexual, upper-middle class, white homeowners.

network because it is inaccurate, but is always referring back to some original object or idea (Law 1). In Oak Park, that original idea is the movement toward integration which allowed the community to prosper during a period of racial transition. Within Oak Park, use of ‘diversity’ is always translated to suggest something of benefit for the community, so even if Houseal is drawing attention to the contradictions of diversity in front of 200 residents, the result is non-damaging because his use of diversity is being read as beneficial.

Diversity was not always intrinsically associated with ‘benefits;’ there was work that went into building that connection. Specifically, there was a governmental regime³² in play that attached diversity to property values. The process of attaching property value to diversity created space for diversity to operate in the previously demonstrated multiple forms. When Village Hall tied diversity to property values by offering mortgage insurance and other financial incentives and property values rose in the 1980s (West et al. 116), it would become impossible to delegitimize the importance of diversity for community building and stabilization. After all, it is very difficult to disregard profits and any homeowner would appear foolish arguing against a relationship or process that appeared to increase his or her personal wealth with little extra effort.

With a focus on understanding how human interactions can be shaped, diversity becomes a hybrid of practice and the theater of proof where the act of practicing, discussing, and measuring diversity is a part of proving that it is beneficial. The networks around diversity are also what bring it into existence and what prove that it, and by extension, Oak Park are sites of interest and value.

³² Foucault speaks of truth regimes, systems of knowledge creation, such as in the sciences, that allow for the creation of truth or connection between ideas that often end up being untrue or lacking a real connection, but appear true because of the process they use to create knowledge (“Biopolitics” 36).

J. Shaping the Community with Diversity

One way that the diversity network has shaped the community, and in turn has been shaped by the community, is through the way that bodies are conceptualized and objectified because of the always increasing desire for diversity. For instance, diversity changed the way that Oak Park residents understood each other and those trying to move into the village. Additionally, diversity was and continues to be a motivational tool as shown through the way the community's desire for diversity, as a response to Austin's white flight, was strong enough to allow village hall to institute an apparatus of control that still manages diversity 40 years after its inception (Goodwin 163). Returning to the statement for "Maintaining Diversity in Oak Park" discussed earlier, we can see that Oak Park was not only establishing itself as the opposite of Austin, but that control and management were always a part of the way that Oak Park could integrate and further differentiate itself from Chicago and other suburbs. This would have been impossible without the diversity network shaping and being shaped by the community.

Furthermore, when Oak Park's government responded to the fears of the community regarding black bodies and crime entering the village together by launching a campaign for integration and diversity (Goodwin 111), it also changed the meaning of black and white bodies within the village. Instead of focusing on the color of skin, Oak Park initially sought to focus on economic self-interest and community pride, which allowed redefining bodies less on what they looked like and more on whether or not they acted out the motions of Oak Park's project for maintaining diversity. In other words, changing the focus from what bodies looked like to how they thought and acted, was another way of expressing the division³³ in the community that the project of diversity would represent. Interestingly, the division created by changing the focus

³³ Foucault explains that any attempt made at redefining the meaning of bodies is also a way of representing the war that was required for change, whether physical or ideological (Foucault "Society" 51).

from black and white to those for the liberal-minded integrationist project is still alive in the village today, with conservative residents often lamenting their feelings of exclusion in *The Wednesday Journal's*, Oak Park's homegrown newspaper, opinion section ("Conservatives Welcome"; Hubbach).

K. **The Value of Diversity**

Oak Park's biggest contradiction, which is highlighted through the complaints of conservative residents, is that inclusion always creates some type of exclusion. In the same way that inclusion includes exclusion, contradiction is an integral part of any community and is necessary for it to prosper. In the specific case of Oak Park, contradictions allow room for the community to appear safe and stable, while the government is actively shaping, and to maintain the aspects of the village that are attractive to current and potential residents. Diversity, as well, is able to play into these contradictions by existing in multiple overlapping forms and being shaped by as well as shaping the village. Diversity also demonstrates the relative lack of diversity of those who have a voice in the village and play the largest role in shaping its future, namely white, middle-class, homeowners.

What is it that keeps this very specific and often contradictory version of diversity working within Oak Park? The answer is a combination of the financial benefit of having a diverse population, which not only increases property values because of an increased home buying population, and the cultural capital that is included in living in a historically integrated community and having racially diverse schools for students to attend. The first way that we see this commitment to treating Oak Park's interest in diversity as a type of economic value is through the creation and focus of the Housing Programs Advisory Committee (HPAC), the main focus of this group involves offering grants of up to \$10,000 and zero interest loans for property

owners who are trying to renovate their rental properties. The biggest aspect of this project is the multi-housing program, which provides support to medium-sized housing units (between four and 10 units) that were in need of repairs and willing to use affirmative marketing initiatives. An alternative to the illegal quota systems, affirmative marketing procedures attempt to steer residents into buildings that are racially imbalanced so that they can become balanced; for instance, recommending that a white family move into a building where very few whites live. This is one of Village Hall's most basic integration strategies. The program mostly operates on "good faith" since the village cannot enforce quotas, but since it includes free advertising for property owner's open units, there is little incentive to work against the program.

L. **Diversity and the Housing Programs Advisory Committee**

My first encounter with this group was in late March 2012, before I became an official member of the group (I became an official member in May 2012). I was there as a member of the public (almost all of the group's meetings are open to the public) so that I could see if I wanted to work with the group, understand how they conducted their meetings, and ask any questions that I might have. This, by chance, happened to be an excellent meeting to attend because the group was focused on planning out their next few months of work. They had received 42 applications for the housing grant program and would need to refine their scoring system (based around a five point scale with categories set by the Housing Programs Office) and how they would award additional points to properties that were either exceptionally segregated or following additional guidelines (such as being LEED certified) so that they could be brought under the village's affirmative marketing program. The group briefly argued over whether the extra points should be something on the form or only used when there was a tie between two buildings. After very brief discussion, they decided that focusing on race as a tie breaker would

avoid situations where wealthier and segregated building with some green energy work done would not win out over buildings in worse condition that actually needed the money to bring the building up to at least the minimum standard as opposed to providing vanity project funds for a wealthier building.

For HPAC, diversity operates in the same ambiguous ways as in the rest of the community, but it is also viewed under a more specific socio-economic lens. This is shown through the concern over helping poorer buildings become more diverse (these are also the buildings that are renting to the poorer residents of the village), since it is understood that diversity helps build demand, which leads to more money for the building, and helps the village to improve the appearance of its housing stock and racial dispersal. In other words, the committee is concerned about supporting landlords who cannot afford to own or renovate some of Oak Park's fancier dwellings, which in turn creates habitable spaces for those who cannot afford to live in the nicer parts of the village. Economic diversity in all of its forms and people (excluding the homeless) is also seen as a valuable part of the village community. This economic understanding of diversity carries nearly the same historic weight as racial diversity within the borders of the village, since maintaining both racial and economic diversity have been at the center of the Oak Park strategy since the 1960s (Sokol 130).

M. **Building Value**

In addition to concerns over protecting wealth within the village in the past, the current concern, as outlined above, is creating a space for the poor within the village limits. "In recent years, perhaps the biggest issue in the local real estate market is the skyrocketing prices of homes that have driven out lower income purchasers; *affordability*, not concerns about *decreased property values*, is the burning issue" (emphasis original, West et al.116). Much like the

importance placed on having a racially diverse neighborhood, having poorer residents live in the village and become a part of the community is also seen as a method for maintaining a healthy rental market, ensuring ideals of diversity are upheld, and reaffirming the village's commitment to moral behavior.

The commitment to morality is another way that the village community is able to build value from integration and diversity. More generally, "the image of the community to the outside world was important to Oak Park leaders. They wanted to see the village portrayed as a liberal community striving to make integration work" (Goodwin 160). The village cultivated its appearance so that it could attract liberal, integrationist whites to live in the village. Additionally, with regard to village interest in integration, there was the commonly held belief that "if we can't do it, no one can" (160), which underscores the idea that residents believed themselves to be something special. Even the presence of black residents was used to help promote conceptions of the community as exceptional.

This acceptance of former 'invaders' as new, and valuable, residents represents at first glance a rejection of Michel Foucault's conception of racism within societies, but is actually more of a slight variation. Foucault explains that "[Racism] is a way of separating out the groups that exist within a population [and]... to fragment, to create caesuras within the biological continuum addressed by biopower" (255). He continues, by explaining that the second function of racism is allowing the killing or death of the 'inferior' race because it not only "guarantees my safety; the death of the other, the death of the bad race, of the inferior race (or degenerate, or the abnormal) is something that will make life in general healthier: healthier and purer" (255). Basically, racism is a state-sponsored and supported activity that makes it appropriate to let die, kill off, or segregate from the general population those who are viewed as a threat to the

community's health. In Chicago and Oak Park this plays out through residential segregation. In other words, segregation, as opposed to direct murder, is being used to protect the 'purity' of a community. A large part of the fear regarding black in-migration in Oak Park was related to the idea that blacks would disrupt safety and increase crime within the village's limits.

The connection between diversity, an absence of bigotry, and exceptionalism in Oak Park demonstrates that diversity is not entirely sought out of some belief in the intrinsic value of an inclusive community; instead the focus is put on diversity as a way of protecting and creating value. As Vanek and Rudy's stories earlier in this chapter demonstrate, the value of property in the village increased after it became racially inclusive. In addition, the village currently has to work to keep spaces for poorer residents because of the post-integration increases in property value. If increasing property values and the avoidance of wholesale white flight are appropriate metrics for judging the village's success, then Oak Park's experiment can be considered a complete success. However, this success draws further attention to the way that diversity operates within the village limits, which is as a form of currency that can be used to enhance all aspects of the community.

N. **Diversity and Real Estate**

In a chapter titled "The Quest for Racial and Economic Diversity," Sokol outlines Oak Park's attempt to actively integrate its neighborhood while protecting property values and attracting local businesses. If nothing else, it is very telling that this chapter, as well as the development of the village, sees a direct link between racial diversity, economic diversity, and the health of the community. In many ways, this also reflects the sentiments that are expressed in the contemporary era by both the HPAC and the explicit goals of the Housing Programs Office. This connection between wealth and diversity is what has made the village's attempts at

managed diversity able to last without the whites the community depends on leaving. This again recalls Latour's discussion of the theater of proof; even if members of the community want a segregated community, they are unlikely to voice their anti-diversity stance because they do not want to argue against their own rising property values.

As Sokol explains, "one of the major fears in an integrating community was that real estate values would drop with blacks moving in, many people whose nearly entire financial stake was in their homes were the most frightened" (142). However, Village Hall removed this fear by instituting the Equity Assurance Program,³⁴ which offered to pay up to 80% of a homes appraised value if property values ever fell because of integration. Early on Village Hall recognized that the fears of whites were tied to their wallet and once the fears were alleviated to even a moderate extent, the village would be free to continue its experiment in integration. The mere offering of financial support to homeowners was a strong enough gesture that very few ever enrolled in the program and not one claim was ever made. "The program, like many others, was just one—but a key—strategy to calm fears, give peaceful integration a chance and limit white flight" (142). Once diversity was actively linked to wealth as opposed to the commonly held belief in the loss of wealth, it became very difficult for village residents to make an argument against the village's form of diversity without appearing to be of the same stock as the bigots who left of their own accord during the 60s and 70s. The generation of wealth is almost impossible to present as a negative and this protects the village government's focus on diversity from commonplace critiques against integration and expanded diversity initiatives.

³⁴ See chapter III for a more detailed description of this program.

O. **Diversity as Currency**

This concept of diversity as currency and the role managed integration plays in cultivating this currency was highlighted at the April 18th, 2012 HPAC meeting. At this meeting four property-owning members of the community came to present their reasons for wanting to receive village grants for their properties. The way that the property owners spoke about their needs, how they manage their properties, and how they planned to use the funds provided a different version of the narrative and commitment to diversity that Village Hall purports. These property owners all provided an unfiltered sense of the financial stakes and benefits of committing to diversity. Although all of the regular meetings are open to the public, it is rare for members of the public to attend, so their presence was immediately noted in the small room where HPAC meetings take place.

Once the meeting was called to order, the chair announced that the property owners would each have three minutes to make comments related to their grant applications, after which, members of the committee would ask questions if they had any. The first to speak was an older gentleman who introduced himself by giving the address of his property (something that many residents of Oak Park do on a regular basis at these kinds of meetings and in general conversation). He explained that he owned his building for 35 years and even joked that he was not smart enough to purchase more properties. His building was near Ridgeland, but on the southern end. He said that he had worked with the Housing Center ... and the HPAC before when it came to affirmative marketing and the rental reimbursement program. He said that his building has been pretty diverse except for two times: 10 years ago when it was “majority minority” and 2 years ago when minority presence slipped to 80% (it should have been below 50% in-line with village goals). He was there to support his current application, to “put a face to

the name,” and mentioned that things had always worked well with him and HPAC and that he saw their help in keeping his building diverse as foundational for protecting the value of his property. He said that his building was the last man standing in a sea of condos and conversions. He said that he and his wife would have given up the property and all the work it required if it wasn’t for the help of the HPAC, Hosing Programs, and the Housing Center and that he liked doing his part to help Oak Park.

The next owner was another man, who mentioned his role as the former HPAC chair, with several members smiling knowingly. He said his property was a foreclosure that he would not have been able to afford under other circumstances, but that the mortgage was still too much for them when considering the needed repairs. He said that he and his wife instantly jumped into making building repairs that the original owner was unable to do (new roof and boiler). He also mirrored the joy of working with the Housing Center saying that his building was very diverse “We have a black family, Latino family, an Asian...” but that he was close to Ridgeland and even though not on the Austin Corridor, there were still people who did not want to move that far east in town. He also said that while their structural repairs they did to the building protect the property, they did not help him to collect rent. The rental program (where the village reimburses 80% of rent for places that are trying affirmative marketing) has helped with some of his problems renting the building, but that these newer and younger residents want things that they can get in the city, like dishwashers and granite countertops that are not common in older buildings in Oak Park.

P. **Diverse Goals**

For the landlords, like the two above, diversity is a way of either profiting from their property or ensuring its financial security. By agreeing to the village’s diversity initiatives, the

homeowners receive financial support during lulls in renting, assistance with marketing, fill their properties with pre-screened tenants who are more likely to pay rent consistently, and become eligible for grants that can be used to fix up properties in ways that are meant to foster increased interest in rental. Property owners are even encouraged to make cosmetic changes that will keep the buildings in competition with some of the nicer units offered in other suburban communities, newer condos turned into rental units within Oak Park, and the fancier apartments found in Chicago, which adds increased value to the properties in case of resale and attracts financially stable tenants.

After the property owners left the meeting, which each did after their short presentation and question and answer session, the group began its discussion of the actual program and how their goals often differ from those of the property owners. The Housing Programs Office manager, Tammie Grossman, explained that when they had distributed satisfaction surveys to past participants, the participants explained that they liked everything about the program but wanted larger grants and more funding opportunities. She noted that the surveys highlighted a disconnect between the property owners and Village Hall because the goal of the village is integration and keeping Oak Park diverse, which is not always the goal of the property owners and explaining the difference is often difficult because of the shift in perspective between property ownership and village management. Basically, the village and the homeowner's goals differ because the two groups have separate understandings of wealth. The village government is interested in attracting the kind of people to the village who will support an inclusive environment so that the overall value of the community increases, the tax base is stable, and the population remains stable. While the homeowners are interested in making money off their property and view diversity as a way of ensuring that they can continue to pay their mortgages or

fund their retirements without having to worry about losing their large investments. In almost every aspect, a commitment to diversity initiatives is an economic investment with a high rate of return for property owners and the village government. Through this entire process, neither group is actually required to share their understandings nor disagreements with integration or diversity because they recognize the financial benefits and the plastic nature of diversity as discourse throughout the community.

This connection between diversity and wealth can be seen as a deviation from Du Bois' understanding of psychological wages, the "public deference and titles of courtesy" given to whites because they are white, since people of color are now tied into white wealth in a way that is not entirely based on subjugation (Du Bois 700)³⁵. Oak Park offers up a difference, as explained previously whites in Oak Park are allowed to believe themselves to be exceptional because of their ability to tolerate and share a community with exceptional blacks. Instead of ignoring the black community in the news, the April 4th, 2012 issue of the *Wednesday Journal* had an article that discussed how Oak Park's integrationist spirit changed the destiny of one black family and cemented Oak Park's future as an inclusive village. In this case, diversity transforms the psychological wages lost through proximity to blacks by creating a situation where whites can benefit financially from blacks who they understand as worthy of living in the community and continuing to believe in the exceptionalism of their community. By creating an inclusive community, the whites in Oak Park are able to move from intangible psychological wages founded on race to social capital stemming from being a part of Oak Park, and even into

³⁵ Du Bois continues by explaining that "The newspapers specialized on news that flattered the poor whites and almost utterly ignored the Negro except in crime and ridicule" (701); ignoring the black community is an important part of psychological wages because it allows whites to keep their distance, when not physically at least mentally, from having to interact with or think anything serious about blacks.

tangible, monetary wealth built from property ownership, diversity, and black and white housing needs.

Additionally, Cheryl Harris, in her article “Whiteness as Property,” explains that “The origins of property rights in the United States are rooted in racial domination. Even in the early years of the country, it was not the concept of race alone that operated to oppress blacks and Indians; rather, it was the interaction between conceptions of race and property which played a critical role in establishing racial and economic subordination” (277).³⁶ Oak Park once again makes a deviation from this model because blacks, while still tied to property and property values, cannot be viewed specifically as property. The financial value of diversity in Oak Park is directly tied into the idea that blacks choose to live in the area, that the property owners are not forcing them to live in an area, but are instead actively courting them to become a part of the community. With government oversight ensuring that the property owners are not operating their properties as slumlords because of the negative impact that would have on the village’s conception of exceptionalism and diversity, which would also damage the village’s financial base. Blacks are no longer property on their own, but something that adds value to property because they can be used to enhance the market and the attractiveness of the community.

The next, and final chapter, will take up more of the problems created by Oak Park's approach to framing diversity as an economic value. Specifically, I will examine the fallout from the HOPE Fair Housing test that the village landlords failed in 2013 and the final Envision Oak Park report generated by Houseal Lavinge Associates. Both of these examples will be used to

³⁶ She continues by stating that “The hyperexploitation of black labor was accomplished by treating black people themselves as objects of property. Race and property were thus conflated by establishing a form of property contingent on race: only blacks were subjugated as slaves and treated as property” (278). In these passages, Harris outlines the different ways that whiteness becomes tied to property and property ownership, and blackness is tied to being property and being owned. In this sense, the value of the black community is specifically that they can work and that they can be housed in inexpensive and subpar housing away from the white community.

demonstrate that despite many successes with integration, many of the village's continued problems with diversity are tied to the lack of interest understanding and challenging the discursive history of both integration and suburban spaces.

CHAPTER VI: FAILURE

A. **Introduction**

When Oak Park's government speaks about diversity and the village, it is always working to promote the image of the village and its community as continually at the forefront of integration. Village Hall's discourse of integration is used to cultivate a population that will continue to support its programs and create a stable tax base. In addition, the relationship to the national and historical rhetorics of integration helps to associate Oak Park with positivity in the mind of residents. HOPE Fair Housing, charged with conducting housing discrimination testing in Oak Park, seems to share the same positive sentiment, which is expressed in the opening of their "Report for the Village of Oak Park" dated January 23, 2014. HOPE explains that:

As it did in the 60s and 70s when it actively promoted integrated neighborhoods and established its Housing Center, Oak Park is again in the forefront of promoting fair housing by assessing discrimination in its housing market. Few if any cities or municipalities undertake this proactive self-testing unless pursuant to a settlement agreement or court order. This agreement between HOPE and Oak Park addressed the commitment made by the Village to Affirmatively Further Fair Housing through the specific activity of having fair housing testing conducted and is a testament to Oak Park's ongoing commitment to confront any housing discrimination in a robust manner (HOPE 4).

High praise coming from an organization that has a "nationally recognized reputation as a premier fair housing organization" with roots going back to Martin Luther King Jr.'s marches in Chicago (Board Meeting 2-18-2014). Unfortunately, for the village, HOPE's praise is used as a

preface for the discovery of discrimination against minorities and persons with disabilities in Oak Park's rental market.

Despite all the work put into intervening in segregation and housing market discrimination and fear mongering, why is Oak Park, which has been working on this problem for over 40 years, still unable to achieve completely stable racial integration, or at the very least, pass a housing discrimination test? The answer lies in the discourses, practices, and various, often disconnected, actors who all play a role in segregation and desegregation.

As Massey and Denton explain, "the techniques of intervention in housing segregation vary depending on the setting, but all essentially work to maintain blacks as a minority" (226). This means that integrationist practices are not about challenging the systems that allow segregation to exist, but instead working to ensure the comfort of white homeowners. Integrationist practices, like those used and refined in Oak Park, often manage and distribute blacks or other minorities throughout the communities in a way that is not only beneficial for white homeowners, but also visually appealing. In other words, blacks are encouraged or prompted to distribute themselves in a way that never creates pockets of darkness that could instill fear in white residents and lower property values as a result; the Oak Park method is not about challenging the discourses that allow segregation and discrimination to exist in the first place.

Chapter V focused on the development of Oak Park's discourse and definition of diversity through governmental policy development and action as well as a few spaces where the government driven emphasis on diversity comes into conflict and contradiction with the larger community's post racial mindset. Following from the same ideas, this chapter will focus on the public disclosure of Oak Park's failed housing discrimination testing in February 2014 and how

Village Hall responded to the problem while also trying to positively spin the results of the housing test. The analysis of the failed housing testing will take place in three parts: first, a description of the events leading up to the failed housing test and its aftermath; second, a rhetorical analysis of the way village officials attempt to both respond to the failed housing test while also attempting to present the community as unique and well-intentioned; and finally, this chapter will examine how the failure of the test and the response to it are related to the way that truth, race, and authenticity are produced in Oak Park. The examination of truth, race, and authenticity tie into the chapter's overarching argument that despite the focus on diversity and equity the village holds as a central tenant, Village Hall's policies and approaches to integration are the main reason village landlords failed the housing test. In other words, the village failed its housing test because of the way Oak Park's government manages diversity through the use of reformatting racism, discrimination, and economic benefits as a motivational factor. The chapter concludes with an examination of Oak Park's completed comprehensive plan and how the comprehensive plan is likely to reproduce the same discourses that have led to the current problems with housing discrimination in Oak Park.

B. A Complicated Response

Two weeks before the housing discrimination test results were fully presented to the public, the Wednesday February 5th issue of the *Wednesday Journal* reran a story from April 30th, 2008 about Oak Park's early work toward integration. Titled "Our *finest* decade: The Oak Park integration story," the reprinting of the story, on the very first Wednesday in Black History month, seemed like the community patting itself on the back for its integrated space and past achievements. Working from a variation of the argument that downplays the role of Village Hall in shaping integration, the article presents the development of integration in Oak Park as a

combination of some resident/activists desire to move away from racial segregation while also forcing Village Hall to take action that would be supportive of the community integrating. For instance, the article explains that the village's first "diversity statement" was based on an ad released by community members who wanted Oak Park to integrate in 1964. The ad read:

We, the undersigned residents of Oak Park and River Forest, believing in the essential oneness of humankind, and seeking to foster such unity in our communities, do hereby declare:

That we want residence in our Villages to be open to anyone interested in sharing our benefits and responsibilities, regardless of race, color, creed, or national origin;

That we believe in equal opportunity for all in the fields of education, business, and the professions, in harmony with constitutional guarantees of equal rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness;

That mutual understanding between people of diverse ethnic, racial and religious backgrounds can best be attained by an attitude of reciprocal good will and increased association;

That all citizens, in a spirit of justice, dignity and kindness, should give serious consideration to the challenge that now faces all Americans in the achievement of brotherhood under God. (Trainor "Our Finest" 30)

While the citizens' 'diversity statement' and Village Hall's 'Statement for Maintaining Diversity' are similar and the statement for maintaining diversity was based on the work of community activists, the framing in the *Wednesday Journal* suggests that it was a simple matter of making some changes to the ad and creating an overarching community policy. Of course, as

has been the subject of this entire project, the work to integrate was far more complicated than simply rephrasing the desires of some residents.

Continuing from the interpretation of Oak Park's history that suggests residents were behind the heavy lifting of integration, the article situates most of the groundwork for integration during the 1960s when the white residents were more active than the government (and when the village was still 99% white), it presents integration as the work of visionary residents who could see through the problems of discrimination and segregation. The emphasis is put on the special residents who provided the original DNA that makes Oak Park what it is today (Trainor 30-31). As discussed in chapters III and V, while this story presents a truth, it misses how governmental action was necessary for shifting the interpretation of discrimination and residents who were for continued segregation or white flight into a representation of what was both undesirable and detrimental to the community. Still, the version of Oak Park's integration presented by the newspaper is useful because it provides an understanding of why even an esteemed organization, such as HOPE Fair Housing, would need to preface a report discovering discrimination in Oak Park with praise for the community and its past achievements. Integration and anti-discrimination are seen as so foundational to the state of the community and its residents that if HOPE did not display its knowledge of the community's achievements and what makes Oak Park unique, they risked having their results dismissed by the larger community (which happened in some of the public response anyway). Essentially, praising the community is seen as a way of understanding the uniqueness of the village and helps to lend credibility to the negative results, even if they are still critiqued by some members of the community (Ruby 21).

Not long after the reprinting of "Our *finest* decade" and a series of self-congratulatory themed civil rights presentations and exhibits in the Oak Park Public Library and throughout the

community, the *Wednesday Journal* published another article titled, “OP flunks rental housing discrimination test. Study: African Americans and disabled not receiving fair treatment” (Inklebarger 1). The title, emblazoned across the front page probably shocked Oak Parkers into, not only buying additional copies of the paper, but also thinking about the state of discrimination and diversity in the village. Even the article’s first sentence, appears designed to expose the community’s hidden contradictions, and states “Despite Oak Park’s reputation as among the ‘few truly integrated communities in the Chicago metro area,’ a new report commissioned by the village government shows a ‘startling’ level of discrimination in the village’s rental housing market against racial minorities and people with disabilities” (1). The rest of the article documents the reasoning for the testing, the methods,³⁷ and the exact problems found, but the main point, is evidenced in the article’s second half when Village Trustee Glenn Brewer asks, “Are we who we think we are?” (11). In other words, is Oak Park the liberal, open, and diverse community Village Hall promotes and many residents believe to be true? A better question and one I will examine during the latter parts of this chapter is: are the problems with segregation demonstrating that Oak Park’s community is not what it wants to believe itself to be or are the problems a byproduct of the white-liberal ideals of the community? Essentially, this question is examining the truth regimes and relationships of power behind creating a situation where the community is able to believe itself to have solved the race problem while problems with race continually exist on the periphery of the mainstream. In short, such problems are to be expected because of the community’s inability to reconcile the racist underpinnings of suburban and

³⁷ “A fair housing audit is a survey technique designed to isolate the impact of a person’s minority status on the way she is treated when asking a landlord or real estate agent about available housing. An audit consists of successive visits to the same housing agent by two audit teammates who are equally qualified for housing but who differ in minority status. Each teammate then independently completes a detailed audit form to describe what she was told and how she was treated. An audit study, which consists of a sample of audits, makes it possible to isolate discrimination, which exists whenever, according to the information on the survey forms, housing agents systematically treat minority auditors less favorably than their white teammates” (Yinger 21-22)

integrationist attitudes and the idyllic projections of white-liberals that depend and are formed from racist ideas and practices.

Alongside the article, were two interesting pieces, one political commentary, from *Wednesday Journal* publisher Dan Haley, on the work that the village has done and needs to do: “it feels clear that we have deluded ourselves with our well wishes and our yellowing press clippings about our exceptionalism in fostering integration” (Haley 5). This quote is especially interesting because the *Wednesday Journal* with the publication of works like “Our *finest* decade” is a part of creating the ‘delusion’ and a continuous stream of yellowing press clippings, but still correctly hits on the idea that Oak Park has been coasting on the accomplishments of its past, especially since the community has remained ahead of other local communities, because many have not tried to combat segregation. Another is an opinion piece from Rob Breymaier, Executive Director of the Oak Park Regional Housing Center and member of the Citizens Involvement Commission, who explains, “among the handful of similarly diverse communities in the region, Oak Park is the most racially integrated. This achievement would not be possible if discrimination was common in Oak Park” (Breymaier 24), as a way of respecting the test and also supporting the work of his organization. Of course, there does not need to be an absence of discrimination for Oak Park to enjoy racial integration. There only needs to be an absence of intense white fear of residents of color. Still, other members of the community seemed to follow Breymaier’s logic and on February 26th, there was a full page ad, calling back to the 1964 ad outlined in “Our *finest* decade,” signed by members of Oak Park’s property owning, reality, and housing community stating their support, and the support of their organizations, for fair housing in Oak Park.

On February 18th, one day before the *Wednesday Journal* article, at the bi-weekly Board of Trustees' meeting, the board moved to hear the findings from the HOPE report. This began by having Tammie Grossman, newly promoted to Director of Community and Economic Development, explain the rationale for the testing and the reasoning behind choosing HOPE fair housing center to do the testing. The test began when HUD asked the village to complete an analysis of impediments to fair housing in 2010. After completing the study, HOPE was asked to do the testing because they served the local area and had a strong reputation. As a way of supporting the decision to use HOPE and support the findings, Grossman went on to explain that HOPE's "founder Bernie Kleina actually was a photographer with Martin Luther King and did a number of beautiful photographs of Martin Luther King when he was working here in Chicago on fair housing, so they have a very long and storied history with fair housing" (Village Board of Trustees). In what seemed to be an additional way of blunting the findings and bolstering the image of the community, Grossman concluded her introduction by explaining that HUD recently changed its regulations for fair housing and Community Block Development grant funding. She explained that this meant there was a possibility that similar testing would become a national requirement, and since, "very few communities had engaged in this testing," Oak Park's attention to fair housing testing puts the village in a good position for maintaining a consistent stream of federal funding and being on top of similar issues in the future. Finally, Grossman concluded by explaining, "while the testing results ... are troubling, I think we're in a good position to really think strategically about how we address what activities we engage in and then hopefully if we were to have testing done in a couple years, the results would be more uplifting" (Village Board of Trustees).

When Anne Houghtaling, Executive Director of HOPE, began speaking, she advised the board to avoid publicly naming offenders, except for one property owner who was especially cruel to a person with a disability, for fear that all the blame would be heaped upon them. By focusing blame on only specific property owners, Houghtaling warned that aside from the initial response to punishments being doled, the general response might end up being inactivity in the rest of the village because the unpunished landlords would feel safe since they were not caught. Instead, she suggested that the solution should be education and training for those who were creating impediments to fair housing.³⁸ She also explained that regardless of continued funding from the village, HOPE would return at some point after education had taken place and do another round of testing with a focus on enforcement if there continued to be problems with fair housing compliance. After Houghtaling finished, public comment was invited and two members of the public spoke. First was Cathy Yen, representing those who deal with property management for the Oak Park River Forest Chamber of Commerce. She said that the Chamber-members were “outraged” and “troubled” by the findings of the report. She suggested that the members of her group cooperate with the village, its laws, and have “systems in place” to ensure everyone receives fair treatment. The members of her group also see discrimination as “bad business.” The second public speaker was Rob Breymaier, Executive Director of the Oak Park Regional Housing Center, who also discussed the way that his organization is committed to fair housing, Oak Park’s commitment to diversity, and the recent testing.

With the introductory statements concluded and public comment heard, the board then moved on to make their own statements about the situation. Their conversation lasted nearly an

³⁸ In July 2014, HOPE would go on to file “administrative complaints against six property management companies in Oak Park.” The complaints “[included] one involving discrimination based on race, one against a hearing-impaired applicant and four so-called reasonable accommodation request denials of applicants with a disability.” While there were other cases, complaints were not filed because the discrimination was “more subtle” (Inkelbarger).

hour as they moved between shock at the results of the report, personal narratives about encounters with discrimination, and the desire for Village Hall to deliver a more streamlined version of housing services that would be able to better combat discrimination in the village. By the end of the meeting though, the original excitement, surprise, and tension gave way for the creation of another commission that would provide suggestions, at a much later date, about how the board should best respond to the results of the HOPE report.

As some of the trustees spoke, they revealed their own personal stakes and approaches to managing discrimination in the village. One Trustee, Peter Barber, who described himself as “a black man, at age 54” detailed an encounter he had with some racists in Chicago and stated repeatedly his desire to see troublemakers named and punished. Another Trustee, Adam Salzman, said that he did not want to just see debates about policy because “we have the policies, we just aren’t enforcing them and we’re not executing them,” instead, he wanted to see more enforcement, which meant using the “law department and our court system” (Village Board of Trustees). Interestingly, he called back to the village’s economic incentives for creating integration by explaining that:

When you have violations of federal law and local law, you need to have an enforcement mechanism with teeth. And I think what we have, and what this report has uncovered, is that we have delinquent property owners that are making decisions to break the law because they believe it’s in their economic interest. The only way to communicate that it’s not in their economic interest is to make them incur some serious legal fees; that will cause those discriminatory practices to become more costly³⁹. (Village Board of Trustees)

³⁹ Supporting Salzman’s assertion, Rolf Pendall explains that “When the housing supply is tight and rentals scarce, a landlord or a real estate agent can turn away African Americans and Hispanics because the landlord or agent may be

Salzman's economic solution, while glossed over at the meeting, is completely in-line with the grants, zero interest loans, mortgage equity assurance program, and other funding sources offered to property owners who agree to participate in the village's affirmative marketing and anti-discrimination practices. Despite some of their ideas, the structure of the meeting suggested that the trustees were only speaking out of tradition or habit, and the real decisions would be suggested by the Village President.

When Village President Anan Abu-Taleb, a stout, balding man, spoke in his often meandering style, he chose to begin positively, framing Oak Park as a community that is trying its best, and doing more than others, even if it falls short at times. "In my view, we're not an A+ student, but I don't think that anyone would argue that we haven't been working hard. And I don't think that anyone would argue that we have a solid G.P.A. that pretty much can get us into the colleges of our choice." Like many who spoke at this meeting before him, once his positive statements about the community in general were over, he quickly transitioned into a more aggressive series of statements. Speaking to Grossman, he explained and questioned, stating, "...it seems to me that for some people, this is not a surprise. If it's not, why isn't it?" He continued:

If this were a business situation with such an embarrassing outcome, someone would get fired... and this is what really bothers me, having six different housing agencies... it makes it very difficult to hold someone accountable...I agree about enforcement, but to enforce you need to have someone accountable, and I don't

confident that a White non-Hispanic household will eventually rent or buy the unit" (127). As financial benefits go up, discrimination increases, so finding a way to make discrimination more expensive could work as a countermeasure.

know who to say “Okay, you’re fired because you have not lived up to our values; we need someone else to do this.” (Village Board of Trustees)

At first, he seems to display a real desire to shake things up in the village, to maybe even consolidate, to force those who have been resting to do something, anything, to help the village avoid the problems that many in the community believe should be in the past. Even so, surprisingly, he continued to clarify his statements directly asking Grossman who, specifically, she would fire:

I would like to know, and you don’t have to name names for me, if I say to you by tomorrow “fire the person in our village that should be accountable for this,” do you have somebody in mind? And if you don’t, why don’t you? You don’t have to answer that question right now, but I want you to be thinking about it. (Village Board of Trustees)

With Grossman looking relieved that she did not need to answer a question that was well outside of her official job duties, Taleb continued:

To me, I think where we are going with our village and with our board is we want to have accountability and until we divide the responsibility and until we divide that in such a way that it is tangible, that we know who it is, we can’t figure it out, we’re going to have conversations. I’m totally in agreement with what trustee Tucker said, forming that committee, from the people of Oak Park who have nothing to do with the housing authority...go out there investigate what they’re doing and how their doing it, study that, come back to us with a certain time in mind...we follow this process that district 200 had done...in a way that allows us

to make a decision that we can live with for a long time. (Village Board of Trustees)

Despite the apparent anger, and Taleb's suggestion that, "the time has come that we revisit these policies that we've put in place 50 years ago, or how many years ago, revisit these institutions and see if we should continue to fund them or not, because if we count on the CDBG...we get one and half-million dollars, so there is a financial outcome...I think that we need to follow the money and follow where things are being done" (Village Board of Trustees). And despite the suggestion that there would be some major overhaul or change in approach to the way Village Hall handles housing discrimination, the result was just more of what Oak Park has always done: create commissions to discuss problems and provide proposals for board approval. This is not to suggest that there is something wrong with that model, but in some cases a swifter response, like that suggested by Salzman, might lead to a stronger impact in the community. This goes back to one of the points I made at the beginning of the chapter: namely, Oak Park is not really about challenging the underlying problems of its community, just trying to work on them in the least disruptive way possible. This failed housing test provided a chance for Village Hall to work on changing residents' behavioral patterns, like it did during the 70s, and begin again to shift some of the community's discourse about race, diversity, and integration. Using the failed housing test as a catalyst, this meeting could have been a chance for the board to challenge the very policies that allow Village Hall to function, but the decision was made instead to continue playing it safe, to offer the community and residents more of the same. While this response did not lead to any major uprising or harsh backlash, some members of the journalistic community noted it and responded with mild frustration.

Taleb was criticized in the *Wednesday Journal* for asking Grossman, who is not the Village Manager, who should be fired for a failure to manage discrimination in the village (“Right tone. Wrong Tone” 21). The decision to create another commission to deal with discrimination was also mocked in “Shrubtown” a political cartoon, which shows several shots of Taleb going from excited to depressed stating, in a series of speech bubbles:

Oak Park has half a dozen departments, commissions, and organizations that are supposed to prevent discrimination in housing ... yet apparently they are all failing. That’s why we need to create a new entity to sort out the problems with all the old entities...and they’ll hold hearings...and they’ll make recommendations and maybe we’ll hire an outside consultant and we’ll look like we’re doing something and by then, we’ll all be out of office. (Stopeck 23)

The cartoon hits on the idea that Village Hall's most successful use of village commissions and committees has been creating the appearance of work and progress while actually just pushing off problems until a later date, something which the cartoon assumes the new commission would emulate. This commission, the Fair Housing Taskforce, made up of village trustees, regular citizens, and those from various housing groups, met for the first time on March 4th, 2014 and set a tentative completion date of October 31st, 2014 for their recommendations to the board of trustees. Their recommendations are expected to focus on education and training, testing and enforcement, and structural reorganization. Their first public finding was that reducing the Community Relations Department, tasked with routing out and enforcing sanctions against discrimination, to a single employee might be one cause of the village’s problems with housing discrimination (Fullerton 10, Inklebarger 15).

At the monthly HPAC meeting the night after the board meeting, February 19th, committee members expressed the same shock, disgust, and confusion as village officials quoted throughout the *Wednesday Journal* and the previous night's board meeting. Everyone seemed surprised that the residents and property owners of Oak Park could be capable of discrimination. The only real surprise in this situation was that the community members responsible for overseeing the village's housing initiatives would be surprised by the existence of housing discrimination. Even HPAC's lead staff liaison, Grossman had admitted she was not surprised by the racial discrimination at the board meeting (Village Board of Trustees), so the group should have known that there were problems with housing discrimination. Those in HPAC are given a chance to see behind Oak Park's post-racial curtain and know that discrimination continues to exist in the village and have intimate knowledge of how village hall attempts to manage discrimination. At the very least, they should have recognized that if discrimination did not exist in the village, HPAC would not need to exist, and the village would not be continually tracking the dispersal of residents of color throughout the village. This demonstrates the same cognitive dissonance between the role of the government and how residents understand the operation of the village that was expressed in articles like "Our finest decade" and is shown by those who continue to believe that Oak Park has somehow surpassed race as an issue.

C. **The Failure of Narrative**

A part of the reason that Oak Park's officials seem so confused by this situation is a byproduct of what President Taelb calls "these policies that we've put in place 50 years ago, or how many years ago..." (Village Board of Trustees), and Haley referred to as "delusions" and "yellowing newspaper clippings" (5), namely the use of one particular narrative of Oak Park's history as a method of shaping the community through the creation of disciplinary norms

(Foucault “Society” 68, 81). Essentially, the perpetuation of narratives like those shown in “Our *finest* decade” are useful for creating the sense that the community’s history is important and marks it as different from other places, but these narratives are shaped in a way that do not fully account for what is and was actually happening in the village. For example, the most important issue that is normally glossed over in these stories is the use of financial incentives to motivate whites toward integration. By removing the role of financial interests and Village Hall in shaping the community, many fall back on the idea of Oak Park’s residents being exceptional to help explain why the village has remained integrated for so long.

Similarly when Michelle Boyd speaks of Chicago’s Bronzeville neighborhood, she outlines the way that historical narratives can be used to shape norms and bring additional revenue streams to communities. More specifically, narratives about Bronzeville’s role during the Jim Crow and Civil Rights era were used to market the neighborhood, attracting certain residents, and inviting tourism (68). Boyd explains that since Bronzeville was viewed as a low-income ghetto, redevelopers “deliberately reconstructed the neighborhood’s black history, tailoring it to the desires of potential consumers” (71). In Oak Park, the narrative of integration was used to market to liberal, middle-class whites and in Bronzeville, a very similar narrative of black resistance to racism is used to maintain a black population and resist gentrification. Despite working from different ends of the spectrum, both communities have used specific historical narratives to maintain racial balance in their communities.

In the case of Oak Park and Bronzeville, these narratives of exceptionalism, “heroism and historical significance” (Boyd 81) are used not only to redefine place, but also the meaning of race within these spaces. Much like the way the community of Oak Park was able to represent whites moving out of the village as racist ‘white flighters’ who would have been a detriment to

the community, blacks leaving Bronzeville were presented in a negative light. Middle class blacks moving from Bronzeville were presented as not only “elitist,” they were also considered “color-struck, wanting so much to imitate whites that they were blind to the richness of resources available to them in their own neighborhood” (Boyd 81). Some of them probably even moved to Oak Park. Like Oak Park, the residents of Bronzeville highlight their superiority by suggesting a commitment to race and space that those who left were unable, or too abnormal, to understand. Essentially, in both Oak Park and Bronzeville, we see the population split into two groups: those who are exceptional and understand the community’s purpose and those who do not and are a problem. The differences between the two groups are normally reinforced by historical narratives that provide purpose and meaning for both the residents and the community as a whole (Boyd 82-83).

Written works about both these communities are also used to support the narratives of exceptionalism and racial stability. For instance, Boyd explains that:

The folklore around Bronzeville is supported by one academic source, in particular: St. Clair Drake and Horace Cayton’s *Black Metropolis* is quoted and referenced constantly as providing proof of the emerging vision of the neighborhood. Most people I encountered were familiar at least with the existence of the book, and many people referred me to it when I told them about my project. (83)

Similarly, Oak Park has the often recommended academic work *Oak Park Strategy* (which no one actually reads) and several other more touristy works such as *Oak Park: Suburban Promised Land*, *Oak Park: Legendary Locals*, and *Oak Park: The Evolution of a Village*, as well as works about Ernest Hemmingway’s time in Oak Park and a comic about the history of the

village distributed by Oak Park's Visitor's Center. These works offer sources of reference and discussion about Oak Park's history as a way of reinforcing the community's narrative of exceptionalism. Even the number of published works about such a small community adds to the sense of exceptionalism.

While Oak Park's historical narrative of exceptionalism is explained in previous chapters, it was important to revisit because this narrative continually resurfaces in the community and is important for understanding the community's discourses about race, history, and integration. Oak Park's failure to pass the housing discrimination test as well as the confusion, anger surrounding the failure, and decision to create another commission to generate proposals are a byproduct of the contradiction between managed integration and diversity and the integration by exceptionalism narrative that encompasses the community.

D. **The Limitations of Oak Park's Discourse**

Taking a few steps back from narratives of exceptionalism, Oak Park's problems with continuing diversity start from commonplace discourses and understandings of race and racism. As Karen and Barbra Fields explain, race is often used as a replacement for other concepts such as racism (16). For the Fields, racism is "a social practice" that "always takes for granted the objective reality of *race*" (17), without accepting the social discourse used to create the concept of race. The Fields also outline that race is a unit of racism, a fiction created by racist discourse to suggest that humans exist in distinct groups with unique "inborn traits" that can be used to differentiate and rank groups (16). Their idea lines up with the concept of "state racism" provided by Foucault who explains that the goal of governmentally supported racism is to take a single population, divide it into at least two groups (one above and one below) with the focus put on keeping the upper race in a position of purity and power by subjecting the lower race to a

lessened quality of life (*Society* 62). In other words, the racism that the Fields and Foucault are discussing exists through the relationship of the state and the populations with which it interacts. This interaction takes place through classification, a system of discourse that is used to create a sense of natural order, allowing one group of people to benefit from the exploitation of another without needing to question the systems of knowledge and power in play. Since, the classification and the defense of racism both occur through discourse, racism becomes invisible through the use of 'race' as a tool for enforcing racism.

The common understanding of race as a shorthand for racism, underlines the discourse that exists in many communities like Oak Park. Oak Park can be engaged in a diversity project without ever needing to develop a more accurate understanding of the connection between the discourse of race and actual racism. In this way, Oak Park's failed housing test can be understood as the problem of advancing an ideological regime without fully understanding the discourse that fuels the regime. Through governance Village Hall may be able to shift public behavior, but without changing the underlying discourse and the connections between ideas, in some ways the same racist ideology is continually being re-inscribed. In other words, while making something legal or illegal may change public behavior, it does not actually shift what individuals are willing to do or what they see as right or wrong. Since their moral compass has not shifted, they will continue to make the same decisions and practice the same behaviors before a law changed as long as there is a small chance of being caught and/or minimal punishments.

The problem is that for Village Hall to manage diversity properly, it needs to have a fuller understanding of the way that racism operates through discourse and how that discourse becomes attached to different bodies. Once the discursive nature of race becomes clearer, then the results of the housing test become less surprising. Basically, Village Hall is having problems

tracking the way that race changes through discourse from an abstract idea to a narrative or history that becomes attached to a physical body and shapes its meaning. Those who discriminated may not have done so because they wanted to be cruel, instead they may have been trying to cultivate a certain image for their property and the surrounding neighborhood, something Village Hall has done as a part of its racial dispersal program. For instance, the HOPE report notes that:

In several tests, agents made comments indicating that families with children did not live in particular buildings. By stating that these apartments are for singles and couples, the agents were indicating an illegal preference or limitation based upon familial status. (HOPE 8)

This behavior could be interpreted as cruel, but it is just as likely that some of these ‘agents’ were being sincere in believing that they were benefiting the potential resident, those living in their building, and the local neighborhood. Especially, since what they were doing directly lined up with the methods the village uses to manage where certain residents move within the community. In similar ways, it is the very dispersal program, which aims to control the number of black bodies in any one area of the village, that is working against changing the discourse about race because white residents are never forced to engage with their fear of being outnumbered by black families who are simply trying to work and live in the village (Fields and Fields 17).

The Fields’ understanding of race is productive because it provides a way of understanding that the issues normally associated with or seen as a direct result of race, such as poverty, discrimination, and segregation are actually a product of racism which attaches those issues to certain populations and not a natural, or innate, aspect of one’s race (11, 97). In Oak

Park, the very method for measuring successful integration is pure numbers. When the village, in the 1980s, had a stable 10% black population, the government declared integration an undeniable success. While true, in the purest sense, they also took this to mean that they had managed diversity as well, that they had found a solution to racism, but this simply reveals that they inscribed racism on the bodies of black residents. This means that Village Hall assumed segregation is racism, not just a tool of racism and that it was the presence of black bodies, not a change in behaviors, attitudes, and discourses of white residents and village leadership that signaled the end of racism. In this situation, the ability to create integration is placed entirely on the skin of certain residents, which suggests a fundamental, but common misunderstanding of what racism is and how it operates.

This understanding of presence bringing an end to racism can be read as ‘racecraft,’ which is the process through which racial discourse becomes real and appears physical within our world. Racecraft refers:

to the mental terrain and to pervasive belief. Like physical terrain, racecraft exists objectively; it has topographical features that Americans regularly navigate, and we cannot readily stop traversing it. Unlike physical terrain, racecraft originates not in nature but in human action and imagination; it can exist in no other way. The action and imagining are collective yet individual, day-to-day yet historical, and consequential even though nested in mundane routine. The action and imagining emerge as part of moment-to-moment practicality, that is, thinking about executing every purpose under the sun. Do not look for racecraft, therefore, only where it might be said to ‘belong.’ Finally, *Racecraft* is not a euphemistic

substitute for *racism*. It is a kind of fingerprint evidence that *racism* has been on the scene. (18-19)

In other words, by chasing race exclusively, Oak Park has missed both racism and the racecraft that makes racism invisible. As the example provided by Trustee Salzman highlights, racecraft is what makes racism seem like a purely logical economic decision devoid of consideration of race or racist behavior. Therefore, the reason Oak Park is having such a hard time tracking racism in the village is because of the almost exclusive focus on racial presence.

Racecraft can be understood as connecting to other issues within the village. In chapter V, I discuss the connection between Foucauldian race and Oak Park, specifically, the way that Village Hall's campaign to cultivate a body of residents was essentially a way of creating Oak Park residents as their own race. The idea of Oak Park residents as their own race can be further complicated by examining what John L. Jackson calls racial sincerity and racial authenticity. Jackson explains that racial authenticity is a kind of behavior, appearance, and location-based discourse that is communally used to objectively label individuals as belonging to a certain race regardless of their personal ideas or concerns. Racial sincerity, on the other hand, is defined by the individual through his or her internal discourse. Sincerity is based on how one chooses to communicate and express his or her understanding of race with others, not what those looking in from outside might choose to label an individual (Jackson 13 – 15). In Oak Park, there seems to be confusion over the difference between those sincerely committed to diversity and those who are authentically committed. This confusion is a byproduct of Oak Park's value centered approach to integration, vague understanding of what diversity, race, and racism actually mean, and the way that the village government divided the population into those normal residents for integration and those abnormal and dangerous residents against integration.

Essentially, racial authenticity (being a member of the good race) in Oak Park is attributed to supporting the government's diversity regime through moving into the village, remaining in the village, and avoiding public displays of discriminatory behavior. Sincerity never comes into question because it would be impossible for the governing body to determine what a resident is truly thinking or feeling, and an effective governing body would only be concerned with disciplinary compliance anyway. In the 1970s white home and property owners were given a financial incentive to integrate, which created the current situation in at least two unique ways. First, no one was told that they needed to change the way that they thought about integration, only asked to recognize the financial benefits. Essentially, as the example of home value insurance shows (Sokol 142), integration was presented as just another in a long list of choices that a homeowner might make to protect his or her investment. Second, by tying integration to economic value and authenticity, there was no need to challenge the commonplace discourses about race and racism. Commonplace discourse and practices were allowed to remain the same because they did not appear to have much or anything to do with integration and economic investment. As long as the behavioral pattern of white flight could be managed, there did not appear to be any need to change or even notice the underlying discourses. Being given a set way to appear authentically interested in diversity and integration, by not being too racist in public, by committing to home ownership, and by supporting the village government's system of integration did a lot of work for Village Hall and the community, but it is also a part of Oak Park's current limitations.

Oak Park's largest limitation is the inability for the village to unpack whiteness as a legal apparatus (Harris 277). While the village is interested in integration, it continues to focus on this issue in a way that is assumed to bring benefits to white residents. In other words, Oak Park is

not a multi-cultural community as much as it is a white community that has allowed people of color to move in. This unconscious focus on what has benefited whites is partially due to the minor shifts in leadership after Jim Crow. In Oak Park and throughout the country, those who ran communities during Jim Crow usually retained their leadership positions, which meant that even if they publicly changed their views, they were still in charge of making decisions that would benefit whites. This situation is further complicated with the understanding that whiteness is more than just a label of one's race, it is also a type of property or currency that is used to ensure that good communities focus on white needs and interests (Peller 132). Specifically, "whiteness—the right to white identity as embraced by the law—is property if by 'property' one means all of a person's legal rights" (Harris 280). Most of Oak Park's original push to integrate focused on those who owned property and those people were, at one point, only white, but when the village continued to integrate it was not just physical property that continued to shape governmentality, but also the abstract property of whiteness that granted the ability for specific voices, concerns, and needs to be heard above others.

Without dismantling whiteness's value as property, whites were given not just the added benefit of increased economic wealth, but also "a whole set of public and private privileges that materially and permanently guaranteed basic subsistence needs and, therefore, survival" (Harris 277). This ensured that while allowing blacks into the community gave them the same financial benefits of homeownership, it also locked them out of the total benefits of being a white resident in Oak Park because the benefits of homeownership did not stack on top of the already valuable property of whiteness. This not only helped to reinforce the subordination of the black community in Oak Park behind the needs of white members of the village, it also gave whites an

additional tool above whiteness that could be used to fulfill their “will and exercise power” within the community and the government (Harris 281, 282).

Oak Park’s problems with continuing discrimination are intrinsic to the way that integrated spaces operate. Gary Peller, when speaking about integrating law schools, explains that one of integration’s failures is that it submits very few, if any, challenges to the systems and criteria that “defined the ‘standards’ during the period of explicit racism [and] continue to be used, as long as they cannot be linked ‘directly’ to racial factors” (132). This means that the very limitation of integration is that it relies on a non-integrated or cross-cultural definition of what is going to be considered normal within the community. On the surface it appears that integration is working to balance out the wrongs of racism and discrimination, but instead integrationism understands progress to be other races assimilating into white spaces. This happens because the mainstream white culture is so ubiquitous that it appears aracial or culturally neutral and is often presented without “consideration of the racial implications of the institutional practices of ‘integrated’ arenas of social life” (139, 150-151). In other words, the weakness of integrationist discourse is that it ignores the existence of other discourses that might provide an alternative way of constructing shared spaces. These very ideas are in play when considering the types of social events offered and allowed within the village, and the problems with the racial achievement gap faced by the school system.

While not unique to Oak Park, the problems with racial disparities in the Oak Park school districts are frequently seen as one of the village’s biggest failures. Oak Park’s school system is made up of two distinct school districts: District 97 which handles education until the 8th grade and includes eight elementary schools and two middle schools both named after local famous black individuals (Percy Julian and Gwendolyn Brooks) and District 200, which shares

responsibility for Oak Park River Forest High School with neighboring town River Forest (Oak Park Elementary; Oak Park and River Forest High School). The problems with both school districts are extensive, but also very common for schools across the country. For instance, both districts struggle with the ‘racial achievement gap’ and have set up programs, such as ‘Rising Readers’ to help close gaps within basic reading skills (Casey 18). There are also groups like APPLE (African American Parents for Purposeful Leadership in Education) that gather parents to rally for the support of black students and black culture in the school and curriculum (Dean “Parents” 18). The school districts also continually evaluate initiatives to refocus on supporting minority students and close the achievement gap before students graduate by “drill[ing] deeper into what role race plays in impacting students’ varied experiences at the high school” (Dean “District 200” 16). While these problems appear to be attached to the failings of the community, they are more accurately tied to the limitations of Oak Park’s race discourse and reliance on the integrationist framework.

These limitations are especially poignant when tied to schools, which are breeding grounds for the types of discourses that come from the communities in which they are placed and the ideologies that went into each school’s planning. For instance, speaking about children’s sexuality in schools during the 1800s, Foucault explains, “one can have the impression that sex was hardly spoken of at all”; however, a deeper inspection shows that the opposite is true (Foucault *History* 27). Instead of being openly spoken about, the management of young boys’ sexuality was ingrained into every facet of the institutions from building organization to classroom instruction. In this way, Foucault shows that “there is no binary division to be made between what one says and what one does not say” instead the silences, and who can and cannot speak about certain topics must be understood as a part of the discourse and the way that

discourse is validated within different communities. In other words, the problems with the school are more than a reflection on the community and the school administration, they are a reflection of the ways that discourse is validated and allowed to move within the community and the schools. When the community has problems managing integration and changing the discourse to adapt with the evolution of race, then the school is both a representation of that problem and physically rooted in the time when the problems first began.

Integration, like sexuality, has had a deep history and connection with education. From the integrationist perspective, racism is caused solely by ignorance and irrationality, and their logical assumption is that educating children of different races together and allowing them space for interaction would curb ignorance and racism in later life. Additionally, providing these students with the same education would also ensure that they are equally ready to compete for jobs and spots in higher education (Peller 129 - 130). Unfortunately, the very planners for these integrated systems were unaware, or uncaring, of the role that silent discourse and validation of whiteness could even create the false dichotomy between knowledge and racism. The very people planning to create fairness and equality were actually just creating a system that valued white, middle-class culture and norms as the basis for an entire educational system. Instead of creating fairness by equally funding schools and social services in non-white neighborhoods and communities, they moved students into “historically white neighborhoods,” schools, and required students to participate in white cultural activities. The understanding was that this was the way to introduce children into the “aracial culture of quality education” and “cultural neutrality” (139-140). Unsurprisingly, since the assumption of white superiority was built into the very framework of both integration and liberal educational reform, “even where integration has been ‘successful’ it has largely meant resegregation within the walls of formally integrated

schools” and this has meant black students being tracked lower than white students and having more difficulty meeting standards and graduation (140). This is also directly mirrored both by Oak Park’s struggles with the racial achievement gap and disproportionate representation of black and minority students in special education (Dean “Special Education”). Again, these problems are all directly related to the community’s lack of nuanced racial discourse and inability to analyze critically its own history in the context of integration and white desires as the catalyst for easing the village into diversity.

E. **Theoretical Changes**

While it is extremely difficult to change the discourse of an entire community, especially when that discourse pervades the community’s layout and structures, it is still possible to theorize what a competing framework might look like. For example, the ideology of James Boggs serves as an interesting base for envisioning both race discourse and alternatives to Oak Park’s style of integration. While Boggs’ ideas are slightly out of date and rely on the mostly archaic idea of Black Nationalism, his ideas are still relevant for two reasons. First, Black Nationalism, during the 60s and 70s, offered an alternative to integrationist ideology, which caused it to be written off as dangerous, violent, and equivalent to white supremacy, but it was mostly an attempt at offering a different perspective on the racial problems of the country and its discourse (Peller 128). In essence, Black Nationalism was a both a critique of, and alternative to, the integrationist movement. Second, Boggs’s work is important in this regard because he was open to the idea that arguments needed to evolve and match the society that they came from. Most strongly in *Manifesto for a Black Revolutionary Party*, he was continually trying to tackle the meaning of ‘black power’ and the always shifting American society. In other words, Boggs explores the discursive nature of black power and the truth regimes that allow for both racism

and black power to exist. Boggs explains his understanding of how racism operated during the 1960s stating that it is the link between racism and capitalism that leads to suffering and oppression, in a manner very reminiscent of both intersectionality and Foucauldian methods (Ward 205).

Boggs points to capitalism as the culprit for ensuring that racism continues unchecked. For instance, he explains that after the civil war, blacks were legally free, but they were economically re-enslaved and Black capitalism was a failure because capitalism requires a group to exploit, like whites exploiting blacks, and blacks are not that interested in being oppressed by other blacks (Ward 208-209). This idea of capitalism always requiring an oppressed group helps to explain why Oak Park can successfully integrate statistically, but also come up short when actually completing social integration. As long as the focus is on how diversity can work to make a community more valuable, then there is little incentive to improve social institutions and create opportunities for dialogue that might actually play a role in ending racism. Also, despite the 'best' efforts of Village Hall, their dinner and dialogue program, which provides selected community members with a space to eat and talk about race and life in Oak Park is not a viable space for helping to reform racial discourse or actually solve the community's problems with discrimination (Quantock-McCarey 1, 15). At best, that program is a waste of time and money, and, at worst, an actual detriment to having productive community dialogue.

Realizing that he is relying on and changing the meaning of commonly used terms, Boggs also explains his understanding of 'revolutionary,' by stating that black politicians, despite their self-image, are not revolutionaries because they are working with and reinforcing the racist, capitalist system instead of actually doing something to discard the system and reform society (Ward 211), an idea that connects directly with Peller's analysis of integration as

reinforcing the racist aspects of society under the guise of universalism (130). What Boggs and Peller articulate is the exact set of problems that have plagued Oak Park and its recent housing test. Integration in Oak Park was always going to continue to have problems with racism and discrimination, because the housing market focused, capitalist approach is founded on discrimination and racism. In the same way that the village needed to recast racists as outsiders, it continues to do the same with its minority residents because many do not have access to the same pool of financial resources and the legal apparatus that protects whiteness and makes it the invisible standard for any suburban community (Fogelson 24). In sum, Boggs views revolutionaries as those working outside the system to create something new, and this is the exact opposite of how Oak Park has historically operated and continues to operate. The inability for residents and non-government groups to work outside of commonplace systems is a limitation of Village Hall's intense involvement and control of the movement to integrate and the continuing discourse about race and integration ever since.

Boggs not only provides a glimpse of what America looks like during the 1960s, but also explores the different discourses and political positions available. He explains that both black capitalism and black politicians are another articulation of the same racist system that has always existed. Reframing black politicians and capitalists as part of the problem explains why he envisions "Racism, like imperialism, [as] a totalitarian system for the dehumanization of one people by another, in all ways possible and by all means necessary, economically, politically, militarily, culturally, ideologically, and biologically" (Ward 227). Basically, his understanding of racism explains that blacks are trapped in a system where every move is either shut down or forced into recreating the very system that oppresses them. This can be extended beyond political actions and into general discourse, which explains the difficulty for presenting alternatives. As

the Fields, Jackson, and Harris explain, the standard conception of race is so ingrained into the racist fabric of society, that it becomes impossible to expect a nuanced understanding of how racism shapes discourse and experience from a mainstream position. Yet, it is in this difficult position that Boggs feels most comfortable setting forth his version of black power, which he considers the power of the oppressed or a revolutionary solution of the problem of a self-perpetuating system of racism. Foucault explains that racism “is quite literally, revolutionary discourse in inverted form” (*Society* 81), which suggests that Boggs’ idea, at the very least, has a chance to create balance.

The danger of a Boggs based framework is that he did not intend to stop at balance or equality; instead, Boggs argues that black power is “the power to destroy the existing system” and replace it with something new that will benefit blacks, all Americans, and the entire world (Ward 212). He explains that black power has such an expansive scope because “the black struggle in the United States has the combined force and drive of a national revolution and a social revolution” (Ward 205), which stems directly from blacks’ unique brand of racial exclusion from the system that gives them a kind of nothing to lose attitude that he sees as being the impetus for change. As Boggs sees it, the social energy contained in black power comes from blacks only having “their condition as the wretched of the earth” to lose (176). He is not setting black power in opposition to white people, but instead explaining that the suffering of the black community can be used as a force to re-envision his society. Because “black power” had been reduced to a chant during his time, but still contained social energy, Boggs borrows the energy contained within the phrase, but also mixes it with a revolutionary discourse that can be used to both communicate with a larger population on somewhat familiar discursive ground and push for a new type of society.

Building out of the idea that black power is something different from white power or integrationist ideology, which both rely on economic incentive, exploitation, and the destruction of marginal cultures, Boggs' moves in a radically different direction from typical articulations of race power. Instead of trying to put blacks at the top of the current system or limiting black power to a form of black pride, Boggs explains that the first step for black power to change the world is to offer everyone, without exception, the right to the goods that they need to live (Ward 212). Realistic or not (he does note that there would be hoarding until people truly realize that they are never going to need again) this move is important because it suggests that 'black power' is being used because of the power it channels and the social energy it can stir, not because Boggs wants to continue working along racial lines, working through capitalism, or even traditional politics. Instead, Boggs focus is changing the way that we understand the organization and discourse about value of life, literally biopolitics through a social movement lens. Boggs' framework contains traces of traditional biopolitics and governmentality, but the goal is to use their valuable points and move in an entirely new direction. Obviously, any new racial discourse or social movement is going to have to adopt a similar (consume, adapt, and evolve) perspective if it is going to break out of the pattern of repeating the same problems.

Of course, Boggs' ideas do not fit as neatly today as they did in the 60s and 70s because as Oak Park's example shows, many blacks, minorities, and the poor have been given a share of the capitalist system and access to the same resources as whites even if they receive a sub-standard version. However, following from Muckelbauer's idea of rhetorical theory being a blend of the old and the new, it is possible to take Boggs' understanding of black power as a discourse and a potential force as an agent of revolutionary change and align it with the ideas of other theorists to create something more cohesive. Potentially building out of Boggs'

understanding of black power, Cedric Johnson argues that in order “To confront contemporary inequalities within the United States and beyond, activists, workers, and citizens must build a counterpower that challenges state policies and productive relations which reproduce inequality and seeks to remake our world in a more humanistic, democratic image” (230). Like Boggs, Johnson is speaking about the creation of a movement that might contain members of a specific race, but has left behind the civil rights framework and instead is interested in mechanisms of power. This means that instead of viewing themselves as powerless or chasing power, a group of revolutionaries would work to understand what mechanisms and procedures are working to keep the contemporary racist truth regime in power (Foucault *Security* 2). Boggs points to racism and capitalism as mechanisms that control power, but the actual frameworks do not matter as long as any group is working to understand how power flows and pools before making a move that might only re-inscribe the same system.

While it is possible to imagine a group of parents, much like APPLE in Oak Park, working to ensure education reform for these students, this group would only be effective if they first moved outside of a race-based framework and also tried to understand how the system worked so that they could progress beyond ensuring that their children receive ‘a piece of the pie’ and instead actually reformat the entire educational system within their reach. The idea of an inter-racial reform coalition is very similar to the successful labor movement Moon-Kie Jung outlines in *Reworking Race* when she explains how the three different ethnic groups analyzed how the leadership was utilizing racism and fear to ensure that the three groups never gained power through cooperation. Once the groups understood what was happening, which took 20 years, they then created a new system that forced the landowners to create a more fair labor system. The laborers did this through controlling the discourse about themselves. As Jung

explains “the workers conceived an interracial, working-class ‘narrative identity,’ selectively appropriating their divergent and conflicting racial histories to create a common interracial identity” (161). Boggs explains that groups like the Hawaiian laborers were successful because they had clear ideals, goals, and disciplined leadership, which is required for any revolutionary party to become successful (Ward 221). In other words, ‘counterpower’ and revolutionary ideology are not enough, there is also a need for focus and adaptable goals. Focus and leadership will keep revolutionary groups from falling into worthless separatist ideals every time some setback is encountered (Ward 221). Controlling the discourse about both those involved in the movement and the goals goes a long way in ensuring that a revolutionary party can keep moving forward without relying on the problems of the frameworks they are trying to escape. This means the inclusion of not only a reinterpretation of history, but also the development of a more respectful discourse about the different groups, individuals, and needs involved in the movement.

For instance, Jung states that “interracialism should be conceptualized as an affirmative transformation of race that, discursively and practically, deals with and rearticulates extant racial divisions” (190). In this statement we see two things: first, racial politics do not have to lead to their own end, meaning that interracialism does not automatically spell the end of racial identity. And second, the trouble with diversity is when it is used as a pacifier for other problems, completely ignored, or not treated as a way to work on other problems and build coalitions. Bonilla-Silva explains that “the most likely route for racial change in the future is coalition politics between the various racial minority groups and progressive whites, a path that significantly reduces the chance for the emergence of an anti-white regime in the United States” (198). Whether or not it is easier to ignore race, the fact is that any serious movement or discourse is going to have to address race and there has to be a framework and language created

that goes beyond what exists or else run the risk of continuing the current system or creating a basic reversal of the system with minorities at the top and whites at the bottom, which is not actual progress. Boggs makes an attempt at this by explaining that black power must take over all the choices of the political arena if there is going to be a revolution and it must be born out of the issues that the majority of the population wants to work on and sees as limitations to their livelihood (Ward 222). In other words, a new racial framework has to become fluid discourse that floats in and out of all our societal understandings and ideals so that it cannot be avoided. This allows the current framework of racism to become visible because another visible option is always present, showing that an alternative exists. This forces change by creating a framework that shows the limits of the past and the potentials offered by a new vision.

Foucault speaks of a very similar type of system that highlights problems and works toward continually developing a new system. He first explains that he would like to work toward doing a genealogy of problems because every system or way of living generates its own set of problems and concerns. He further explains that his “point is not that everything is bad, but that everything is dangerous, which is not exactly the same as bad. If everything is dangerous, then we always have something to do. So my position leads not to apathy but to a hyper and pessimistic activism” (Foucault “Genealogy of Ethics” 256). Foucault sees admitting that no system is perfect and that every system contains some kind of danger can be productive for communities. Instead of searching for utopia, communities and people are more productive when they are working to continually change and question the commonplace systems that they rely upon.

Essentially, a new framework focused on discourse and understanding that discourse can become material, both influencing and being influenced by the world has the power to “liberate

increasing numbers of people from the illusion that the conditions under which they now live are worth protecting in view of the conditions under which they could live” (Ward 225). Both Foucault and Boggs are asking others to look away from the systems and discourses that claim the current way of living is the only way that matters, and instead challenge themselves to create a better system. Potentially even one that would include critique or skepticism as a part of its framework, which would create a way of life that demanded continual challenges to the mainstream ideologies and frameworks as a way of repeatedly improving society.

The work of Foucault and Boggs demonstrates that while we must respect the successes of the past and the contemporary worldview, it is necessary to always work toward new societal configurations. This need to work toward new societal configurations seems to be the opposite of where Oak Park is headed, which is partially confirmed by an examination of the village’s recently completed comprehensive plan. To close out this chapter and project, I will examine the way that Oak Park’s new comprehensive plan continues to operate around Village Hall’s projection of the residents and their concerns. Overall, the comprehensive plan created by the Envision Oak Park project demonstrates that Village Hall is mostly focused on continuing its plans from the past 40 years with very little deviation or revision.

F. **Conclusion: Oak Park 2030**

In September 2014, Houseal Lavigne Associates released the final version of *Envision Oak Park: A Comprehensive Plan for the Oak Park Community* for board approval and public review. The 229 page document begins with a rationale for the document and the planning process, which explains that:

Envision Oak Park: A Comprehensive Plan for the Oak Park Community

represents the collective effort of the Oak Park community to define a vision for

the future and identify the actions to be taken to realize that vision. It is both a process and a product. The initial process included an extensive public outreach program that allowed residents, businesses, agencies, not-for-profits, local governments, and other stakeholders to help draft the Plan's recommendations. The resulting product, this Envision Oak Park document, is an overarching policy guide that aims to provide context for future decision-making by Village government and other implementation partners. The adoption of this document is not the end of the planning process, but the beginning of an on-going implementation effort by the Village and community stakeholders. (Houseal Lavigne Associates 1)

Both the opening statement and the design of the document, with bright and colorful photographs of the community in the headers, are meant to inspire confidence and pride in the community. Since the comprehensive plan is a government document and created with the intention of giving Village Hall a basic outline of what actions it should take, it makes sense that the plan does not directly critique the faults of the community and its governance. Instead, the document is framed in such a way that any critique or suggestion appears to be positive. Even the plan's suggestions for how the village can improve are written in a way that seems specific, but are ultimately vague. The format of the suggestions shows that the focus is not on reforming the government, but on creating a plan that allows the status quo to remain with some potential refinements. As the opening shows, this is a government document meant for public consumption and as such is not in a position to overtly critique the community and the government. Instead, the comprehensive plan serves as a guidebook and public relations tool that serves to provide the outline of a plan based on what the village is doing well and supporting what residents already

enjoy about the community. Even without being directly critical, the comprehensive plan could provide useful alternatives to the governance in place, but it does not. The plan is very safe and rarely challenges Village Hall to do anything new. To the detriment of the village, *Envision Oak Park* does not envision anything other than a slightly more efficient contemporary Oak Park 15 years in the future.

Past the opening, the document includes some information about Oak Park's history and five guiding principles: diversity, urban sustainability, respect for Oak Park's history and legacy, collaboration and cooperation, and thriving neighborhoods (Houseal Lavigne Associates 2). The document also outlines 11 different areas of the community that are covered by the comprehensive plan ranging from "land use and built environment" to "governmental excellence," since my project focuses on the connections between diversity and governance, I will focus on chapters seven and 14, which relate to "neighborhoods, housing, and diversity" and "governmental excellence" (Houseal Lavigne Associates 5). While these chapters offer some insight into the planning process and concerns of Oak Park's government, nothing about the plan pushes Village Hall to do anything drastically different or revise its approach to community building and this is ultimately what will keep the community stagnant and probably lead to increased problems with discrimination and segregation.

Chapter seven begins with a description of how diversity became important to Oak Park through the 1973 passing of the original statement for maintaining diversity in Oak Park and the role that this section of the comprehensive plan plays in continuing the process:

The recommendations of this chapter address the relationship between neighborhoods, housing, and diversity. The three are interlinked, as they represent the building blocks of a fully integrated community, from the village-wide

perspective to the scale of each neighborhood and block. The goals of this chapter relate in some way to all other chapters in this Plan and strive to ensure that all residents of Oak Park have the opportunities and access to quality housing and supportive and welcoming neighborhoods. (Houseal Lavigne Associates 97)

Houseal Lavigne Associates place diversity and housing as central to the community and Oak Park's future, but they never directly push the community or Village Hall to go further. For instance, on the next page, they explain the ways that diversity is not only a part of the "community character," but also that it has brought the village "a local, regional, and national reputation" (98). As a public document their focus must be placed on making the community sound attractive, not on clearly defining the faults inherent to Oak Park's approach to diversity and housing.

The document does begin to offer a slight critique of the village when the chapter's "Statement of Importance" explains the role of diversity in protecting the community's infrastructure and then moves on to examining how Oak Park should appear in the year 2030. Still, it should be noted that even the strongest critiques offered by the document never lead to any direct plan for changing what the village is doing or trying to actually solve some of the community's foundational problems. The document explains that:

Diversity and integration are fundamental values in Oak Park and must permeate all aspects of the community. They foster social acceptance that strengthen each neighborhood and the village as a whole, and encourage long-term investment in neighborhoods and housing. The village government's adopted Diversity Statement clearly expresses the importance of quality housing, infrastructure and services that create an inclusive and welcoming community. (98)

In Oak Park, diversity is tied to ensuring interest in owning property and ensuring that the tax-base is protected. Without a focus on diversity and integration (based on identity and class), there would be a reduction in desire to live in the community which would have a negative impact on the community's property value. In addition, Oak Park's identity is that of an integrated community and without that identity, the community would not have much separating it from other near-Chicago Suburbs and the village would be forced through another period of transition and unrest like the one created during integration. The statement of importance explains why diversity must be protected in the community, but it is the "Vision Statement" which outlines how Oak Park should look in the year 2030 that provides the closest thing to a critique a publically circulated comprehensive plan can offer about the community.

Specifically, the vision statement suggests that the village could be doing a better job reaching out to its diverse population and avoiding complacency.

Oak Park has strived to create a community of thriving, welcoming neighborhoods that collectively create a strong, vibrant and diverse community. Through specific and deliberate efforts, each neighborhood is highly diverse with integrated populations that benefit from a variety of housing options, are home to engaged and active residents, and provide high quality community services. Oak Park's neighborhoods foster inclusion of all residents through physical design, social outreach and involvement, and programs and events that result in the active integration of the community. (Houseal Lavigne Associates 98)

This opening paragraph highlights the need for "a variety of housing options," which nods toward the realization that Oak Park is a fairly expensive community to both own property in and to rent. Property taxes alone are enough to deter many potential residents to other communities

and the proximity to Chicago and access to public transit make the community attractive for renters, which has created a tight rental market even for those who can afford to pay a premium. The mention of “social outreach and involvement” relates to the problems of representation and participation that were seen throughout the community outreach portion of the Envision Oak Park process and many of the community’s social events. Without finding a way to create more accurate social integration in the village, the community risks resegregation.

The next paragraph highlights the need for the village to ensure housing that is accessible to people with different social identities and economic status as well as reiterating the need to ensure social, and not just demographic, integration.

All members of the Oak Park community share the goals of high quality and accessible housing. This includes Village government, supporting agencies, developers, property owners and managers, financiers, not-for-profits, and individual residents. Through partnerships and the targeted use of local, regional, state and federal resources, Oak Park has expanded its supply of housing for people in all walks of life. Traditional housing has been modified to meet specific local market needs, and new development incorporates housing that appeals to a broad range of potential tenants. As a result, all residents feel they are an equal part of the social landscape, whether they live in predominantly residential areas or mixed use environments, such as commercial districts or transit nodes that utilize appropriate housing densities and accessibility to maximize local and regional mobility and provide greater access to commercial, recreational, civic, and government services. (Houseal Lavigne Associates 98)

The suggestion that “all residents feel they are an equal part of the social landscape” hits on one of Oak Park’s biggest inhibitors to total integration, people of different races and economic status move through different parts of the village. Even a casual stroll through both Lake Street and Madison Street reveals the socially segregated reality of the village. The social segregation has a way of working against the integrated culture Village Hall needs to promote in order for the community to avoid problems like its failed housing exam, which partially happened because landlords were interested in having buildings that seemed to fit with their area of the village.

The final paragraph, which highlights the need to avoid complacency offers the strongest critique of the village while remaining positive in tone.

The community has not become complacent towards diversity and integration. Instead, Oak Park citizens proactively sustain and broaden these characteristics. Accessible and affordable housing, events, education and awareness, mobility, and local services ensure that the community remains inclusive of all residents throughout the village as well as in each neighborhood and block.

The problems with Oak Park are not because the village is terrible or intentionally doing a bad job; it is simply a matter of the government and the community being unwilling to continually challenge and revise their way of life. Without a strong drive to constantly work toward and redefine integration and diversity, the village will be unable to remain as successful as it has been in the past. The main reason that the vision statement is able to directly critique the problems of the village is that it appears to be suggesting that the village will have transcended these problems in the near future. Also, since this part of the document deals with the future, many readers will assume that these problems have already been solved and are not actual critiques, but suggestions for more of the same. The placement of the vision statement before any

of the actual suggestions for improving the village also lessens the impact of any critiques or suggestions that might seem less than positive about the village.

After the vision statement, the rest of the chapter focuses on four main goals that are designed to help Oak Park reach vision statement's 2030 projection. The four goals are: "sustain and broaden diversity and integration throughout Oak Park," "ensure all Oak Park neighborhoods foster social interaction and inclusiveness," "provide mixed income housing that is accessible, integrated, and responsive to the needs of Oak Park's diverse population," and "maintain the long-term viability, quality, and character of Oak Park's housing" (Houseal Lavigne Associates 99, 102, 104, 107). These goals take a seemingly practical approach to refining and, ultimately, maintaining Oak Park's status quo. For instance, "sustain and broaden diversity and integration throughout Oak Park" one of the action points is "advancing diversity through village leadership," which as has been covered at length throughout this project is the main way diversity is maintained and its biggest weakness. Even the detailed description of this task, which speaks of the role of village commissions argues that those who represent the citizens of Oak Park should accurately

represent the perspectives and values of the diverse population of Oak Park. This can be accomplished in two ways. First, Village government could proactively recruit candidates for service on various boards and commissions that reflect the diversity of the Oak Park community. Secondly, Village government should require that each board and commission annually reaffirm its commitment to the adopted Diversity Statement. (Houseal Lavigne Associates 99)

This appears to be a practical approach to ensuring more diversity among the voices used to represent the village, but it ignores a few important points. First, the village commissions do not

actually hold power over governance, they simply approve and review what is already supposed to fit within village policy guidelines. Second, while directly recruiting candidates to commissions might help to get a more diverse population, there are probably more practical considerations, such as changing the times and frequencies of commission meetings to accommodate those who work on different schedules. Even some of the more hardline statements, such as “simply being diverse is not enough” rarely extend beyond a suggestion to double-down on what Village Hall is already doing (Houseal Lavigne Associates 99). In this case the suggestion revolves around advertising Oak Park’s interest in diversity to an even larger audience, not challenging what it means to be a diverse community. Houseal Lavigne associates specifically call for Village Hall to:

set the example for creating a diverse and integrated community. Its actions – regulations, capital improvements, partnerships, etc. – should be weighed against their ability to advance this goal throughout Oak Park. Village government should conduct a review of its Code of Ordinances to determine where regulations further segregate the community’s population. Village government should also ensure that capital improvements do not inhibit access to services, facilities, or other amenities that foster diversity and integration. Finally, Village government could collaborate with vendors and institutions, including contractors, lenders, service providers, and others, to support the community’s values through equal employment opportunity, fair lending practices, and other policies and programs.

(Houseal Lavigne Associates 100)

The desire to further integrate diversity into policies and governance makes sense and even sounds very productive, but it is unclear if simply strengthening the methods already used by

Village Hall is enough to avoid stagnation. Reexamining the Code of Ordinances, for example, can only be successful if the bureaucratic systems and methods in place are flexible enough to judge and revise what is already in play. If the government is unable to extend itself and innovate the way it manages the community and defines diversity and integration, then Oak Park will be unable to further expand its version of suburban integration.

With regard to the capabilities of Village Hall to expand its approach to managing the community, Chapter 14 of the comprehensive plan outlines a vision of the government in 2030 and several actions that Village Hall could take to improve its responsiveness and reach within the community. The vision statement focuses mainly on the idea that the local government has ensured that the community has remained “a desirable place for residents, businesses, and visitors to invest” and that “communication and collaboration has become a hallmark of local government” (Houseal Lavigne Associates 202). The section concludes by projecting that:

Oak Park has remained a premier community in the Chicago metropolitan region through its well-run local governments. Each governmental body provides a high level of customer service, making it easy for residents and businesses to get answers to important questions, understand local rules and regulations, and address issues and concerns. This has helped Oak Park build upon its assets and provide a high quality of life for all who experience it. (Houseal Lavigne Associates 202)

The focus of the entire section is about getting better at providing services and communication, not on finding ways to innovate within the space of small local government. Seeing this type of vision does not lead support to the idea that Village Hall is positioning itself to deal with or create new challenges that will improve the community in the long term. While improving

efficiency is not a large problem, it shows that the focus of the comprehensive plan is maintaining the status quo.

The desire to maintain the status quo continues throughout the specific suggestions made in the rest of the chapter. Village Hall is asked to “assess [the] level of customer service,” “improve responsiveness,” “achieve superior efficiency in the delivery of governmental services,” “manag[ing] the total real estate tax burden on the community,” and “conducting orientation for officials” along with other commonplace management practices (Houseal Lavigne Associates 203-205, 208-209). Interestingly, there is an entire section of suggestions that ask Village Hall to “maximize opportunities for citizens to engage with government and play a role in assuring government transparency and accountability,” which provides ways that Village Hall can make volunteering easier or more convenient for citizens “in the light of changing technology and an evolving and diverse community” (212). Like the rest of the chapter, this section only asks Village Hall to refine what is already happening in Oak Park. There are no calls for a fundamental change in the way operations are handled, instead the plan calls for more opportunities for residents to speak with officials or more collaboration between Village Hall and local groups.

Overall Oak Park’s comprehensive plan is well organized and detailed, but the plan’s flaw is that it does not push Village Hall to try to innovate or challenge what has counted as integration and diversity within village limits. It is entirely possible that the plan was designed to ignore innovation, but if this plan is what Village Hall wants to use “on a day-to-day basis” and ensure that it is “referenced by all representatives of village government...[so that the plan will become] the ‘playbook’ and official policy guide for the community” for the next 20 years, then Oak Park will continue its pattern of increasing problems with segregation (Houseal Lavigne

Associates 218). I agree with Jay Ruby's remarks that "Oak Park has reached a level of success [with diversity] where the really serious problems now appear. Most places don't get to that point" (Trainor "Return" para. 1), but Oak Park cannot continue to be successful without finding new ways to deal with the problems of long-term financially motivated integration. Being at a point that most places cannot get to does not mean that the community can begin to rest. If Oak Park's government does not do more to improve the community's understanding and implementation of diversity and integration, then the only aspect of the community that will remain exceptional is its connection to past success. In other words, for Oak Park to remain at the forefront of integrated community building, it must challenge itself to develop new discourses of suburban diversity.

APPENDIX

Oak Park 2010 Census Data

Total Population	51,878
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Population by Sex	
Male	24,069
Female	27,809

Population by Race	
White	35,121
African American	11,233
Asian	2,511
American Indian and Alaska Native	93
Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander	16
Other	1,042
Multi-racial	1,862

Population by Ethnicity	
Hispanic or Latino	3,521
Non-Hispanic or Latino	48,357

Housing Status	
Total Units	24,519
Occupied	22,670
Owner-occupied units	13,664
Renter-occupied units	9,006
Vacant units	1,849
Population in owner-occupied	35,508
Population in renter-occupied	15,987

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Awards and Fellowships _____

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- Lincoln Fellowship, UIC, 2010 - 2014
- Graduate Assistantship, PSU, 2004 - 2006
- Service Award, UW, 2004
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- Next Step Scholars Scholarship, UW, 2002 - 2004
- English Division Award, GRCC, 2002
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Teaching Experience _____

- Ithaca College, Assistant Professor, Writing Department, Fall 2015 - Present
- Ithaca College, Pre-Doctoral Diversity Fellow, Fall 2014 – Spring 2015
- University of Illinois at Chicago, Teaching Assistant, Fall 2011 – Spring 2014
- Highline Community College, Adjunct Instructor, Fall 2008
- Northwest Indian College, Muckleshoot Campus, Fall 2008
- Green River Community College, Adjunct Instructor, Fall 2007 – Fall 2008
- Portland State University, Graduate Assistant, Fall 2004 – Spring 2006

Teaching Areas _____

- Composition (Pre-College, Introductory, and Research)
- Rhetorical Theory
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- African American Studies/Race Theory

Courses Taught _____

- Academic Writing I, Fall 2014 – Spring 2015, Ithaca College
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- Academic Writing II: Research Writing (English 161), Summer 2013, Spring 2012, UIC

- Tutoring in the Writing Center (English 222), Spring 2013, Fall 2012, UIC
- Academic Writing I: Writing in Academic and Public Contexts, Fall 2013, UIC
- Introductory Composition (English 110), Fall 2008, Spring 2008, Fall 2007, Green River CC
- Research Writing: Social Sciences (English 112), Fall 2008, Spring 2008, Fall 2007, Green River CC
- Research and Persuasive Writing (Writing 105), Fall 2008, Highline CC
- Introductory Writing Series (English 095, 098, 100), Fall 2008, Northwest Indian College
- College Writing (English 100), Winter 2008, Green River CC
- College Writing (WR 121), Fall 2004, Summer 2005, Winter 2006, Spring 2006, Portland State University
- Introduction to Fiction (ENGL 100), Spring 2005, Portland State University
- Writing as Critical Inquiry (WR 323), Fall 2005, Portland State University
- Special Topics in Writing (WR 199), Winter 2005, Portland State University

Administrative & Other Experience _____

University of Illinois at Chicago – August 2012 – May 2014

Assistant Director of the Writing Center

Responsible for teaching sections of Tutoring in the Writing Center (ENGL 222), conducting training for active tutors, supporting the Director of the Writing Center, and serving on the selection committee for the hiring of new and returning tutors.

University of Washington Tacoma

Writing Coordinator – December 2008 – August 2010

Responsible for the daily operations of the writing side of the Teaching & Learning Center (TLC), including supervising, training, and hiring of writing consultants. Additional duties included holding writing appointments with students, conducting seminars on writing, developing materials and content for the TLC website, updating and creating the policy and training manuals, creating connections with writing centers and directors at other campuses, and meeting with faculty to understand how the TLC could meet the needs of students and support faculty.

University of Washington Tacoma

Lead Consultant – September 2006 – June 2007

Worked with faculty to acclimate new students to the campus writing curriculum, assisted with the development of the writing across the curriculum program, lectured on composition, and tutored students in writing.

Writing/Technology Consultant – September 2002 – August 2004

Tutored students in writing, held writing seminars, and assisted faculty with classroom writing activities. Other duties included facilitating seminars in general computing and the office software suite for returning students.

Professional Affiliations _____

- Rhetoric Society of America, 2011 to Present

Conferences _____

Presented

- “Experimenting with Coding to Assess Tutor Training.” International Writing Center Collaborative at the Conference on College Composition and Communication.
- “Writing Across the Curriculum.” Northwest Indian College at Muckleshoot. Auburn, WA. January 2010.

- "Teaching the Process of Revision Effectively." *Teaching Writing Workshop*. Portland State University. Portland, OR. February 2005.
- "Diversity in the Classroom." *Diversity Partnership Institute 2003*. Tacoma, WA. February 2003.