

The Politics of School Desegregation in Oak Park, Illinois

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Associate Professor of Political Science
University of Illinois at Chicago

A Great Cities Institute Working Paper



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May, 2000



The Great Cities Institute

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Acknowledgement

I began my study of Oak Park during my year as a Great Cities Institute Faculty Scholar. I would like to extend my deepest appreciation to the Institute for giving me the time and resources to get the project underway.

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This paper is available on the Great Cities Institute Web Site: www.uic.edu/cuppa/gci

Great Cities Institute Publication Number: GCP-00-1

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The Politics of School Desegregation in Oak Park, Illinois

Abstract

Oak Park, Illinois, has more than 30 years of experience with policies expressly aimed at maintaining an integrated community. The policies address issues in housing, education, public safety, and economic development that policy makers believe contribute to resegregation. In this working paper, I examine the area of education, focusing on the enrollment trends, areas of controversy, and public policies that have emerged in Oak Park over the last 30 years. Oak Park's school desegregation efforts in 1976 and 1987 accomplished their intended purpose, which was to promote racial balance among the neighborhood elementary schools. But new disparities have emerged in the years since. I present data covering 1979 to the present, showing significant and growing racial imbalance in the district. Changed circumstances have altered the prospects for future policy interventions to maintain school integration.

Despite the effectiveness of previous desegregation efforts in Oak Park, there is serious question whether such interventions will be undertaken again. The most significant divergence in support for integration maintenance may be among middle class, educated, involved citizens--Oak Park's policy elite. This elite is more ideologically liberal than in years past, and has expanded to include a significant number of black elected and appointed officials, journalists, and other influential citizens. Those who question the need for school desegregation are well educated and familiar with contemporary issues in American politics. Their views of Oak Park politics are not derived from purely local experience, but are heavily influenced by the national discourse over race relations. That discourse is highly conflictual, ideological, emotional, and sensitive to the symbolic dimension of politics and policy. By contrast, Oak Park's local politics, where integration is concerned, have historically been relatively nonpartisan and highly pragmatic, being focused on non-ideological local solutions to concrete issues.

The advocates of integration maintenance are still speaking the language of pragmatism, but they are now being met with rebuttals saying, in effect, that proposals to achieve racial balance in the schools through public policy have the potential to make black people feel negatively about themselves. It may be possible to resolve the existing impasse over school desegregation in Oak Park by taking advantage of a new Leadership Council process to let a new pragmatic consensus come into existence that addresses both the emotional and rational dimensions of public policy.

The Politics of School Desegregation in Oak Park, Illinois

If the question, “What’s wrong with all black schools in Oak Park?” has ever once passed your lips or even entered your mind, you don’t belong on a public school board in Oak Park. Dan Haley, publisher, Wednesday Journal¹

In Chicago, as in many large American cities, racial segregation has been for many decades a self-perpetuating source of conflict, inequality, and mutual suspicion. But any policy intervention aimed at reducing segregation, whether it be in the workplace, schools, the economy, or politics, is tainted from the outset by the pre-existing suspicion segregation engenders, particularly if government is perceived by minority residents as an instrument of social domination controlled by a hostile majority. There is intense ideological disagreement over whether any government intervention can make the situation better, and, even among those who agree in principle that policy measures are called for, there is equally intense dispute over how to intervene. In “divided cities” that are polarized by segregation, race often becomes a subtext underlying and distorting consideration of issues in other policy areas.²

Some small cities, however, claim to have developed ways of promoting and “managing” integration and thereby reducing the problems segregation engenders. Oak Park, Illinois, has over 30 years of experience with policies expressly aimed at maintaining an integrated community. The policies were adopted in the face of circumstances that nearby resulted in rapid racial transition from all white, to briefly integrated, to all black, a process known as “re-segregation.”³ Recently the focus of these policies has expanded to include other areas of human diversity, but race remains the primary focus. The policies address issues in housing, education, public safety, and economic development that policy makers believe contribute to re-segregation.

In this working paper, I examine the area of education, focusing on the enrollment trends, areas of controversy, and public policies that have emerged in Oak Park over the last 30 years. This history is framed by the interaction between two levels of policy.

On the one hand Oak Park has had a relatively consistent, locally-generated policy to maintain racially balanced schools as an integral part of promoting residential integration. On the other, since the mid-1970s support for educational desegregation at the federal level and in Illinois state government has declined steadily. The reversal of direction in the federal courts on this issue has been especially pronounced.⁴

In addition to the collapse of school desegregation policy at the federal and state levels, there have been changes in local public support for integration efforts, with some members of Oak Park's black middle class and white liberals questioning the value of school desegregation as a policy goal. These changes in exogenous and endogenous circumstances have altered the prospects for future policy interventions to maintain school integration. Oak Park's school desegregation efforts in 1976 and 1987 accomplished their intended purpose, which was to promote racial balance among the neighborhood elementary schools. But new disparities have emerged in the years since. I present data covering 1979 to the present, showing significant and growing racial imbalance in the district. But despite the effectiveness of previous desegregation efforts in Oak Park, there is serious question whether such interventions will be undertaken again.

Background: Oak Park's Integration Maintenance Policies

Located on Chicago's western border, just eight miles west of the Loop, Oak Park is literally across the street from Austin, a Chicago neighborhood which was a white middle class neighborhood until the first black residents began to arrive, at which time it rapidly resegregated. Austin was virtually all-white in 1960, about one-third black in 1970, three-fourths black in 1980, and nearly 90% black in 1990.⁵

What happened in Austin represented for some a confirmation of the belief that racial transition is often inevitable as communities age and minority groups begin to enter them. Ernest W. Burgess and other proponents of the "human ecology" model believed there was a natural process of "invasion and succession" by newcomers. Such models imply that ethnic and racial groups are like various plant and animal species competing for the same territory.⁶ Events in parts of Chicago, and particularly in Austin, interpreted in light of these prevailing theories about the inevitability of white flight, led some urban theorists to predict that Oak Park would follow the example of its neighbor to the east and in short order become a predominantly black community in short order.⁷

However, In Oak Park, such explanations were rejected by political elites and many residents, who believed that resegregation was simply a self-fulfilling prophecy that did not need to come true. The processes that had occurred in Austin, they argued, exemplified not nature at work, but a characteristic "Chicago pattern of block-by-block resegregation." Integration advocates attributed this pattern to calculated, predatory, and highly profitable practices by realtors and bankers who exploited the fears of white sellers and the vulnerability of black buyers. Austin was, and still is, viewed not as a picture of Oak Park's future but as a negative example of processes that only appear inevitable but are in reality subject to control by public policy and a mobilized population.

Oak Park was able to consider adopting its own policy approaches because, unlike Austin, which was part of the City of Chicago and its machine-dominated system of major-council government and ward politics, Oak Park had its own governing institutions and political elite. Austin's attempts to develop policy responses to population change were hampered by a lack of local autonomy and by political conflict over what to do. But the Village of Oak Park (VOP), Oak Park Township (OPT), and an elementary school district (District 97) all share the same boundaries, and a progressive-style political organization called the Village Manager Association (VMA), had been dominant in Oak Park politics since the 1950s, when Oak Park adopted the

city manager form of government.⁸

Oak Park also benefited from the experience of the neighborhood stabilization movement. During the 1960s, the civil rights movement produced offshoots to address specific housing issues. For example, there were fair housing groups and tenants' rights groups. One of these branches, the neighborhood stabilization movement, developed to address a very specific problem. Once a community was opened up to minority entry through fair housing efforts, white flight generally occurred. The outcome of fair housing policies, it seemed, was creation of yet another all-minority community. Neighborhood stabilization advocates asked how this segregation-integration- resegregation process could be prevented, so that the community could remain integrated.⁹ In short, they believed that residential integration was a good thing, and they looked for ways to counter the cynical view attributed to columnist Mike Royko that integration is the brief period between the day the first black person moves in and the day the last white person moves out. The goal of the policies was also labeled "managed integration," "integration maintenance," and more recently "diversity assurance."¹⁰

This movement focused on the beliefs and actions of white people as the key variables in the resegregation process. One problem was preventing the departure of a community's existing white population, and the other was ensuring that the community would remain attractive to potential new white residents, which went under the label of "affirmative marketing."

As evidence that Oak Park's policies work, advocates often point to the village's population make-up, which has never exhibited the rapid turnover and dramatic neighborhood segregation seen in Austin and elsewhere. The black population of Oak Park grew gradually, from less than 1 percent in 1970, to 11 percent in 1980, and to 19 percent in 1990. Within the village, in 1990 the census tracts ranged from 4% black to 39% black.¹¹ The policies adopted in Oak Park to maintain integration fall roughly into four categories: housing, schools, crime prevention, and economic development. In this paper I focus on school policies.

Schools and Residential Segregation: The Social Science Findings

School policies are an especially important part of integration maintenance programs because of a demonstrated relationship between school desegregation and residential desegregation. In 1979, *Society* published a statement signed by 37 distinguished social scientists of "findings on which there is broad scholarly agreement."

There is an interdependent relationship between school segregation and neighborhood segregation. Each reinforces the other. Policies that encourage development and continuation of overwhelmingly racially identifiable schools foster residential segregation. This residential segregation in turn fosters increased school segregation...The racial composition of a school and its staff tends to stamp that identity on the surrounding neighborhood. In many urban areas, the attendance zone of a school defines the only effective boundary between "neighborhoods." Homebuyers use school attendance zones as a guide in their selection of a residence. Realtors take particular pains to "sell" the school as they sell the home; the school zone is listed in many newspaper classified advertisements for homes and often serves to identify the racial character of the "neighborhood." ... Change in the racial identifiability of a school can influence the pace of change in racial composition in a

“changing” residential area.¹²

These findings are not limited to the 1970s, but have been confirmed in recent years. Gary Orfield, arguably the nation’s leading analyst of school desegregation, observed in 1985 that, “[s]chools change racial composition before neighborhoods, and racially identifiable schools become key factors in ending the migration of white families to integrated areas.”¹³ In 1991, Juliet Saltman concluded after a national study of the neighborhood stabilization movement that there were two “killer variables” in maintaining residential integration without which “the movement for neighborhood stabilization cannot succeed in any community.” One was the absence of concentrated public housing. The other was the existence of systemwide school desegregation:

In each of our success examples, we found a systemwide school desegregation program. In our failure and conditional examples this was absent. The reason this is a critical factor is that affirmative marketing of an integrated neighborhood cannot occur effectively without it. Unless racial balance is empirically present in a neighborhood’s public schools, a majority of whites with children will not perceive that neighborhood as a desirable one and will not move into it. We have countless studies that verify this. [citations omitted] The smaller number of whites who may be persuaded to move into a neighborhood having predominantly black schools would simply not be enough to maintain the racial integration of the neighborhood.¹⁴

In Illinois during the 1970s, integration advocates were able to use national and state policies as additional incentives for school districts to consider a desegregation program. All local school boards in Illinois were under a state mandate to prevent racial segregation. The state policy was, in turn, influenced by events at the federal level. Following the school desegregation mandate of the United States Supreme Court decision *Brown v. Board of Education*,¹⁵ the Illinois legislature passed the Armstrong Act in 1963, which required local school boards to “change or revise existing units or create new units in a manner which will take into consideration the prevention of segregation and the elimination of separation of children in public schools because of color, race or nationality.”¹⁶ Waukegan’s school district challenged this law on constitutional grounds, but in 1968 the Illinois Supreme Court upheld the Armstrong Act, ruled that the Act required districts to correct for unintentional, de facto segregation, and ordered Waukegan to develop a desegregation plan.¹⁷

In 1971, the Illinois Superintendent of Public Instruction, Michael Bakalis, issued a set of mandatory rules known as the “Bakalis Guidelines” for local districts to follow in preventing and eliminating racial segregation. The penalty for failure to comply was “nonrecognition” by the state and withholding federal funding to the district. One of the provisions defined “racial segregation” as follows:

A public school whose proportion of white, black, Spanish-speaking, American Indian, and Oriental pupils or administrative, faculty, and staff personnel, fails to reflect, within fifteen (15) percent, their proportions of such pupils and personnel in the district as a whole at the grade levels maintained.¹⁸

This would mean, for example, that if a district were 30 percent black, all the schools in the

district should have a black population of no less than 15 percent and no more than 45 percent. The Bakalis guidelines were invalidated by the Illinois Supreme Court in 1982, on the grounds that they were an unauthorized intrusion of the Illinois State Board of Education into local board authority. Local boards, the court held, were to decide for themselves how to comply with the Armstrong Act, and the state board was limited to holding hearings and asking the Illinois Attorney General to file suit against a local board that was not taking sufficient steps to desegregate.¹⁹ However, while the Bakalis Guidelines were in force they were a significant resource for those who wished to push school boards to undertake integration efforts, in Oak Park and elsewhere in Illinois.

Oak Park's 1976 School Desegregation Plan

In Oak Park, the importance of school desegregation as a necessary component of integration maintenance was understood by community activists from at least the early 1970s. In 1972, Oak Park's elementary school Board of Education (District 97) adopted a "human dignity" policy statement saying that the board "asserts that our educational system must in no way be exclusive, and recognizes its obligation to educate children in an atmosphere free of the narrowing and stifling influences of social, religious and ethnic prejudice," and to ensure that children "develop a respect for cultural and racial differences and a full appreciation of the contributions which all races and peoples have made to the advancement and enrichment of humanity."²⁰ The District also tried to improve the curriculum at the two elementary schools with the highest black enrollments as part of a deliberate effort to maintain their attractiveness.²¹

The district began counting students by race in October, 1973. The pattern of black movement into Oak Park, which was disproportionately concentrated in one part of the eastern village, was producing noticeably disparate minority and white enrollments among the ten elementary schools in District 97. Some Oak Park residents were concerned that this growing enrollment imbalance would make the east village less attractive to potential white residents and bring the "Chicago pattern" of gradual, spreading segregation to Oak Park. The school board acted quickly to address this concern.

In March 1974, after a series of meetings, the District 97 board issued a "Policy Statement on Racial Balance in Oak Park Elementary Schools."²² The statement acknowledged that, "Enrollment data prepared during the current academic year have suggested the beginning of a trend which, if projected into the future, would result in racially identifiable Oak Park schools." The Board then gave several reasons for its actions, beginning by stating that "The legal case for avoiding and eliminating racial isolation in the schools is unambiguous," quoting from the Brown decision and the Armstrong Act and mentioning the Bakalis Guidelines.

The board then expressly addressed the relationship between educational and residential segregation and, implicitly, the Board's obligation to promote Oak Park's residential integration policies:

It has long been recognized that the schools in Oak Park have been an important influence on the community's housing market. That is, people move here in large part because of our schools. It is essential that each of our schools continue to attract families of both white and minority backgrounds to the village. Unfortunately, in American urban life, most white families are reluctant to move into a local

neighborhood when its school has a high proportion of minority students. *A racially-balanced school system is therefore a necessary if not sufficient prerequisite if residential segregation is to be avoided.* [emphasis added]

The board also noted that “a racially segregated school system is inimical to the goals of the Board’s policy on Human Dignity,” and asserted that “planning for racial balance provides the opportunity for evaluation of the district’s entire educational program,” and that “it is likely that racial relations at the high school level will be more positive where the students have had a history of interracial contact extending back into their elementary days.”

For these reasons, “The Board declares its determination that the Oak Park Elementary Schools should reflect the racial composition of the district as a whole.” The Board then commissioned a group of 40 citizens, called the “Committee for Tomorrow’s Schools,” whose “primary charge will be to develop and recommend two or more alternative plans for the maintenance of racial balance.”

In December, 1974, the committee presented four approaches, and during 1975 the school board held a series of public hearings. One of the four alternatives, creating junior high schools, had been rejected several times during the 1960s, when it was proposed on educational grounds unrelated to racial balance. But now racial integration was part of the choice.

On March 13, 1975, the attorney for District 97 responded to its request for a legal opinion on the Committee for Tomorrow’s Schools’ alternative plans and the duty to desegregate. The attorney provided a letter stating that local school boards had an “affirmative duty” to “effectuate desegregation of district schools in compliance with the Bakalis guidelines,” and that “[t]he proposed plans for racial balance outlined [in the report from the Committee for Tomorrow’s Schools] appear on their face to represent a bona fide effort on the part of the District 97 Board of Education to comply with the Bakalis guidelines.” However, the letter did not address the issue of whether there was actual risk of being charged with violation of the guidelines.²³

Armed with this opinion letter, the school board was able to assert plausibly that the reorganization it wished to undertake was an effort to comply with state law. However, the state official with responsibility for deciding in the first instance whether District 97 was in violation of that law said in public meetings that, although minority enrollment at Hawthorne, which was in close proximity to Austin, was slightly above the 15-percent differential allowed by the Bakalis Guidelines, the district did not need to fear prosecution. In fact, he expressed concern that a desegregation plan might be counterproductive as it would disperse a relatively small number of black students so widely that they would feel isolated.²⁴

So, in 1975, District 97 did not need to adopt a desegregation plan to avoid being charged with violation of the Bakalis Guidelines. Nonetheless, the district placed a high priority on moving forward with a plan, and soon. This suggests that the existence of a state mandate helped local officials generate consent for a plan that was undertaken not to avoid litigation, but to prevent residential resegregation and, for some supporters, to move to a junior high school system that they favored but that had been rejected by the voters. The plan was adopted, with racial balance as the stated objective. As a journalist described it at the time, “[o]n March 24, 1975, approximately 300 persons witnessed the school board unanimously vote for grade

reorganization as the method for integrating the village's public Schools." The school board staff then developed three alternative plans, and in early 1976 adopted the one calling for two junior high schools.²⁵

By 1976, when the new plan was to be implemented, Hawthorne, in east Oak Park, had a black enrollment of 28 percent. Mann, on the northwest corner of the village, had a black enrollment of less than 3 percent.²⁶ Of the ten neighborhood schools, each housing kindergarten through eighth grade students from its attendance area, the desegregation plan turned two of these, Emerson and Hawthorne (later renamed Julian),²⁷ into junior high schools for grades seven and eight. Each junior high was to draw from elementary schools on both east and west, to assure that the junior high schools would reflect the racial balance in the district as a whole. Emerson's students would come from Hatch and Whittier on the east and Holmes and Lincoln on the west. Julian would draw from Beye, Irving, and Longfellow on the east, and Mann on the west. These eight schools would become K-6 only, with redrawn boundaries that would reduce somewhat the developing racial imbalance. The plan involved reassignment of 41 percent of the District's students and busing of more than 1500 of them.²⁸

This first episode of policy making to achieve racial balance in Oak Park schools is instructive. The elementary school district was in a position to advance or retard the managed integration goals the Village had set for itself because of the well-established relationship between school desegregation and residential segregation. The district was an independent institution that could chart its own course to a considerable extent. It was nonetheless subject to influence by community elites, the press, public opinion, and other levels of government, including in this case the State of Illinois and other Oak Park Governments.²⁹ The Bakalis Guidelines, particularly the specific 15% limit, were used to legitimate the Board's inclination to promote the community's residential integration policies. The assurance that no prosecution for violating the guidelines was likely to occur in the foreseeable future did not bring comfort to advocates of integration maintenance, because acting early, before resegregation became far advanced, was one of the cardinal rules of the neighborhood stabilization movement. The existence of an external mandate allowed advocates of integration to portray the decision facing the board as not whether to act, or when to act, but how to act. This reframed the issue and facilitated a rapid decision.

In short, Oak Park advocates of managed integration cited the state policy to prevent school segregation in order to advance their goal of acting quickly to prevent residential segregation.

The 1987 Boundary Adjustments

The racial balance plan adopted in 1976 remained untouched until 1987. Trends following the desegregation plan are noticeable in Figures 1-19, which present enrollment data from the academic years 1979 through 2000.³⁰ Figure 1 is a line chart showing all enrollments from 1979 through 1986. The years 1979, 1987, and 2000 are summarized in Table One.

The data show that there was a substantial drop in white enrollment in the district during the early 1980s, from over 4000 to just over 3000. The white student enrollment then leveled off, and it has remained relatively constant since the mid-1980s. Net decline in white enrollment is 27% from 1979 to the present. Black enrollment has shown a consistent, gradual increase, and increased by 117% since 1979, from 848 to almost 1800. The "other" category includes Asian

and Hispanic students, and this category has remained constant at under 350 for the last 21 years. As a percentage of the entire district the change is from 78% white to 58% white, and from 16% black to 35% black., with the “other” category increasing from 6% to 7%.

Table 1: District 97 Enrollments by Race, 1979, 1987, 2000

	Dist. 97 Total	White	Black	Other
Academic Year 1979	5307	4139 (78%)	848 (16%)	320 (6%)
Academic Year 1997	4715	3139 (66.5%)	1224 (26%)	352 (7.5%)
Academic Year 2000	5138	3003 (58%)	1795 (35%)	340 (7%)

The overall change in the ethnic composition of the district seems quite modest and gradual, particularly when one considers the stability from 1986 through the present in light of the fears and predictions of rapid resegregation that were voiced in the 1970s. Based on these overall results, the 1976 remap appears to have achieved its objectives. However, this did not occur without some “fine tuning.” Enrollment trends in the early 1980s were sufficiently disturbing that in 1987 the District 97 board ordered two more boundary adjustments.

The importance of school integration in Oak Park had been reaffirmed in 1984, in the course of a major project commission by the Village to “study the progress of racial diversity in Oak Park.” This Task Force on Racial Diversity produced a 184-page report which included a section on the importance of school desegregation. The Task Force said:

In a racially integrating community, the schools become a principal factor in determining whether that community can achieve stability while becoming integrated...*[M]aintenance of high quality education alone is not sufficient.* Racial diversity within each school is necessary to make all parts of the community equally attractive to potential residents of all races.³¹ [emphasis added]

The process leading to the 1987 adjustments began in 1985, when the District 97 board appointed a citizen’s committee to study numerical imbalances in the district.³² The committee was formally charged with examining whether or not some schools were becoming overcrowded while others were underutilized. However, the committee’s final recommendations, presented in January 1986, focused on what it saw as growing racial imbalances among the schools. The committee recommended a major reconfiguration of elementary school boundaries and creation of middle schools that would draw as low as fifth grade. However, as a local newspaper observed, “community response last January vehemently opposed all of these suggestions.”³³ Consequently, the school board decided not to make major changes and instead spent another year studying the issue.

On February 9, 1987, the board decided to make two boundary adjustments which would take effect in Fall of 1987, but which would not affect current students unless they changed residences. One change involved reassigning several blocks in east Oak Park from Whittier to Beye schools. Here the idea was to reduce the black enrollment at Whittier by shifting it to Beye, where black enrollment had been declining (see Figure 18). The other change reassigned

several blocks from Lincoln, in predominantly white west Oak Park, to Irving, which was the area of greatest minority enrollment. The objective was to stop the steep decline in white enrollment at Irving (see Figure 19). In rejecting the idea of middle schools, the board said, “there is overwhelming community reaction against implementing any solution which...in any will destroy the identity of a neighborhood school.”³⁴

Although the immediate effect of the changes was mixed,³⁵ perhaps because of the “grandfathering” of existing students, over time it is clear that following the two boundary adjustments the precipitous drop in white enrollment at Irving stopped, and the minority enrollments in Whittier and Beye became similar. Once again, the school district’s intervention to maintain racial balance appears to have been successful.

In 1987, as in 1976, District 97 regarded maintaining racial balance in the K-6 schools as an important part of its mission. Although the Bakalis Guidelines, with the 15 percent disparity limit, had been invalidated, the 1986 committee studying enrollments had recommended an even more stringent goal of no more than a 10 percent deviation. District 97 personnel director Vince Lynn, who was in charge of reporting on enrollment trends, said the district “is always working to improve racial balances,” and pointed out that when the 1987 adjustments were made, the district tightened restrictions on “permissive transfers,” requests by parents for reassignment of their children to a different school than the one in their attendance area, if the transfer would adversely affect racial balance.³⁶

“Dismantling Desegregation”: Changing Legal Standards

Many things have changed since 1976 in the legal and political environment in which Oak Park’s school board makes decisions about desegregation. In 1982, as noted above, the Illinois Supreme Court invalidated the Bakalis guidelines. Then, from 1991 through 1995, the United States Supreme Court made three major rulings³⁷ that school desegregation expert Gary Orfield calls the “turning back to segregation”:

Four decades after the civil rights revolution began with the Supreme Court’s unanimous 1954 school desegregation decision, *Brown v. Board of Education*, the Supreme Court reversed itself in the 1990s, authorizing school districts to return to segregated and unequal public schools...The decisions were often characterized as belated adjustments to an irrelevant, failed policy. But in fact, these historic High Court decisions were a triumph for the decades-long powerful, politicized attacks on school desegregation. The new policies reflected the victory of the conservative movement that altered the federal courts and turned the nation from the dream of *Brown* toward accepting a return to segregation.³⁸

These court decisions greatly reduced the burden on local school districts to desegregate. Since 1954, school boards had lived under the very real possibility of legal action and, ultimately, being placed under a court-ordered desegregation plan. This had been a powerful incentive for boards to monitor and correct for racial imbalances. But after these United States Supreme Court decisions, boards were much freer from external pressure, and at greater liberty to respond to local political dynamics.

In some communities, where there was limited enthusiasm for racial integration, this would mean

a rapid transition to segregated school systems. In Oak Park, where the community as a whole placed a high value on integration, the effects of this changed legal environment were much more subtle but still significant. District 97 had never been a serious candidate for prosecution under the Bakalis Guidelines or the Armstrong Act. But the existence of a state and, ultimately, a federal mandate to desegregate was an important weapon in the arsenal of advocates for taking significant action at the earliest stages of racial imbalance. With the state and federal courts enforcing desegregation as a guiding principle, the issue in Oak Park could readily be framed as what action to take to achieve that goal-- such as redrawing district lines, reorganizing grades, transporting students, assigning students to schools through a combination of choice and lottery, or some other measure. But in the absence of this mandate, it was easy for the local debate to become focused on, and possibly mired in, the issue of whether to act at all.

In addition to these changes outside Oak Park, there had been at least one major transformation within the community. Between the early 1970s and the late 1990s, managed integration policies had become institutionalized. A variety of governmental and quasi-governmental agencies had taken over responsibilities from voluntary citizens' groups that were in some sense part of larger social movements.³⁹ Of course, this institutionalization represented the most significant victories these groups had achieved. It was a critical step in seeing the policies implemented with public resources, and to a large extent these agencies embodied what was unique about Oak Park's identity as a community. Residents could point to the existence of these agencies as the local counterweight to segregation-promoting forces in the real estate market and society in general.

But there was a price to be paid when the impetus for integration came from government agencies instead of organized civil society. As time went by, there was less need for a mobilized public to keep integration working. The policies were a government responsibility, and Oak Park citizens increasingly became tax-paying consumers of an end product -- an integrated community -- rather than the creators of that product. The focus of community activists shifted from block clubs and other voluntary groups to involvement with local government. In the process of this shift, public understanding of and support for the logic and policies of integration maintenance slipped. These voluntary groups had been the "schools" in which many citizens learned how resegregation happened and how it could be prevented, and where broad popular support for Oak Park's special policies was generated. Institutionalization meant that grass roots organizations did not need to organize and struggle constantly to keep the policies in effect, but without that impetus to action, their other critical functions of public education and mobilization of consent declined.

Consequently, Oak Park increasingly found itself with a population that liked living in an integrated community, but did not fully understand, much less support, the means that were being used to create and maintain it as such. In that sense, the neighborhood stabilization movement had become a victim of its own success. Moreover, there was a growing contingent of Oak Park office holders, including a number of prominent African-Americans, who questioned the value of school desegregation policies, and even of racial integration itself.

Enrollment Trends in District 97, 1979-2000

The effects of declining legal support for desegregation, diminished public understanding of the policies, and open questioning of the value of integration became clear in the most recent

controversy over desegregation of District 97. The issue resurfaced in 1998 and continues as of this writing. An increasing awareness of disparate enrollment trends in the district has played a role in the debate. In order to understand that debate, it is necessary to examine the data on enrollments by race in Oak Park. This analysis has three parts. First, I look at the present, showing the district and its schools as of the academic year 2000. Second, I examine the trends in all schools from 1979 to 2000. Third, I consider a possible explanation for why one school on the east side, Beye, tends consistently to be more reflective of the district's overall racial makeup than other schools.

1. The Present: Year 2000 Enrollments

Figure 1 (Appendix) is a map of District 97, showing the boundary lines of all eight elementary attendance areas. The five K-6 schools located in the east side of Oak Park are, from north to south, Hatch, Whittier, Beye, Longfellow, and Irving. The three west side schools are, from north to south, Mann, Holmes, and Lincoln. Table Two (below) shows the enrollments of the eight elementary schools and the two junior high schools, Emerson and Julian, for the academic year 2000.

Significantly, the junior high schools have virtually identical racial profiles, and both schools closely mirror the district as a whole. This, of course, is due to the 1976 remap, which intentionally compensated for a possible east-west residential segregation pattern. Each junior high school includes elementary attendance areas from both sides of the village, and that keeps them racially balanced.

Table 2: District 97 Enrollment, Academic Year 2000

	White-n	White-%	Black-n	Black-%	Other-n	Other-%	Total
D97 TOTAL	3003	58.4%	1795	34.9%	340	6.6%	5138
EAST SIDE K-6 SCHOOLS							
Hatch	129	49.6%	127	48.8%	4	1.5%	260
Whittier	279	58.4%	173	36.2%	26	5.4%	478
Beye	291	60.6%	170	35.4%	19	4.0%	480
Longfellow	298	48.9%	271	44.5%	40	6.6%	609
Irving	222	44.8%	224	45.3%	49	9.9%	495
<i>East Total</i>	1219	52.5%	965	41.6%	138	5.9%	2322
WEST SIDE K-6 SCHOOLS							
Mann	407	78.3%	84	16.2%	29	5.6%	520
Holmes	303	61.1%	141	28.4%	52	10.5%	496
Lincoln	414	63.9%	186	28.7%	48	7.4%	648
<i>West Total</i>	1124	67.5%	411	24.7%	129	7.8%	1664
JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOLS							
Julian	343	57.4%	221	37.0%	34	5.7%	598

Emerson	317	57.2%	198	35.7%	39	7.0%	554
<i>JHS Total</i>	660	57.3%	419	36.4%	73	6.3%	1152

If there were no disparities among the elementary schools, the percentages for individual schools would look like the figures for the District as a whole and like the junior high schools, as shown in Table Two. However, this is not the case. When the current enrollments for the elementary schools are compared, it is obvious that there are significant differences.

The most glaring disparities involve Mann, in the affluent northwest corner of Oak Park. When Mann is compared with Irving, in the southeast, and with Hatch, the northeast school, which shares a boundary line with Mann, the differences are striking. White students are less than 45 percent of the Irving student body, but Mann is 78 percent white, a difference of about 33 percentage points. Black enrollment at Hatch is at almost 49 percent, but at Mann it is just over 16%---again, approximately a 33 percentage point difference.

When the schools are grouped on an east-west basis, it becomes clear that black students are over-represented on the east side and white students on the west side. The differences are statistically significant.⁴⁰ At present, 70 percent of the black students in Oak Park's elementary schools are concentrated on the east side and 30 percent on the west, but the white students are nearly evenly divided between east and west. This translates into a set of east side schools which is about 53 percent white and 42 percent black and a set of west side schools which is two-thirds white and one-quarter black.

Table 3: East-West K-6 Enrollments by Race, Academic Year 2000

	White	Black	Other	Total
East Side Schools	1219	965	138	2322
	<i>52.5%</i>	<i>41.6%</i>	<i>5.9%</i>	<i>100%</i>
(Hatch, Whittier Beye, Longfellow, Irving)	<i>(52%)</i>	<i>(70%)</i>	<i>(51.7%)</i>	<i>(58.2%)</i>
West Side Schools	1124	411	129	1664
	<i>67.5%</i>	<i>24.7%</i>	<i>7.7%</i>	<i>99.9%</i>
(Mann, Holmes, Lincoln)	<i>(48.0%)</i>	<i>(30%)</i>	<i>(48.3%)</i>	<i>(41.7%)</i>
Total	2343	1376	267	3986
	<i>58.8%</i>	<i>34.5%</i>	<i>6.7%</i>	<i>100%</i>
(All elementary schools)	<i>(100%)</i>	<i>(100%)</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>(99.9%)</i>

Note: row percentages are in italics; column percentages are in parentheses;

totals of less than 100% are due to rounding to one decimal

2. Enrollment Trends, 1979-2000

It could be argued that these differences are not severe enough at present to justify boundary changes or other racial balancing measures. However, it is not just the degree of difference between east and west, but the fact that that the disparity is growing, which must be considered.

Figures 2 through 9 (See Appendix) show enrollments at each of Oak Park's eight elementary schools from 1979 through the year 2000. Each figure has three lines, depicting enrollments for white, black, and other⁴¹ (Hispanic, Asian/Pacific Islander, and Native American/Eskimo) as they have changed over the last two decades. The charts show that white enrollments in all schools dropped in the early 1980s and then stabilized in most of them. Beyond this general similarity, there are differences in enrollment trends among the schools, which taken as a whole contribute to a growing disparity between the east side and west side schools.

On the east side, in three of the five schools -- Hatch, Longfellow, and Irving -- white students are in the minority (see also Figures 11, 12, and 13, where the categories "black" and "other" are combined, for a clearer picture of the three majority-minority schools). Moving from north to south, it is clear that Hatch has been losing white students since 1986, while black enrollment has gradually increased. Black and white enrollments are nearly equal. Other minority enrollment at Hatch has also declined. Whittier and especially Beye have been substantially balanced relative to the district as a whole since the boundary between them was realigned in 1987 (possible reasons why these two schools are more reflective of the district than the other three east side schools are discussed below). In the south east quadrant of Oak Park, Longfellow and Irving have become majority-minority schools. Longfellow shows a long-term decline in white enrollment since 1979. Irving had a dramatic loss of white students in the early 1980s, which stabilized after the 1987 boundary adjustment with Lincoln, but black enrollment has increased steadily at Irving to the point where black students outnumber white students.

On the west side, the patterns at individual schools are different from the east. All the west side schools have substantial white majorities. On the affluent and overwhelmingly white northwest corner of Oak Park, Mann has had a steadily increasing white enrollment since the mid 1980s, while black enrollment has remained consistently small, hardly changing since 1979. Holmes also had strong increases in white enrollments from 1983 through 1996. Lincoln's white enrollments remained steady until 1992. It is too early to determine whether recent declines in white enrollment at Lincoln and Holmes is a trend, but clearly both schools have tended toward increasing black enrollments over the years.

Perhaps the most dramatic contrast in the district is the comparison of trends in white enrollment at Mann and Hatch, two schools on the north of the village whose attendance areas are side by side. Figure 14 (appendix) and Table 4, below, show that from 1979 until 1986 the two schools had similar numbers of white students and a similar number of students overall. In 1986 there were 294 white students at Mann and 279 at Hatch, a difference of only 15 students. But since 1986, Mann's white enrollment has gone up by 38 percent, while Hatch's has gone down by 54 percent, so that now, Mann has 407 white students and Hatch only 129. The lines depicting white enrollment at these two schools are virtual mirror images--as Hatch has lost white students, Mann has gained. Moreover, over the same time period, Mann's total student enrollment has gone up from 360 to 520, an increase of 44 percent, at the same time that Hatch's has dropped by 29 percent, from 367 to 260. Hatch has gone from having slightly more

students than Mann to being half its size in a decade and a half. The changes in total enrollment are especially noticeable because as late as 1992, Hatch still had high total enrollment, with 392 students. Measured from that date, Hatch has lost over one-third of its student population in nine years.

Table 4: Mann and Hatch Compared, 1986 and 2000

		Year: 1986	Year: 2000	Difference: n%
Hatch	White enrollment	279	120	-150, -54%
	Total enrollment	367	260	-107, -29%
Mann	White enrollment	294	407	113, +38%
	Total enrollment	360	520	160, +44%

In order to determine whether the overall trends toward an east-west disparity are statistically significant, the difference in white enrollment on the east and west can be treated as a dependent variable, with the passage of time in years being the independent variable. The statistical technique used here is linear regression. Figure 18 is a linear regression analysis which plots the difference between east side and west side schools over time. In 1979, the difference was 11.5 percentage points. As of the year 2000, the difference is 15 percentage points. The disparity has been higher in the past, but the trend line over time shows a statistically significant pattern of increase over the last two decades.⁴² If this pattern continues, the difference in racial composition between east side and west side schools must surely become increasingly obvious to any observer.

This pattern is especially pronounced at the northeast and southeast corners of the village, and the only thing keeping the east and west at all similar is the pattern of integration in Beye, and to a lesser extent Whittier. Both schools are in the central portion of the east side. It is important to examine whether Beye is different from other schools in some way that, year after year, keeps it more racially balanced than the other schools in the district. It is equally important to consider what might explain the changes at other east side schools.

3. Possible Explanations for Observed Trends in East Side Schools

Table Five presents demographic data from the 1990 Census for Oak Park census tracts which entirely or partly fall within any of the five east side attendance areas.⁴³ Oak Park has a total of 12 census tracts, four of which are predominantly comprised of rental housing. Beye draws almost entirely from three of these four apartment-heavy tracts. Beye, in other words, has a disproportionately higher percentage of renter households in the census tracts from which it draws. To a lesser extent, this is true of Whittier. On the other hand, Hatch, Longfellow, and Irving draw from tracts which are largely populated by homeowner households.

This is significant because the Village of Oak Park goes to great lengths to control the racial composition of Oak Park's apartment housing in order to prevent racial resegregation. These apartment-centered programs have long been the centerpiece of the village's integration maintenance policy. One possible explanation for Beye being more racially balanced over time than the other schools is that the apartment rental population in Beye's attendance areas is itself being managed to preserve racial balance, and that this fact has a direct or indirect effect on the

composition of Beye's student body. However, further study is needed to establish with certainty whether this is the case.⁴⁴

By contrast, Hatch and Irving, and, to a lesser extent, Longfellow, draw from census tracts which are largely owner-occupied. Regardless of whether concentrated apartment housing and the Village's housing policies explain Beye's racial balance, the growing imbalance in these other schools may be the result of changes in the market for owner-occupied housing.

Table 5: 1990 Census: Home Ownership Percentages, Housing Values, and Percent Black, Selected Oak Park Census Tracts and District 97 East Side Attendance Areas

School	Census Tracts	Percent Owner-Occupied 1990	Percent Black 1990	Median Housing Values (\$) 1990
Hatch	8121	.75	.29	118,000
	8122	.90	.06	231,900
	8124	.81	.04	230,400
Whittier	8121	.75	.29	118,000
	8124	.81	.04	230,400
	8125	.32	.28	161,300
Beye	(8124)	(.81)	(.04)	(230,400)
	8125	.32	.28	161,300
	8126	.25	.39	160,900
	8127	.34	.19	203,100
Longfellow	(8126)	(.25)	(.39)	(160,900)
	(8127)	(.34)	(.19)	(203,100)
	8129	.65	.09	133,000
	8130	.67	.26	120,100
Irvings	8131	.57	.26	97,500
	8132	.63	.09	122,800

Note: Parentheses indicates small portion of tract in attendance area.

The village's housing programs have little or no influence over who buys a house. This is largely determined instead by a real estate market notoriously segmented by race. White buyers tend to select from a much wider range of communities than black buyers, who for a variety of reasons, including discrimination and reluctance to become racially isolated, tend to choose from among a smaller number of cities and neighborhoods. There have been dramatic increases in black homebuying nationwide since 1992, but black purchasers in the Chicago area are still disproportionately concentrated in a few areas. One of these areas is the near western suburbs, including Oak Park.⁴⁵ Some of the most affordable houses in Oak Park are in the Hatch, Longfellow, and Irving attendance areas. Consequently, it is likely that these areas are especially attractive to black homebuyers, leading to a steady increase in the black population of those schools. So, the changing student make-up of Hatch, Longfellow, and Irving may be the result of these trends in the Chicago area housing market.

The data for the Hatch area merit special consideration because this school draws from two very different parts of the village. Tract 8121 is a moderate income tract with a substantial black population, but tracts 8122 and 8124 are very affluent and overwhelmingly white. It is conceivable that there is an incompatibility in this reinforcing cleavage of class and race, which may contribute to the loss of white enrollment at Hatch.

The 1998-2000 Controversy

The most recent controversy over school desegregation in Oak Park began when an article appeared in the *Wednesday Journal* in July of 1998 that presented 1997 District 97 enrollments by race. The 1997 data showed disparities among the eight elementary schools. The District was 60 percent white, but Mann Elementary School, in affluent northwest Oak Park, was almost 78 percent white, at 18 percentage point disparity. Hatch, Irving, and Longfellow, in east Oak Park, were all at or near 40 percent black enrollment, while Mann's black enrollment was only 16.8 percent. The article also included comments from a number of citizens and officials on the relationship between school desegregation and residential segregation. The most pointed comments came from Daniel Lauber, a lawyer and former president of the American Planning Association, who said, "We're getting to the point where we have racially identifiable schools. It's the killer variable. For Oak Park to continue to exist as a racially diverse community depends in large part on school integration, and they're blowing it. Unless they do something in the next year and a half, they're setting the stage for Oak Park to re-segregate."⁴⁶

However, the District 97 School Board president was noncommittal, and even expressed doubt that any trends toward segregation were occurring, saying, "We do strive to maintain race balance in schools and sometimes it's not easy to do. You can look at schools and have no idea what the make-up is. Some people freak out when they see five more kids than they saw two years ago. We're going to look at the things we need to as we work through facilities, and this could be a part of it."⁴⁷

A strong counterpoint to Lauber's views came from District 97's Director of Multicultural Education, who was against changing boundaries solely to achieve racial balance, saying, "My dream is to see children of all races with the opportunity to have the same quality education. Should we redraw the boundaries just so kids can sit next to each other in another school? If the school has quality programs and everyone is working together, why do it?"⁴⁸

This view was echoed, and amplified, by the Village's Community Relations Director, who supervised many of the programs that emerged from the integration maintenance agenda. She said, "Schools need to be good. We don't have any schools that are one race. I don't think that's acceptable, but if we get there, we need to make sure that it's the best school, or one of the two best schools out of ten. If the quality of education is good and stays high, race should not be an issue."⁴⁹ She also placed the school desegregation issue in a larger context, questioning the value of integration. The issue, she said, was promoting "diversity," not integration, which she appeared to equate with assimilation:

I don't use the term integration because I don't know what that person is talking about. I can't think of any term connected with integration that has ever worked. It's to become like you, like somebody else. Busing integration didn't work, school integration didn't work, housing integration didn't work. Here we're talking about racial diversity. We're a cosmopolitan, racially and ethnically diverse community-- rather than an integrated one. For some people, 70/30 is integration, for other people 50/50 is integration. It has not been successful as a term. Racial diversity is the main thing; that's what we're about. And some people have a hard time saying that.⁵⁰

These statements by the School Board President, the District's Director of Multicultural Education, and the Village's Community Relations Director -- three prominent African-American public officials -- clearly demonstrate how much had changed since 1976. The issue was no longer what to do about maintaining racial balance in the schools; it was now necessary to argue about whether anything at all should be done. Oak Park public officials were publicly questioning the value of policies promoting racial integration in the community and in the schools.

As the issue intensified through 1998 and 1999, advocates of school integration made the case that racial balance in the schools was necessary if neighborhood resegregation was to be avoided. They produced data showing a growing racial imbalance in the district, and pointed out that the district had done nothing to address this imbalance since 1987. They argued that the current board was abdicating a critical role in Oak Park's integration maintenance program, a role which in the past the district had openly and willingly acknowledged, even embraced. In short, advocates of resegregation measures were saying that the school board would be to blame if Oak Park's efforts at integration maintenance failed.

But those who questioned the need for further desegregation efforts, including members of the school board, the District 97 Superintendent of Schools, and staff members, presented a series of counter-arguments. Some denied the significance of any existing racial imbalances. It was also contended that even if a significant imbalance existed, it was not the school board's responsibility to deal with it because it was the result of residential patterns and the board's only responsibility was quality education for all students. Further, it was asserted that even if it were part of the board's role to address racial imbalances, school district officials were being unfairly scapegoated and should not be expected to act on their own. Instead, there should be a concerted effort by government agencies, notably the Village, in which the school board would play a part. The board also argued that there needed to be not only a joint effort by government but also a full examination of the issue by the general public. And finally, some expressed the

opinion that discussing the racial composition of the various District 97 schools as though it were a problem was distasteful. Several influential black Oak Park residents argued that the debate over school desegregation policies had the potential to make black residents, and especially black children, feel badly about themselves.

The issue of whether the school board should undertake racial balancing efforts became more hotly contested at the same time that the school district was considering a reorganization plan to move sixth grade students into the junior high schools, which would be extensively remodeled and become middle schools. Much of the debate over the schools took place in the pages of the *Wednesday Journal*, whose publisher took a strong editorial stance in favor of further desegregation efforts. In October of 1998, the *Journal* ran an article reporting on a letter from the district's legal counsel. The district had requested an opinion as to whether a return to K-8 schools was feasible, as an alternative to the K-5, 6-8 plan. The attorney, said the *Journal*, replied that "a return to a system of kindergarten through eighth grade schools could result in a lawsuit and judgment against the district for 'intentional discrimination'" under the Armstrong Act. Intentional, or de jure, segregation could be inferred from returning to a K-8 system, the lawyer said, because,

If the plan exacerbates racial imbalances as anticipated, the school district may be at risk of being found legally liable for intentional discrimination... Based on October 1997 diversity statistics you provided me, it appears that at least one facility, Mann, already exceeds the average percentage of white students by more than 15 percent. Additional racial balance [sic] in this facility alone might result in the school district being subjected to a legal challenge.⁵¹

Releasing this letter to the press had the effect of muting protest from those who opposed middle schools and wished to go back to the pre-1976 system of ten neighborhood schools. It also underscored the relative severity of the growing racial disparities in the district. In March of 1999, Daniel Lauber raised the issue again in a blistering opinion article published in the *Wednesday Journal*:

Twenty years from now, when Oak Park has become mostly African-American with a small pocket of wealthy white homeowners, historians will recount how the District 97 elementary school board consistently undermined village hall's longtime efforts to achieve and keep Oak Park racially diverse. The historians will note that for several years, the District 97 board refused to address the crucial role of the public schools in preserving Oak Park's racial diversity, namely adjusting school boundaries to assure that every District 97 school has roughly the same racial composition...⁵²

Lauber then explained the relationship between educational and residential segregation, and concluded saying that unless the board acted, "Oak Park will lose its distinction as one of the few stable, racially diverse municipalities in the Chicago area, the Midwest and the nation. The whole nation is watching."⁵³

The following week, Robert Milstein, chair of the Village's Community Relations Commission, came to District 97's defense, arguing that there was no significant racial disparity, and that the

school district should not be expected to act alone to correct one if it existed:

We see no sign that District 97 has forfeited, or intends to forfeit, its responsibilities ...While we agree that the schools must have a role in the community's overall diversity efforts, we do not feel that District 97 should shoulder a disproportionate share of that duty. We are also satisfied with the district's progress to date...Moreover, supporting evidence abounds that Oak Park is diverse in every community and continues to attract people of all races to all parts of the village.⁵⁴

In April 1999, Milstein's Community Relations Commission held a public meeting and heard from Lauber and other proponents of school desegregation, along with those who defended the school district. Lauber pointed out that Irving School had become the first school in Oak Park history to have a white minority, with at least two other schools in east Oak Park not far behind. To remedy this, he suggested that attendance lines be redrawn, busing increased, and permissive transfers (allowing parents to voluntarily move their child from his or her neighborhood school to a different one of their choice) be limited. He said the school district should return to the 15 percent disparity policy of the Bakalis Guidelines.

But the vice president of the District 97 board disagreed. She said that the board might "discuss racial balance briefly but not extensively" because the District had more important matters to take up, including the middle school reorganization plan. She also said that school quality was more important than racial balance, asserting, "I think people choose a school because of the academic quality of the school. We're going to work really, really hard to make sure all children are excelling." The meeting ended with commission chair Robert Milstein and the school board vice president agreeing that the commission's Education Subcommittee would meet informally with District 97 officials to discuss the issue.⁵⁵

The evident lack of enthusiasm for integration maintenance displayed by members of the Community Relations Commission and the school board was not lost on Dan Haley, publisher of the Wednesday Journal. He expressed his reaction to this meeting in his weekly column, saying:

It's time to talk about the balance of black and white kids in our elementary schools. It is time to talk because the balance is being lost. And it is time to talk because the significance of that imbalance seems to be lost among some people who ought to know better...Excuse me, but how did the Community Relations Commission, of all places, get stacked with people who don't buy into the fundamental premise that long-term diversity is the over-arching goal of this village?⁵⁶

A long-time Oak Park policy maker, who had been a member of the 1976 school board that instituted the original desegregation plan, had a similar reaction. He wrote an article for both local newspapers drawing the contrast between past and present:

[M]ost Oak Parkers 25 years ago were wise enough to understand that the racial composition of a local school would have a powerful influence on the surrounding housing market. Thus they were prepared to support widespread changes...Now fast forward one generation to 1999, and the recent meeting of the Village's

Community Relations Commission...A group of leading citizens is now questioning whether this School Board is committed to a system where each school building reflects the system's racial numbers...[I]f it is indeed the School Board's intention to abrogate its 1974 policy on racial balance, it has the obligation to tell us so. It must explain without dissembling, and in detail, why this is no longer important.⁵⁷

Community Relations Commission Chair Robert Milstein again responded to Dan Haley and other critics of the school board and his commission, writing in the *Wednesday Journal*. He cited an article in another newspaper which had predicted that Oak Park was on its way to becoming a black majority community, and asked, "So, Dan, where are the whites going to go?" The implication seemed to be that school desegregation no longer mattered as much as before, because whites would soon be in the minority in Oak Park regardless of what the school board did.⁵⁸

Haley responded to Milstein in the same issue, calling the newspaper article on Oak Park's supposed resegregation that Milstein had cited a "hatchet job," and saying, "Sorry to upset you, Mr. Milstein, but your essay only confirms to me the CRC has wandered off course. The best next step would be for you either to resign your post or for the Village President to demand your resignation. Oak Park has challenges aplenty when it comes to integration. Scare tactics that suggest the rate of black population growth is ahead of the reality don't help."⁵⁹

On June 30, the school board held a special public meeting on the racial balance issue. At this meeting, several speakers presented and discussed data on growing racial imbalance in the district throughout the 1990s. It became clear that the Superintendent of Schools for District 97, John Fagan, had no more enthusiasm for new desegregation measures than did the school board. A reporter characterized the Superintendent's demeanor as "fundamentally dismissive of school critics who challenged the school board to get ahead of the racial balance issue. Both in his comments and in his posture, Fagan downplayed the concerns and statistical analysis presented by three area residents." Fagan said of the speakers, "I don't think they're anywhere close," and "I've spent 30 years in [education], not reading studies, living it. You can play with this data." He said, "We're not going to listen to knee-jerks."

Instead, Fagan explained, the district was primarily focused on providing good education at all the district's schools, and he detailed the district's early and leading involvement in a consortium of communities that were studying ways to improve minority achievement. However, Fagan did not rule out further consideration of the racial balance issue, saying, "I'm willing to talk in some larger conversation." And several board members seemed to imply the same thing. One board member said, "I hope everyone will be patient as we slog through this long process."⁶⁰ A representative of the Village of Oak Park who spoke at the meeting proposed an idea that might hasten that process: she publicly invited the District to participate in a day-long workshop in the fall that would address this issue in a broader context.⁶¹

After this meeting, the publisher of the *Wednesday Journal* again excoriated District 97, this time evoking visions of the fall of Rome: "If Nero fiddled while Rome burned, will they someday say that while Oak Park schools resegregated, Fagan reclined?" He said that Fagan's "supine nonchalance" reflected "this administration's firm reluctance to take on what is probably Oak Park's major challenge at the moment: maintaining racial balance in Oak Park's elementary

schools. Fagan and the board seem to have little stomach for this battle. Too hot politically. Residents will howl."⁶²

Under continuing pressure from the local press, other agencies, and citizen activists, the school board held a goal-setting retreat in July, 1999, at which "five of the seven members placed racial balance as either the number one or number two issue facing the board this year and next."⁶³

The nature of the issue, however, was different than in years past. The issue was not how to maintain racial balance in the schools, but whether anything should be done at all. It also became clear that there was disagreement over whether the racial disparities among the schools were significant or not. However, in the months that followed, school board members and other local officials were briefed on long-term enrollment trends in District 97. Among those receiving briefings were the Housing Committee of the Village of Oak Park Board of Trustees, the Village Manager, and the Board of Directors of the Oak Park Regional Housing Center.⁶⁴

Dissemination to policy makers of the data on enrollment trends changed the debate. It became clear to Village officials and others that the racial differences between Oak Park's east side and west side were increasing. However, the school board was still not moved to action, and board members seemed to have adopted a defensive posture in the face of what seemed to some unfair criticism. In order to broaden support among community elites for the District taking action, the Village and the Regional Housing Center agreed to co-sponsor a conference on the future of integration in Oak Park, at which school desegregation would be the major, but not the only, issue to be discussed. The conference was entitled, "Oak Park: An Integrated Community, Now and Into the 21st Century."

One veteran writer on Oak Park summarized the purpose of the conference as follows: The initial impetus behind the conference was a growing sense of uneasiness that the school on the eastern half of Oak Park...have seen a significant rise in minority students and a corresponding decrease in white students...District 97 board member tend to talk about "academic excellence" as a more important factor than racial balance in keeping Oak Park, and Oak Park schools, integrated. At the very least, District 97 board members have no intention of taking on this political hot potato alone. If the community wants racial balance, the community will have to ask for it. Hence, the emphasis on "interdependence" at this conference, says Rogene Hill, director of Community Services and the village's point person on organizing this conference. Racial balance won't be the only issue discussed and District 97 won't be the only governmental entity put on the hot seat. The responsibility for whatever approach to integration Oak Park takes in the future will have to be shared.⁶⁵

At the conference, which took place on November 6, 1999, the data on enrollment trends in the district became public for the first time.⁶⁶ The event was attended by more than 100 community leaders and covered by the *Chicago Tribune*.⁶⁷ Harvard's school desegregation expert Gary Orfield was the featured speaker, and he used these data as the factual basis for his address.⁶⁸ Orfield urged the school district to address the disparities without delay, in a presentation that covered in detail the major research findings concerning the relationship between educational and residential integration. He offered a number of methods for achieving racial balance, including redrawing boundaries, creating specialized magnet schools, and moving to a lottery plan of the type used in Cambridge, Massachusetts.⁶⁹

It is a good indicator of how much had changed in Oak Park that, despite the impetus of the conference and the discussion it generated,⁷⁰ the district remained reluctant to act, and the controversy continued. In February, 2000, more than three months after the conference, the board balked at a proposal from Village Manager Carl Swenson to create a "leadership council" that would do what the board and school superintendent had earlier said it wanted: consider school desegregation in the context of all Oak Park's integration maintenance programs, through a process involving many agencies and a great deal of citizen input.

The board reacted to this proposal from the Village Manager as though it were a subterfuge. One school board member said he believed Swenson's proposal had a hidden, and by implication improper, motivation, "a fear [some] schools have too many black kids in them--this is the impetus for this discussion; it's clearly the impetus." Another expressed discomfort at even keeping track of the racial composition of the schools, saying, "Personally, I find the issues of the number of kids distasteful." Other members seemed to be uncertain as to the purpose of the discussion and spoke in non sequiturs. One said, "We're not trying to solve something, [we're] trying to figure out what the question is." The new board president, in an ironic choice of words, said diversity was, "an extremely complex issue that's been, to this point, too simplistic...it's not that black and white." And a teacher at Emerson, who was invited to the meeting by the board, said, "If it isn't about achievement, maybe it isn't something we should be involved in."⁷¹

Once again, the school board came under criticism from the *Wednesday Journal*. Dan Haley wrote of the meeting that, "As they have for the past year or more, school board members and appointed administrators continue to act as if a net was about to be thrown over them as part of an elaborate trap." He pointed out that earlier the school board had legitimately taken the position that this was a "village-wide issue," and had said, in effect, "Don't expect us to solve it alone." The village government agreed, and responded by holding the November conference and then proposing the Leadership Council, which, he said, was "largely a way to give District 97 cover in tackling the racial balance issue in our elementary schools." But now the school board was refusing the "lifeline" extended to it by the village. Haley wrote:

[s]ince the first of the year, the village believed it had the buy-in needed from District 97. Then things bogged down internally. And last week they boiled over publicly as District 97's ambivalence in embracing the truth that racial integration has to be a fundamental goal of any significant Oak Park public institution became the subject of a rambling, unfocused board meeting. The board seems confused and obstinate. Here's some clarifying advice: Unless you honestly believe in racial integration, that would be blacks and whites living together in all parts of the village, you shouldn't be in public office in Oak Park. If the question, "What's wrong with all black schools in Oak Park?" has ever once passed your lips or even entered your mind, you don't belong on a public school board in Oak Park.⁷²

Gloria Merrill, a member of the Village of Oak Park Plan Commission who had been involved with the village's diversity issues for many years, wrote that the school board's behavior was "simply beyond understanding" and inconsistent with the board's own policy statements and behavior in years past.⁷³

Finally, at the March 8, 2000, school board meeting, the board relented and agreed to participate in the Leadership Council. The understanding between the village and the school board specified that "education and village issues, including housing and economic development, are closely related," so the council would engage in broad discussion of all these matters. This was to include not just racial diversity in the schools and the village, but economic diversity, i.e., the class disparities in Oak Park's population, and the issues presented by the increasingly prominent gay and lesbian community in the village. And the council was to involve a great deal of citizen participation including some system of hearing from organized groups.⁷⁴ One school board member read from a proposed list of such groups that included "taxpayers, parents and students, park district patrons, library patrons, church-goers, members of nonprofit organizations, real estate brokers, building owners and managers, business owners and managers and government officials."⁷⁵

The price of engaging District 97 in school desegregation efforts was now clear. In exchange for the school board considering any steps to address obvious and growing racial imbalances, the Village had to agree to open everything about its integration maintenance programs and plans to a lengthy period of public scrutiny. As an editorial in the *Wednesday Journal* pointed out, this looked a great deal like something the community had just done. From 1995 through 1997, all six Oak Park governmental taxing bodies --including the village and the school districts -- had sponsored a large and expensive project known as "Vision 2000" that had sought to envision "a preferred future for Oak Park based on current shared community values and ideals." The project included taking extensive public input from every conceivable group. There were seven open "community conversations" and eight focus group meetings, which included sessions dedicated to discussing education, race, and diversity.⁷⁶ All the issues and programs to be discussed by the Leadership Council had been considered in Vision 2000; all the groups of citizens who were now to be called to participate had been convened and listened to for Vision 2000. But unless this process were repeated, the school board would not seriously consider desegregation measures.

The *Wednesday Journal* urged the new Leadership Council to use the Vision 2000 report as a guide to public opinion, noting that "this is a 'leadership' council, not a passive receptacle of public opinion....Oak Park has already demonstrated that we're above average in eliciting opinions. What we haven't been particularly good at lately is leadership."⁷⁷

Galen Gockel, the Oak Park Township Assessor and a member of the 1976 school board, linked this failure of leadership to the absence of a sense of crisis. In the 1970s, he said, "people knew that the leadership wouldn't tolerate rapid racial change. They knew the officials were on top of things...Everyone was against rapid racial change. That was the common enemy, what happened in Austin. Today there is no common antagonist." He expressed concern about any far-reaching re-evaluation of Oak Park's policies in the current climate of "Balkanization," saying, "I shudder to think of the strife from zealots with axes to grind."⁷⁸

Slouching Toward Desegregation?

The empirical facts suggest strongly that Oak Park's integration maintenance policies work as intended. The District 97 policies implemented in 1976 and 1987 to prevent racial resegregation appear to have been largely effective for a number of years. The junior highs are still racially

balanced because of the 1976 reorganization, which set them up to draw from both east and west. After the 1987 boundary adjustments, the drop in white enrollment at Irving stopped, and the disparity in black enrollment at Beye and Whittier was remedied. The village's housing policies, which promote racial balance in apartment buildings, may help in these two schools. In short, to the extent that racial balance exists in District 97, it is largely the result of public policy interventions done with the intention of creating that balance.⁷⁹

However, probably because of changes in the housing market, there is at present a significant and growing racial imbalance developing among the District 97 schools. Oak Park's housing policies were designed to deal with resegregation of apartment neighborhoods. The issue now may be resegregation of single family housing neighborhoods. Four schools, all in areas of predominantly single family housing -- Mann, Hatch, Longfellow, and Irving -- are especially unbalanced. The trend is clearly toward some schools being racially identifiable as "white" or "black" schools, if this has not begun to occur already. Moreover, there is an increasing tendency for the five east side schools and the three west side schools to have different profiles. If present trends in the housing market continue and District 97 does not redraw its internal boundaries or otherwise react to those trends, not only particular schools, but entire halves of the community are at risk for becoming racially identifiable.

Notwithstanding these trends, and the fact that the school board is by now well aware of them, Oak Park's latest attempt to grapple with school desegregation has already lasted almost two years and, as of this writing, there is no end in sight. Something has changed in Oak Park's ability to mobilize a consensus around integration maintenance measures. Politically, it is much harder to do so than it was in the past.

The changes that have taken place in Oak Park are certainly influenced by the decline in support for school desegregation that has occurred at the federal and state levels, which has tipped the scales significantly in local consideration of such measures. Integration advocates in years past could cite federal court decisions and state policies in support of their position. Now they not only receive no support from those quarters, but some recent court decisions have invalidated local efforts at achieving racial balance. These decisions reflect the triumph of the "color blind" policies advocated by conservative jurists such as United States Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas.⁸⁰

However, there are internal changes in Oak Park as well. It is harder to mobilize a consensus for policy-making because there is no longer consensus on the values underlying the policies. The debate over school desegregation seems to have become fixated on the issue of whether promoting integration is a good thing. The energy of desegregation advocates is focused on making a case for integration, something that was generally accepted in 1976 and 1987, rather than on specifically what to do to achieve racial balance in the schools.⁸¹

In considering why there is paralysis, it may be that the integration maintenance movement is suffering from the consequences of its own successes in Oak Park. The movement was able to institutionalize its programs quickly in village government and related agencies. This success means that government and government-linked agencies that are relatively invisible do the work of integration maintenance, and residents in their neighborhoods are less likely to understand and support how integration is maintained.

In the 1970s, voluntary community groups mobilized people and educated them about the logic of resegregation and how to prevent it. Now, citizens are in the position of paying taxes for government services that include integration maintenance, and then consuming that service, which they experience as daily life in an integrated community. Integration was once a valued state that citizens in Oak Park had to think about and act to preserve. Now it may be something they tend to take for granted, as though it happened automatically here because the people were especially virtuous, rather than as the calculated result of 35 years of public policy.

If this is true, then those who wish to desegregate District 97 face a political challenge that is more severe than in 1976 or 1987. In committee meetings and newspaper columns, they must make the case for integration and for policies designed to preserve it. The outcome of that process is by no means certain.

Oak Park's integration maintenance policies were passed during a time of perceived crisis caused by the rapid resegregation of Austin and the predictions that Oak Park would follow suit. This created a "policy window,"⁸² an unusual opportunity to take significant action that might otherwise never have advanced to the top of the policy agenda. Organized advocates of integration maintenance were ready with specific policies, and a consensus mobilized around those policies quickly because the course they advised seemed the only sensible alternative to passively watching resegregation take place.

But now it is taken for granted that Oak Park is, and always will be, an integrated community, and the importance of particular policies is not as obvious as it once was. In this case, the issue is the relationship between maintaining racial balance in the schools and "affirmative marketing," or making sure that all neighborhoods are attractive to white buyers. For many in the community, impending school resegregation does not send off alarm signals as it once did. Absent such a sense of crisis, desegregation advocates have to argue every step of the way and overcome every conceivable objection. This makes it very difficult to mobilize a consensus quickly. If their view of the dynamics of resegregation is accurate, by the time the situation is perceived as serious, it may be too late to do anything about it.

The most significant divergence in support for integration maintenance may be among middle class, educated, involved citizens -- Oak Park's policy elite. Explaining the reasons for emerging fissures over integration among in these circles is beyond the scope of this study. However, certain things about them are clear. Today, in contrast to the 1970s, they are almost universally ideological liberals. And, as Oak Park's black population has increased, the circle of policy influentials has expanded to include a significant number of black elected and appointed officials, journalists, and other influential citizens.

Those who question the need for school desegregation are well educated and familiar with contemporary issues in American politics. Their views of Oak Park politics are not derived purely from local experience, but are heavily influenced by the national discourse over race relations. That discourse is highly conflictual, ideological, emotional, and sensitive to the symbolic dimension of politics and policy. By contrast, Oak Park's local politics, where integration is concerned, have historically been relatively nonpartisan and highly pragmatic, being focused on non-ideological local solutions to concrete issues.

The advocates of integration maintenance are still speaking the language of pragmatism and cause and effect, but they are now being met with rebuttals saying, in effect, that proposals to achieve racial balance in the schools through public policy have the potential to make black people feel bad about themselves. One black parent and Village Managers Association member wrote, after the November diversity conference, that she experienced ambivalent emotions as the event drew near:

As the conference approached, my own opinions raged inside me. Yes, I did believe in the diversity goal, but at what price? Had anyone considered the message all this sends to African-Americans? How, I imagined, would I explain this to my daughter? “They’re thinking we should re-district the schools because there are too many Black kids in certain ones.”⁸³

At day’s end, she left the conference with positive feelings and said, “I hope that our community will explore and implement some of the alternatives discussed.”⁸⁴ Similar conflicting sentiments were voiced by other black Oak Park residents. Charles Whitaker described his own ambivalence in terms that mirrored Robinson’s:

Like many African Americans, I bristle at the suggestion that the schools of the southeast face a crisis because too many black children are enrolled in them. (And let’s face it, that is how the code “racial imbalance” gets translated.) Yet I must confess that I, too, am concerned about current housing and enrollment trends that threaten to further divide the village along racial lines.⁸⁵

Stan West said substantially the same thing, acknowledging the value of maintaining an integrated community, but raising the issue of just how far public policy should go in accommodating white fears. In particular, in discussing his own feelings and those of others, he described something he called, “the black insult,” the feeling that most blacks and some whites felt insulted by the not-so-subtle patronizing insinuation that “the blacks are coming; let’s do something before our schools fail, property values plummet, the sky falls, and civilization as we once knew it evaporates before our teary, bloodshot eyes.”...Am I alone in saying if prospective white homeowners see too many middle-class African American children having fun in a playground that I’d prefer that person move their family and their fears elsewhere because I sure don’t want a neighbor like that?⁸⁶

From the standpoint of the advocates of school desegregation, the “black insult” perspective may seem paradoxical. The paradox, of course, is that people who feel insulted by the existence and implications of integration maintenance policies moved to Oak Park in part because it was integrated.⁸⁷ They are now raising objections to the very policies that many believe are responsible for making the community the way they wish it to be. On the other hand, nobody questions that these emotions are genuine. Moreover, if these strong feelings are rooted in a deep mistrust among black people of the motivations of whites, clearly that mistrust resulted from centuries of cultural experience and cannot be discounted.

In short, an argument that says “public policy is about how the world works” meets a counter-argument that says, “policy is about how people feel,” and the result to date is policy paralysis.

As of this writing, it seems that there are two separate conversations on the topic, and people are talking past each other. Until the two conversations are reconciled, or at least joined, the impasse will remain, and Oak Park will be unable to engage in a new round of school desegregation.

There may be a way to bring these conversations together because, in a sense, both positions are valid. If public policies are to be effective interventions in human behavior, they must be pragmatic to some extent, and they must include some notion of cause and effect. Rationality is an essential component of public policy. But there is an equally important emotional and symbolic side to public policy as well. As public policies are considered in a community, a social process of discussion, argument, and consensus-building goes on, and this never approaches perfect rationality. It is often a vehicle for expressing fear, anger, suspicion, and utopian hopes. Hyperbolic and conflictual discourse are common. And, according to one leading policy theorist, all this is a good thing, because it is through this non-rational social process that communities come together and find their identities.⁸⁸ Seen in this light, the seemingly irrational, symbolic, and emotional aspects of the policy process are essential to community building.

If this theory of the policy process is correct, it may be possible to resolve the existing impasse over school desegregation in Oak Park by taking advantage of the Leadership Council process to let a new consensus come into existence. This would amount to extending the pragmatic logic of integration maintenance to include all residents. Oak Park's policies are called "pragmatic" because they are designed to produce observable, behavioral results, given the fact that racial prejudice is widespread among white people and in American institutions. Because the policies do not make utopian assumptions about white people, they are measurably effective in maintaining white demand for housing in Oak Park. So, just as the policies of integration maintenance take white people as they are, with all their fears, perhaps now these policies must do a better job of taking black people as they are, with all theirs. If many black residents say they feel insulted by proposals to desegregate the schools -- even as they express their understanding of the rational argument for desegregation -- then somehow that must be taken into account and addressed in the policy process, just as the feelings of existing and potential white residents are taken into account.

It may be that the Leadership Council process, although potentially cumbersome, will provide an opportunity to do this, and possibly to mobilize a new and more inclusive consensus around policies that seem to be giving Oak Park residents the kind of community they want.

Evan McKenzie

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Appendix

**The Politics of School Desegregation
in Oak Park, Illinois**

Notes

- 1 Dan Haley, "Dist. 97 Refuses Lifeline in Planning Integration," *Wednesday Journal*, February 23, 2000, p. 4.
- 2 See Seamus Dunn, ed., *Managing Divided Cities*. (Keele, Staffordshire: Ryburn Publishing, Keele University Press, 1994)
- 3 See Carole Goodwin, *The Oak Park Strategy: Community Control of Racial Change* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979).
- 4 Gary Orfield and Susan E. Eaton, *Dismantling Desegregation: The Quiet Reversal of Brown v. Board of Education*, (New York: New Press, 1996).
- 5 United States Census for tracts 2501-2524 (check this), 1960, 1970, 1980, 1990.
- 6 Ernest W..Burgess, "Residential Segregation in American Cities," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, (November 1928), Vol. 140, pp. 105-115. A perceptive review of this literature is found in Goodwin, op. cit., pp. 2-9.
- 7 See Pierre de Vise, "The Annexation of Oak Park by Chicago," (Working Paper 8.16, Chicago Regional Hospital Study, December 1973); see also Anthony Downs, "Alternative Futures for the American Ghetto," Daedalus
- 8 There were other differences between Oak Park and Austin, which are considered at length throughout Goodwin, op. cit.. For example, Austin's white population was composed largely of people who identified strongly with Irish, Italian, and other immigrant ethnicities, while, as Goodwin puts it, "...ethnic identification of any sort did not appear to be as strong in Oak Park as in Austin." (p. 38).
- 9 The fullest exposition of these views, which includes a discussion of the relationship between the movement and Oak Park is Juliet Saltman's *A Fragile Movement* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1990).
- 10 One of the principal figures in Oak Park's adoption of these policies was Roberta Raymond, who founded the Oak Park Regional Housing Center. She relates much of the history of these policies, and the logic for their adoption, in Roberta Raymond, "Racial Diversity: A Model for American Communities," in *Housing: Chicago Style* (Chicago: Illinois Advisory Committee to the United States Commission on Civil Rights, October 1982) pp.85-93.
- 11 *Chicago Fact Book Consortium, Local Community Fact Book, Chicago Metropolitan Area, 1990*. (Chicago: University of Illinois at Chicago, 1995), p. 300.
- 12 A Signed Statement by 37 Social Scientists. "School Desegregation and Residential Segregation." *Society*, Vol. 16, No. 5, July/August 1979, pp. 70-76, at p. 71 (emphasis added).
- 13 Gary Orfield, "Ghettoization and Its Alternatives." In *The New Urban Reality*, Paul Peterson (ed.) (Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution, 1985), p. 192.
- 14 Juliet Saltman, *A Fragile Movement: The Struggle for Neighborhood Stabilization*. (New York: Greenwood Press, 1990).
- 15 347 US 483 (1954)
- 16 Illinois Revised Statutes, Chapter 122, Par. 10-21.3.

- 17 Tomety v. Board of Education, 39 Ill.2d 593 (1968).
- 18 State of Illinois, Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, "Rules Establishing Requirements and Procedures for the Elimination and Prevention of Racial Segregation in Schools," November 22, 1971.
- 19 Aurora East School District No. 131, et al. v. Cronin [cite] (1982). State officials cited four elementary schools in the Aurora East district as having excessive minority enrollments: Brady, Beaupre, Oak Park, and O'Donnell. One plan the state recommended would have involved closing Beaupre and reassigning students to different schools. Following its victory in the courts, the district's segregation trends worsened. By 1998, the white enrollments of the four schools cited by the state had plummeted to 2.9%, 6.9%, 3.5%, and 19.6%, respectively.
- 20 Board of Education, Oak Park District 97, "Human Dignity Policy," March 20, 1972.
- 21 Goodwin, 92-3.
- 22 Elementary School District 97, Oak Park, Illinois, "Policy Statement on Racial Balance in Oak Park Elementary Schools," March 13, 1974.
- 23 Letter dated March 13, 1975, from Maurice J. Garvey to Dr. Kenton Stephens, on file with the author.
- 24 Interview by the author with Michael Mangan, Illinois State Board of Education, March 16, 2000. Mangan was the enforcement officer with responsibility for Oak Park in 1975.
- 25 Kathy Catrambone, "Racial Balance is Top School Issue," *Oak Leaves*, January 1, 1976, p. 5; Kathy Catrambone, "Remap Gets 'go' for '76," *Oak Leaves*, January 28, 1976, p. 5; Kathy Catrambone, "How Schools Came to Remap Plans," *Oak Leaves*, January 28, 1976, p. 7.
- 26 District 97 figures, reported in Goodwin, at p. 90, Table 14.
- 27 Hawthorne was later renamed Julian, in honor of Dr. Percy Julian, a prominent physician and early Oak Park black resident whose house was set afire by racists.
- 28 Goodwin, p. 93.
- 29 Carole Goodwin discusses these and other factors in her perceptive analysis of this episode, in *The Oak Park Strategy*, at pp. 89-96.
- 30 Data for 1979-1999 were supplied by the Illinois State Board of Education. Data for 2000 were supplied by Oak Park Elementary School District 97. The enrollments are calculated for October of each academic year, so that, for example, the data for 2000 represent students enrolled in Fall, 1999, who will complete that grade in June of 2000. As of this writing, the ISBE has been unable to supply me with data for 1976-1978.
- 31 Task Force on Racial Diversity, Report to the Board of Trustees, Village of Oak Park, May 21, 1984, p. 40.
- 32 Gail Moss, "No Middle Schools for Dist. 97, Boundaries Adjusted." *Wednesday Journal*, February 11, 1987, p. 3.
- 33 Ibid.
- 34 Ibid.

35 Mark M. Sweetwood, "Enrollment Plan Has Mixed Results," *Oak Leaves*, October 17, 1987, p. 12.

36 Ibid.

37 Board of Education of Oklahoma v. Dowell, 498 US 237 (1991); Freeman v. Pitts, 503 US 467 (1992); Missouri v. Jenkins, 115 S. Ct. 2038 (1995) [get official citation]

38 Orfield and Eaton, *Dismantling Desegregation*, p. 1.

39 The full picture of these other agencies will be the subject of subsequent works, but one example of this process is the Village of Oak Park's creation of a Community Relations Department. Another example is the creation of formal linkages between the Village and the Oak Park Regional Housing Center, the Oak Park Residence Corporation, and the Oak Park Housing Authority. These "sister agencies," as they are called in Oak Park, are essentially the institutional incarnation of the neighborhood stabilization movement.

40 The chi square value is significant at above the .001 level, which means that there is less than one chance on one thousand that this distribution would occur by chance.

41 These three groups were combined because otherwise their numbers are so small in Oak Park, in comparison with white and black, as to produce three indistinguishable lines across the bottom of the chart.

42 The statistical significance level is .037. This means the probability that this distribution did not occur by chance is 96.3%.

43 These data are from the 1990 Census and, being ten years out of date, clearly understate the value of housing and the black population of east Oak Park, both of which have increased substantially in the last decade.

44 This paper is part of a larger study that will address in detail the nature and effect of Oak Park's programs that focus on regulating the racial composition of apartment buildings. When the 2000 Census data for Oak Park are available, it will be possible to undertake a more detailed analysis of the impact the Village's housing programs have had on racial makeup of the tracts and neighborhoods.

45 Daniel Immergluck, *Unfinished Business: Increase in African-American Home Buying and Continuing Residential Segregation in the Chicago Region* (Chicago: Woodstock Institute, 1999); Mike Leachman, et al., *Black, White, and Shades of Brown: Fair Housing and Economic Opportunity in the Chicago Region*. (Chicago: Leadership Council for Metropolitan Open Communities, 1998).

46 Elaine Richardson, "Oak Park Schools Key to Diversity's Future," *Wednesday Journal*, July 22, 1998, p. 1.

47 Ibid, p. 14.

48 Ibid.

49 Ibid.

50 Ibid.

51 Elaine Richardson, "District 97 Could Face Lawsuit," *Wednesday Journal*, October 21,

1998, p. 17.

52 Daniel Lauber, "School District Undermines Oak Park's Racial Diversity," *Wednesday Journal*, March 17, 1999, p. 25.

53 Ibid.

54 Robert Milstein, "Schools Among Those Helping Oak Park Diversity," *Wednesday Journal*, p. 30.

55 Eric Linden, "How Important is Racial Balance Between Schools?" *Wednesday Journal*, April 28, 1999, p. 1.

56 Dan Haley, "Fair or Not, Schools' Racial Balance an Issue," *Wednesday Journal*, May 5, 1999, p. 4.

57 Galen Gockel, "It's About Time Dist. 97 Revisits Racial Balance," *Oak Leaves*, May 12, 1999, p. 21; also published as, "Oak Park Schools Need a New View of Racial Balance," *Wednesday Journal*, May 12, 1999, p. 25.

58 Robert Milstein, "Oak Park Needs Real Scoop on School's Racial Balance," *Wednesday Journal*, May 12, 1999, p. 29.

59 Dan Haley, "CRC Chief Should Buy In or Be Bounced," *Wednesday Journal*, May 12, 1999, p. 4.

60 Brett McNeil, "Schools Hear Resegregation Threat," *Wednesday Journal*, July 7, 1999, p. 1.

61 Scott Ballard, "Report Warns District 97 About Losing Diversity," *Oak Leaves*, July 14, 1999, p. 13.

62 Dan Haley, "Nero Fiddled, Will Fagan Recline?" *Wednesday Journal*, July 14, 1999, p. 20.

63 Brett McNeil, "Communication, Racial Balance Among Goals Discussed by Dist. 97," *Wednesday Journal*, July 21, 1999, p. 9.

64 These briefings were conducted by the author, who obtained the data from the Illinois State Board of Education and prepared the charts, Daniel Lauber, and Gloria Merrill. The charts presented in this paper are identical to those used in the briefings except that data for academic year 2000, which were not available at the time of the briefings, have been added to Figures 1 through 15. The data were disseminated quite widely in Oak Park in late 1999. The author was also among the presenters at the Community Relations Commission and School Board informational meetings.

65 Ken Trainor, "Crossroads on Racial Diversity."

66 A few weeks after the conference, the charts documenting these imbalances became even more widely disseminated when they were published in an article in the *Wednesday Journal*. See Daniel Lauber, "A Graph Is Worth A Thousand Words," *Wednesday Journal*, December 1, 1999, p. 21.

67 LeAnn Spencer, "Oak Park Studies Ways to Preserve Diversity," *Chicago Tribune*, November 7, 1999, Section 4, p. 3.

68 The author provided Orfield with the data in advance of his talk. At the conference, before Orfield's address, the author presented the charts to the audience using an overhead projector.

- 69 Spencer, "Oak Park Studies Ways to Preserve Diversity."
- 70 Some of the most direct and insightful commentary came from two Wednesday Journal columnists, who offered especially candid observations on the conference and reactions to it in Oak Park's black community. See Stan West, "Race and Education: Let's All Hold Hands and Scream," *Wednesday Journal*, December 1, 1999; Charles Whitaker, "From Diverse Viewpoints, a Unified Vision," *Wednesday Journal*, December 15, 1999, p. 21
- 71 Brett McNeil, "Leaders Muddled on Diversity," *Wednesday Journal*, February 16, 2000, p. 1.
- 72 Dan Haley, "Dist. 97 Refuses Lifeline in Planning Integration," *Wednesday Journal*, February 23, 2000, p. 4.
- 73 Gloria Merrill, "Who Will Lead?" *Wednesday Journal*, February 23, 2000, p. 23.
- 74 Andrea Poet, "OP School Board Joins Race Efforts."
- 75 Casey Moffitt, "OP, Dist. 97 to Work on Diversity," *Oak Leaves*, March 15, 2000, p. 8.
- 76 *Vision 2000 of Oak Park, Vision 2000: The Dynamic Culture of Oak Park -- Final Report*. November 1997.
- 77 Editorial, "Leadership Council Needs to Get Specific on Diversity Issues," and "Vision 2000 May Be a Starting Point," *Wednesday Journal*, March 22, 2000, p. 22.
- 78 Ken Trainor, "Do We Need Another CTS?" *Wednesday Journal*, August 4, 1999, p. 27, 34.
- 79 The relationship between Oak Park's policies and the changing national discourse on race will be explored in a different portion of the author's overall study of Oak Park.
- 80 See Thomas' concurring opinion in *Missouri v. Jenkins*, 515 US 70 (1995), for an explication of his views on school desegregation efforts.
- 81 There was an example for District 97 to follow. In 1994, not long before the issue emerged again in Oak Park, District 65, in nearby Evanston and Skokie, adopted a reorganization plan "to address issues of racial balance and overcrowding." The plan included redrawing of attendance area boundaries, creation of a magnet school, and reorganization of programs. District 65 has a guideline providing that "no defined racial group shall exceed 60 percent of a school population." See Community Consolidated School District 65, District Reorganization Plan, December 19, 1994.
- 82 John Kingdon, *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies*, 2nd Ed., (New York: Addison-Wesley, 1995)
- 83 Jacquelyn Robinson, "What Price Diversity?"
- 84 *Ibid.*, p. 3.
- 85 Charles Whitaker, "From Diverse Viewpoints, a Unified Vision," *Wednesday Journal*, December 15, 1999, p. 21.
- 86 Stan West, "Race and Education: Let's All Hold Hands and Scream," *Wednesday Journal*, December 1, 1999, p. 21.
- 87 Both Charles Whitaker and Stan West acknowledge this paradox and discuss it in their columns. See Whitaker's "From Diverse Viewpoints," *ibid.*, and West's "Race and Education,"

ibid.

88 For a discussion of the respective roles of rationality and emotion in public policy, see Deborah Stone, *Policy Paradox: The Art of Political Decision Making* (New York: Norton, 1997).

