

# Dog Parks and Coffee Shops: Faux Diversity and Consumption in Gentrifying Neighborhoods

Sonya A. Grier and Vanessa G. Perry

*The process of gentrification, whereby lower-income residents are replaced with higher-income ones (Glass 1964), has changed the composition and character of hundreds of urban neighborhoods in cities worldwide. These changes affect not only the physical landscape but also the diversity of the people who live there. This research explores diversity seeking, consumption, and community in neighborhoods undergoing gentrification. The authors conducted a qualitative study of longer-term and newer residents in three neighborhoods in Washington, DC, to examine how the demographic changes that accompany gentrification relate to consumption. The findings suggest that diversity-seeking tendencies among newer residents were accompanied by tensions in the social and consumption domains, such that longer-term residents perceived exclusion and all residents experienced a reduced sense of community. The authors also find that these dynamics undermined the diversity that drew residents to these areas in the first place, resulting in “faux diversity.” The authors draw on these findings to discuss strategies that marketers and policy makers can utilize to contribute to the development of inclusive, healthy, and sustainable diverse communities.*

**Keywords:** consumption, diversity, diversity seeking, gentrification, sense of community

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Change is coming thru the neighborhood, like a hidden treasure,  
Building coffee houses in the 'hood,  
A place where we can come together.  
Dog Parks/coffee shops/collard greens/hip-hop/all on the same block  
Can we live together?  
Fancy Food/flaming hot/red bottoms/high tops/goat cheese and laptops  
We're all in this together.  
—Lyrics from “All in This Together,” by Dana Divine (<https://www.danadivine.com>)

Cities worldwide are segregated by income, race, and ethnicity, and as a result, they are grappling with ways to manage racial, ethnic, and cultural diversity (Iceland and Wilkes 2006; Parisi, Lichter, and Taquino 2015). Enter the process of gentrification, whereby lower-income residents are replaced with higher-income ones (Glass 1964). This process

has changed the composition and character of urban neighborhoods in cities worldwide (Kennedy and Leonard 2001). According to a study of gentrification in the 50 largest U.S. cities, approximately 20% of low-income neighborhoods have experienced gentrification since 2000, compared with only 9% between 1990 and 2000 (Maciag 2015). These demographic changes bring diverse groups into contact with one another and provide a preparatory backdrop as the United States moves toward a majority-minority society by 2043 (U.S. Census Bureau 2012). Bringing together consumers of different races and income levels is an important policy goal because it serves as a counterpoint to the deleterious effects of segregated neighborhoods. Indeed, sustaining healthy diverse integrated communities has been an ongoing policy priority in both direct and indirect ways and is an important concern for researchers, marketers, and consumers (Tach 2014; Turner and Rawlings 2009).

The realities of the current marketplace present several challenges to the establishment of sustainable diverse communities. Gentrification is a controversial process, with a core question of equity in terms of who benefits from the revitalization (Zuk et al. 2017). Scholars, policy makers, and community advocates echo concerns that growing racial and ethnic diversity may undergird intergroup conflict in changing neighborhoods (Holloway, Wright, and Ellis 2012; Lichter 2013). In addition, despite efforts by policy makers, along with private and nonprofit actors, diverse neighborhoods are unevenly distributed in major cities, and many areas continue to lack social and economic integration (Bolt, Phillips, and Van Kempen 2010; Massey and Tannen 2015; Parisi, Lichter, and Taquino 2015). The mix of public and private investment in formerly ignored or distressed areas increases

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neighborhood diversity in the short run, but it may also result in displacement of long-time residents (Zuk et al. 2017). These changes often occur through a gradual process that results in racially segregated neighborhoods (Bader and Warkentien 2016). In such cases, the diversity is short-lived, followed by many predominately minority or lower-income neighborhoods eventually becoming mostly white or higher-income neighborhoods.

In cases where original residents remain in a gentrifying area, the presence of diverse individuals does not automatically translate into a sustainably diverse community. Mirroring the broader society, racial tension often accompanies changing neighborhood demographics, given the strong correlations between race and income in the United States (Pew Research Center 2016). Thus, an important policy issue involves how to leverage the strengths associated with demographic and cultural diversity as societal assets. Strategies to create diverse communities can not only contribute to economic development and stability but also foster racial harmony (Boyack 2016). The potential role of marketing in these efforts is an unexamined and potentially impactful question.

A marketing focus on consumption in the context of gentrification is consistent with the emergent research emphasis on “space” and geographically defined areas for policy interventions, social marketing campaigns, commercial endeavors, and cross-sector initiatives (Ozalp and Belk 2005; Rosenbaum et al. 2017). As noted by Ozalp and Belk (2005),

Our understanding of both low involvement everyday consumption choices and practices and high involvement consumption choices (e.g., buying a house) has been isolated from the dynamics of urban life and urban space, including the strategies used by actors in the consumption scene to create or to contest value and their struggles over symbolic and social spaces where value is created. (Ozalp and Belk 2005)

In this research, we examine diversity and its relationship to consumption through the eyes of consumers in the context of neighborhood gentrification. Research has suggested that many of the people who are attracted to gentrified areas are “diversity seekers” (i.e., those who are specifically interested in diversity and who may seek out diversity in their neighborhood consumption preferences; Brumbaugh and Grier 2013; Grier, Brumbaugh, and Thornton 2006; Grier and Perry 2014). Understanding the views and experiences of those who choose to live among diversity, as well as the longer-term residents who “receive” the diversity, will add insight to our knowledge of how to promote inclusive communities.

## Background

### Neighborhood Diversity

Back-to-the-city movements worldwide have directed research attention toward the ability of neighborhoods to support racial and ethnic diversity (Hyra 2015, 2017), and this is particularly the case for so-called superstar cities and tech hubs such as New York, San Francisco, Seattle, Boston, and Washington, DC (Florida 2017; Guerrieri, Hartley, and Hurst 2010). Neighborhood diversity is typically defined and measured in terms of heterogeneous representation of different racial and ethnic groups (Freeman 2009; Massey and Denton 1993). We also consider dimensions of diversity based on income, age, family type, and sexual orientation because these are important determinants of social stratification and interaction (Tach 2014; Talen 2006).

Many studies have documented changing neighborhood diversity, and others have examined the compositional effects of gentrification on neighborhoods (Holloway, Wright, and Ellis 2012; Jackson and Butler 2015). In general, this research has found that an increasing number of neighborhoods with multiple demographic groups have developed alongside decreasing numbers of all-white neighborhoods; thus, the number of racially diverse neighborhoods is on the rise (Farrell and Lee 2011; Massey 2008; Parisi, Lichter, and Taquino 2015). This evolution is notable, because U.S. neighborhoods have been traditionally segregated owing to a history of policy choices, laws, and social norms (Carr and Kutty 2008). Minority populations in U.S. urban areas increased significantly after World War II because of “white flight,” a term that refers to white people leaving cities for more homogeneous suburbs (Boustan 2010). Despite shifting demographics, urban revitalization, and the mainstreaming of urban culture, many urban neighborhoods remain segregated along racial lines (Logan and Stults 2011). Several studies have found that white people prefer to live in predominately white neighborhoods (Ellen 2000; Havekes, Bader, and Krysan 2016). Continuing segregation is driven not only by housing choices but also by individual and institutional discrimination, stereotypes, mistrust, information asymmetries, and disparities in purchasing power (Turner and Rawlings 2009; Squires and Kubrin 2006).

### Gentrification, Neighborhood Diversity, and Public Policy

In the United States, the emergence of diverse neighborhoods is driven by a variety of public policies, private investment, multisector partnerships, and consumer choices (Zukin, Lindeman, and Hurson 2015). Scholars have characterized this assemblage of actors and institutions as “urban redevelopment governances,” highlighting the multiplicity of influences on the gentrification process and the central role of public policy (Anderson and Sternberg 2013). Research has also identified key processes as important determinants of gentrification, namely “the movement of people, public policies and investments, and flows of private capital” (Zuk et al. 2015, p. 3).

Residential diversity has been a key focus of policy makers because it serves as a counterpoint to the deleterious societal and individual effects of segregation. Segregation excludes certain consumer segments from high-quality housing and schools as well as important public services, and it is related to uneven access to institutional and economic resources (Massey and Denton 1993; Squires and Kubrin 2006; Trounstein 2016; Turner and Rawlings 2009). Segregated middle-class minority neighborhoods have lower-quality schools, fewer neighborhood amenities, and lower property values than comparable white communities (Cashin 2005; Pattillo 2005). Segregation is also a key factor in the constraints faced by poor and racial minority consumers in the marketplace, such as higher prices and fewer offerings (Saatcioglu and Ozanne 2013). In contrast, racially diverse neighborhoods provide a context for intercultural exposure and meaningful interaction between groups. Residents of diverse neighborhoods may experience more casual interracial contact, which can promote intergroup understanding and trust, broaden people’s social networks, and support the benefits of diversity (Farrell and Lee 2011; Pettigrew and Tropp 2006). For example, residents of more

diverse neighborhoods express less racial and ethnic prejudice (Ihlanfeldt and Scafidi 2002). More generally, because segregation affects access to high-quality housing, institutions, and services, sustaining healthy, diverse communities has been an ongoing policy priority when promoting equitable access to resources (Tach 2014).

Yet research has suggested that neighborhood diversity may be hindered in the quest toward healthy, integrated communities. Demographic changes that result from gentrification bring different preferences, lifestyles, and ways of being into confrontation. Even amid increased population diversity, many Americans of different races and income levels live in separate worlds, and culturally diverse relationships are rare in practice (Lees 2008). For example, an analysis of the 2013 American Values Survey demonstrated that the social networks of white Americans, the largest population group, are predominately white, with 75% of whites having no minority friends, a significantly higher proportion than black Americans (65%) or Hispanic Americans (46%) (Jones 2014; Jones, Cox, and Navarro-Rivera 2013). Gentrification has also been shown to threaten the existence of strong community ties based on different preferences and lifestyles (Ilkucan and Sandıkcı 2005; Stolle, Soroka, and Johnston 2008).

A variety of public policies in the United States attempt to influence the social mix of disadvantaged neighborhoods “as a solution to an emergent underclass and as a way of breaking up the social homogeneity and disconnection of such neighborhoods from the rest of the city by bringing in middle-class residents” (Bridge, Butler, and LeGalès 2014, p. 1134). Starting with the Civil Rights Act of 1964, public policy makers have devised an array of national, state, and local programs intended to alleviate these inequities; at their core, these programs emphasize issues of integration and inclusion. Federal policies, acts, and rules such as the Housing and Community Development Act of 1977, New Markets Tax Credits, and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Prosperity Playbook initiative, for instance, were implemented to promote neighborhood diversity (Carr and Kutty 2008; HUD 2015a, b, 2016; Popkin et al. 2004). The recently reformed Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing rule is a national HUD program that was designed to increase community diversity (HUD 2015a). This rule is intended to reduce racial and ethnic segregation in U.S. metropolitan areas and now requires cities to develop plans to rectify patterns of neighborhood segregation to qualify for funding (HUD 2015a).

The Housing Opportunities for People Everywhere (HOPE VI) program, a federal grant program administered by HUD, was launched in 1992 to provide resources to local housing authorities to redevelop public housing and to reduce the concentration of poverty (Popkin et al. 2004). Evidence of the effects of the HOPE VI program on the diversity of these neighborhoods has been mixed, and the ability of these programs to create sufficient levels of diversity to advance their desired outcomes has been questioned (Popkin et al. 2004). The Affirmative Fair Housing Marketing regulations, which require that real estate professionals attract and promote diversity in their marketing activities, have been criticized for their failure to provide adequate guidance on effective practices, particularly in terms of targeting underrepresented racial groups (Haberle, Gayles, and Tegeler 2012).

In addition to federal policies, there are many state and local programs that are intended, at least in part, to foster diversity across income levels, housing types, and ethnic groups (Keller et al. 2013). For example, innovative city managers in Dallas, Texas, are providing tax incentives to both newcomers and longer-term residents to maintain diversity (Schutze 2017). Other policy efforts to encourage “social mixing” include urban renewal programs, the creation of mixed-income housing, and dispersal and diversification programs (Bolt, Phillips, and Van Kempen 2010). Many urban municipalities also work to balance the aim for community revitalization with the desire for social inclusion. For example, in Washington, DC, the Tenant Opportunity to Purchase Act gives tenants the right to refuse the sale of their residential apartment building and to purchase the building for the contracted sale price (Gallaher 2017).

Private and nonprofit actors, including real estate developers, urban planners, financial institutions, and community advocates, have also experimented with strategies to foster neighborhood integration and stability (Boyack 2017; Turner and Rawlings 2009). The gentrification research area is rich with inconclusive, contentious, and contradictory findings, and a full review of this literature is beyond the scope of this article (for a review, see Zukin, Lindeman, and Hurson [2015]). Many have written about housing policy and other federal intervention tools that may help promote neighborhood diversity. It is unclear, however, whether policy tools are the most effective approaches to these problems. Thus, we examine the role of consumption as an important nonpolicy tool to support residential diversity and inclusion in gentrifying neighborhoods.

## Diversity Seeking and Consumption Amid Gentrification

Many gentrifying neighborhoods were previously disinvested neighborhoods inhabited primarily by racial and ethnic minorities. The gentrification process brings more capital to a neighborhood, strengthens the tax base, and can result in changes that can accrue benefits to all residents. Because of gentrification, residents of a neighborhood may see increased property values, improvements in schools, and reductions in crime. In addition, consumption opportunities may expand as the area gains new retail offerings and increased or enhanced public services (Bridge and Dowling 2001). Such redevelopment, while for the benefit of all in a neighborhood, should especially benefit low-income consumers who were previously denied these consumption opportunities. From an ideal perspective, these changes should reduce the salience of race and simultaneously facilitate mutual acceptance, positive interracial interaction, and community involvement (Farrell and Lee 2011).

Prior research has demonstrated that gentrification results specifically in an influx of younger, higher-income, and more educated “hipsters” into typically lower-income and minority neighborhoods (Sandıkcı 2005). Research on gentrification has identified several different motivations and mechanisms for these processes, including proximity to the central city and its amenities and the glamorization of inner-city living in popular culture (Ellen and O’Regan 2011; Farrell and Lee 2011; Holloway, Wright, and Ellis 2012; Hyra 2015, 2017). Of interest to the present research is the finding that some new residents are attracted to these gentrified urban areas to fulfill a



desire to live among diverse others (Blokland and Van Eijk 2010; Grier and Brumbaugh 2013; Ilkucan and Sandıkcı 2005).

Survey research has found that many Americans want to live in racially and ethnically mixed neighborhoods (Turner and Rawlings 2009). Research in marketing has established that some people are specifically interested in diversity and seek out diversity in their consumption preferences. The diversity seeking construct characterizes behaviors that these individuals undertake to include cultural diversity in their lives (Brumbaugh and Grier 2013). These “diversity seekers” invest in diversity-related activities and environments and proactively seek out products, services, and experiences of cultures different from their own. The construct encompasses two factors—a learning subscale that reflects one’s tendency to explore other cultures through experimentation and activities that allow temporary interaction, and a living subscale that reflects a greater level of commitment to connect with diverse others. Diversity seeking has been linked to consumption attitudes as well as past, present, and intended consumption behaviors, including neighborhood selection (Brumbaugh and Grier 2013; Grier, Brumbaugh, and Thornton 2006; Motley and Perry 2013).

In developing the diversity-seeking scale, Brumbaugh and Grier (2013) assessed the relationship between participant diversity seeking and residential location as one important diversity-related behavior. Their research found that higher levels of diversity seeking were associated with living in zip codes with higher proportions of people outside the respondent’s own ethnic/racial group. Other research has suggested that there may be boundaries to an orientation toward neighborhood diversity. Although Brumbaugh and Grier conceptualized diversity seeking as a trait, Motley and Perry (2013) found a shift in consumers’ diversity-seeking tendencies in response to certain external, situational stimuli. In an experimental study, these authors found that participants reported lower diversity-seeking tendencies after being presented with stereotypical scenarios about public housing.

Brumbaugh and Grier (2013) also argued that diversity seekers may be boundary spanners whose cross-group interactions help diffuse attitudes and behaviors that support diversity-focused initiatives and policies. These authors presume that living in diversity reflects a greater commitment to learning about diversity. Drawing on the contact hypothesis, which suggests that intergroup contact leads to more tolerant attitudes and harmonious relations across groups (e.g., Pettigrew and Tropp 2006), we would expect that living in increased proximity to different groups of people would reflect both learning about and living among diversity and would foster increased tolerance and stronger intergroup interaction as well. Of course, not all newcomers to gentrifying areas are diversity seekers; some are simply urban pioneers who are attracted to other attributes of the neighborhood. Nonetheless, the movement from compositional diversity (i.e., numbers of members of different groups) to inclusive diversity (i.e., everyone feels like a part of the neighborhood) should be facilitated by the presence of diversity seekers.

Prior research has also suggested that gentrification may influence consumption opportunities and consumer well-being. Goods and services are critical purveyors of cultural meaning (McCracken 1986), and differences in consumer consumption patterns based on race, ethnicity, and income are well-documented (e.g., Alexis 1962; Charron-Chénier, Fink,

and Keister 2016; Darley and Williams 2006). New residents in gentrifying areas may also engender more political clout and may desire neighborhood amenities that differ from the priorities of longer-term residents (Hyra 2015, 2017; Prince 2014).

Thus, previous studies have demonstrated relationships between gentrification and diversity and have suggested a relationship between diversity and consumption. However, prior research has not considered the interrelationship between these covarying constructs. The present study explores the complex interplay between gentrification, diversity, consumption, and the sense of community among neighborhood residents. Specifically, we explore the following: How, if at all, does the diversity associated with gentrification relate to residents’ consumption opportunities and social interactions? The approach utilized considers the interaction of these constructs in “everyday life” to enhance our understanding of how consumption and diversity manifest in gentrifying neighborhoods.

## Methodology

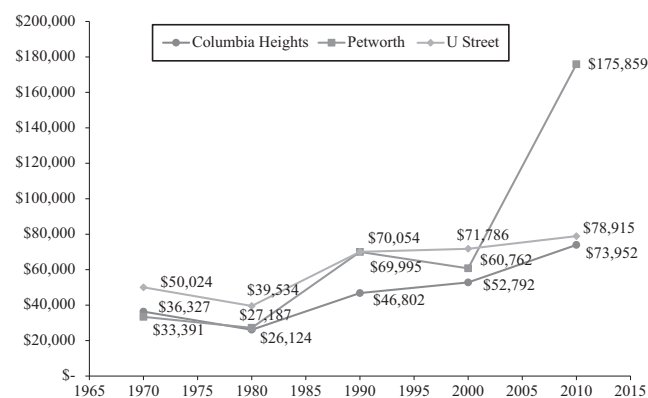
### Study Context

We examine resident perceptions related to diversity and inclusion in three historically significant gentrified neighborhoods in Washington, DC: Columbia Heights, Petworth, and the U Street Corridor. Washington, DC, is an ideal location for our study because it is one of the most diverse cities in the United States, a leader in national trends related to neighborhood change, and a pioneer in neighborhood integration policy (Ellen 2000; Pinto-Coelho and Zuberi 2015). In addition, it has been characterized as a gentrification “hotbed” since the 1980s (Asch and Musgrove 2016; Lee, Spain, and Umberson 1985). All three focal neighborhoods were major enclaves of residential, cultural, and economic activity until the riots that erupted following the assassination of the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., in April of 1968. After the riots, these neighborhoods suffered from abandonment, disinvestment, and periods of increased crime as many residents and businesses moved to other areas. For many years, these neighborhoods were some of the city’s poorest and most crime ridden.

The U Street Corridor was once one of the most notable and earliest African American-owned business and cultural districts in the United States, and the surrounding neighborhood was home to many of the city’s prominent African American citizens (Asch and Musgrove 2016). Many of the revitalization efforts have built on this history, with new apartment complexes, restaurants, and nightclubs named in honor of prominent African Americans (e.g., The Ellington Lofts, named after the famous jazz musician Duke Ellington; Marvin, named after the famous rhythm and blues artist Marvin Gaye; Busboys and Poets, which is a reference to the Harlem Renaissance author Langston Hughes). Revitalization of the Columbia Heights and Petworth neighborhoods was jumpstarted by the introduction of metro subway stops. The subway has had a transformative effect on these areas and has brought in new apartment buildings, restaurants, and shops.

Since the late 1970s, all three neighborhoods have grown increasingly more diverse, with a variety of newcomers of all ethnicities and income levels integrating what was once largely an African American population (Abrams 2013; Hyra 2015,

**Figure 1. Average Incomes in the U Street Corridor, Columbia Heights, and Petworth (2010 dollars)**



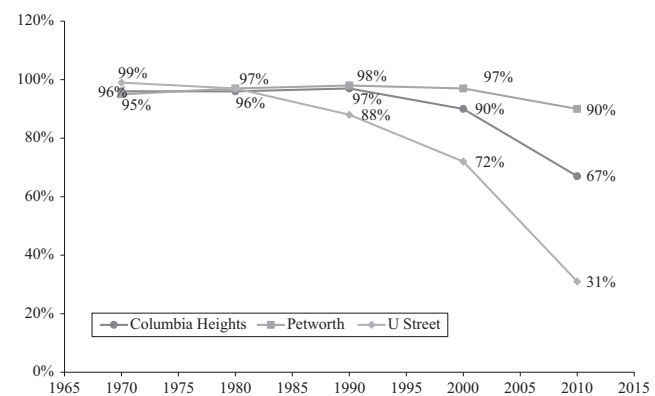
2017). As we show in Figure 1, median incomes in these neighborhoods have increased sharply in recent years.

At the same time, as Figure 2 shows, the proportion of ethnic minority residents has steadily declined. Over the past 15 years, house prices have far outpaced inflation and are among the highest levels of appreciation in the United States (Federal Housing Finance Agency 2017). Taken together, these demographic changes reflect the process of gentrification. As a result, many new residents find themselves living side-by-side with longer-term residents who may be demographically different.

### Approach, Participants, and Recruitment

Our study aims to understand residents' perspectives on how changes in diversity that accompany gentrification relate to consumption and social interactions in their neighborhoods. We utilized a qualitative research method to gain insight into the deep structure, meanings, and motivations underlying consumer attitudes and behaviors. Prior to the start of each interview, participants completed a brief information sheet to identify their neighborhood, how long they have lived in the neighborhood, and their demographic factors (e.g., age, race, gender). We designated longer-term residents as those who lived in these areas before the year 2000, which is considered the start of large-scale gentrification under Mayor Anthony Williams, who was known for his efforts to attract new residents with upscale amenities (Chan 2014). Given that the three neighborhoods are in different stages of gentrification, this time frame serves as a guidepost more than a strict cutoff. In addition, we deferred to the participants' own self-characterizations as newcomers versus longer-term residents. The demographic characteristics of our participants generally reflected the composition of these neighborhoods during their era of residence; the longer-term residents were overwhelmingly black and Latino, whereas newcomers were more likely to be white. Our sample also included participants who would be considered black gentrifiers, a term that researchers use to describe higher-income blacks who move into lower-income, predominately black urban neighborhoods and may have a separate set of motivations from their white

**Figure 2. The Proportion of Black and Hispanic Residents in the U Street Corridor, Columbia Heights, and Petworth**



counterparts (Anderson and Sternberg 2013). We relied on both purposive and snowball sampling to identify and recruit study participants. We also identified and recruited experts on neighborhood gentrification who had familiarity and experience with these areas. These included a sociologist and an intercultural communications specialist. One longer-term resident was also an anthropologist who studies changing neighborhoods and thus is both an expert and a resident.

We contacted potential interviewees either in person or through email and followed up with a phone call. Of the 26 people we requested to participate in an interview, 3 declined. Our final sample included 21 local area residents and 2 experts: 9 women and 14 men ranging in age from 23 to 70 years old. Informant race/ethnicity was self-reported as white (eight), black (ten), Asian (one), and Latino (one). Educational backgrounds were varied and included individuals with some high school or college education as well as those with master's and doctoral degrees. The interviewees' time in the neighborhood ranged from a few months to more than 60 years. For descriptions of our participants, see Table 1; note that we assigned pseudonyms to ensure anonymity.

### Data Collection and Analysis

We used depth interviews to gain a "thick" description and deep understanding of an individual's views (Thompson 1989). We began each interview with broad questions assessing residents' history in the neighborhood and then asked more focused questions about their perceptions of and experiences in their neighborhood (McCracken 1988). Specific topics included perceptions of neighborhood diversity, consumption behaviors, and social interactions. We asked open-ended questions followed by more specific probing questions to elicit examples and explore nuances. We made every effort to establish a conversational tone given the importance of gaining each informant's trust and the potentially sensitive nature of the topic. Most interviews took place at participants' homes, offices, or a setting in the neighborhood (e.g., coffee shop, park). The typical interview lasted approximately one hour and 15 minutes. To garner immediate impressions, we compiled field notes after

**Table 1. Interview Participants**

Pseudonym	Neighborhood	Profession	Time of Residence	Age Range (Years)	Race/Ethnicity/Demographic
Gary	N.A.	Sociologist	N.A.	51–65	N.A.
Travis	N.A.	Communications professor	N.A.	36–50	N.A.
Sandra	Columbia Heights	Anthropologist	N.A.	51–65	African American
Bob	Columbia Heights	Home improvement contractor	23 years	51–65	African American
Peter	Columbia Heights	Journalist	1.5 years	51–65	Caucasian
Mischa	Columbia Heights	Physician	1.5 years	36–50	Asian American
Leslie	Petworth	Digital strategist	15 years	36–50	African American
Juan	U Street	Waiter	29 years	59	Hispanic
David	U Street	Nonprofit financial manager	10 years	20–35	Caucasian; LGBT
Jerry	U Street	Administrative manager	14 years	51–65	Caucasian; LGBT
Don	U Street	Real estate professional/politician	25 years	36–50	African American
Tony	U Street	Graduate student	3.5 years	36–50	Caucasian
Dorothy	Petworth	Retiree	33 years	51–65	African American
Mark	Petworth	Retired Air Force officer	12 years	51–65	Caucasian
Darryl	Petworth	N.P.	13 years	51–65	African American
Karen	Petworth	Social worker and disc jockey	15 years	36–50	African American; LGBT
Monty	Petworth	Information technology developer	1 year	20–35	Caucasian
Lana	Petworth	International educator	6 months	20–35	Caucasian
Feather	Petworth	Clothing store owner	2 years	20–35	African American
Mike	Petworth	Federal employee/rock musician	9 months	20–35	Caucasian
Carlos	Petworth	Diner owner	55 years	51–65	African American
Monica	Petworth	Retail/clothing store owner	N.A.	36–50	African American

Notes: N.A. = not applicable; N.P. = not provided; LGBT = lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender.

each interview. In addition, we audio recorded each interview and then had these transcribed verbatim for analysis. We also relied on participant and nonparticipant observation at events and institutions in all three neighborhoods (e.g., farmers' markets, "community night" events, public parks, local retailers) to complement the formal interview data and to inform our interpretation of the data.

Analysis involved ongoing coding, categorizing, and abstracting of the data following standard recommendations for qualitative data analysis (Miles and Huberman 1984; Strauss and Corbin 1990). First, we carefully reviewed the transcripts and related field notes. Next, we subjected the transcripts to a process of "open coding," whereby each author independently examined the transcripts line by line to suggest initial categories, themes, and patterns. We recorded these themes and developed a preliminary coding scheme. Then, we repeatedly reviewed the transcripts to determine whether specific verbalizations represented each of the identified codes. As a result of this iterative process, we extracted thematic results that explain how changing neighborhood dynamics relate to social interactions and consumption experiences from the perspective of neighborhood residents. In presenting the findings, we provide illustrative quotes that reflect broad agreement on a theme and extensively rely on our participants' own words and perceptions to increase transparency (Drumwright 1996; Geertz 1973).

## Findings

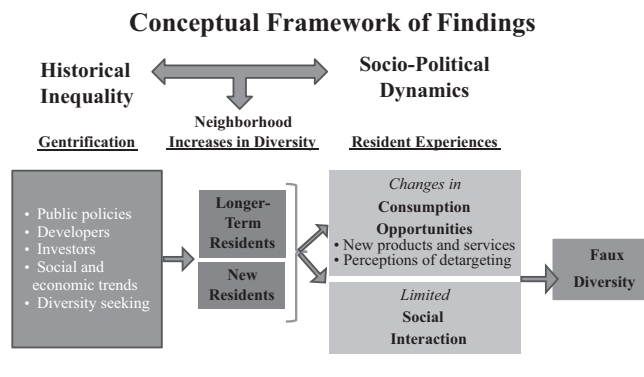
In the following sections, we summarize key themes, and where appropriate, we compare the perspectives of newer versus longer-term residents. We present an overview of

these findings in Figure 3. Our findings reveal a relationship between neighborhood compositional changes from gentrification, consumption activities, and social interactions. Gentrification processes, resulting from economic factors, public policy, social trends, and consumer diversity seeking, increase the nominal diversity in these neighborhoods. However, when residents experience changes in consumption opportunities accompanied by limited social interaction, faux diversity occurs. Faux diversity encompasses the presence of diverse groups without interaction between them. In these situations, diversity is superficial, temporary, fleeting, and misleading. In our data, faux diversity is particularly reflected by the lack of social interaction. Described in terms of the diversity-seeking construct, for consumers experiencing gentrification, the learning aspect of diversity seeking remains unfulfilled even though they live in a demographically diverse area. These dynamics are influenced by the history of racism, which led to segregation, as well as by differences in political power and other manifestations of inequality in these areas.

## Diversity and Diversity Seeking

Our participants, whether longer-term residents or relative newcomers, highlighted neighborhood demographic diversity as a salient and positive characteristic of their neighborhoods. As expressed by two longer-term residents, participants appreciate the residential mix in which people of different races, ethnicities, marital statuses, sexual orientations, ages, and incomes are represented.

**Figure 3. Faux Diversity Occurs when Residents Experience Changes in Consumption Opportunities and Limited Social Interactions**



I do see the diversity of the neighborhood changing. I think that there's a broader mix of people here. When I first moved here, it was solidly African American. Now there's a mix of people. And I think that's important. I think we learn from each other and I certainly hope that there are more different types of people that move into the neighborhood. I don't want to just see black and white. I want to see Latino and Asian and LGBTQ people. I'd like to see a broader mix of people here. (Karen, African American, 15-year resident)

To me, diversity is a positive thing.... Having the blacks, whites, middle-income, higher-income, single, single families, multifamilies, children, straight, gay—that mix is a good thing for the city. (Darryl, African American, 13-year resident)

Participants who were relatively new to these areas were also enthusiastic about the diversity in their neighborhoods, albeit somewhat differently. Newer residents in most cases selected their neighborhood on the basis of personal values and preferences for diverse experiences and interactions, thus self-identifying as diversity seekers (Brumbaugh and Grier 2013). As previously noted, the diversity-seeking construct includes two dimensions: (1) a desire to learn about diverse others and (2) a longer-term, stable preference for living among and interacting with diverse others (Brumbaugh and Grier 2013). In their narratives, these participants exhibited both dimensions of diversity seeking, although the *living* aspect, which is much more closely linked to consumption preferences, was more likely to be emphasized.

I lived overseas for seven years, so this is the first time that I've been living back in the States.... We like it here because it is a very diverse neighborhood. On the weekends you have a farmers' market here. And the music that plays.... There are Latino bands, they're speaking Spanish, and when they're talking in between songs, it's in Spanish. It's a very mixed neighborhood. We like that. There's a mix of Vietnamese restaurants, 24-hour diners, and Mexican restaurants. (Peter, Caucasian, 1.5-year resident)

I was looking for diversity, not only in the way of restaurants and things that we could participate in in a superficial way, but in a cultural way. For instance, we live by Malcolm X Park or Meridian Park, and every Sunday they have a drum circle there and we were looking for those kinds of events. If we were really going to be living in DC, we wanted to really be able to partake in these events and experience DC in the most real way possible. (Mischa, Asian American, 1.5-year resident)

Nonetheless, residents also highlight *learning* about the area and the attendant “authentic” cultural characteristics. Some participants, however, were more skeptical and challenged the notion that these areas were truly diverse. Several participants mentioned that these areas had become largely homogeneous concentrations of affluent, white, and young residents.

I would say that it's very diverse as far as different cultures and the availability of different foods. They are gay residents in the area, but as far as the individuals who live there, I would say that it's all just middle-class white folks. (Jerry, Caucasian, ten-year resident)

Some people may want to keep it how the history was as opposed to the newer façade that's coming into the city or into the neighborhoods. I'm not saying that development shouldn't progress and proceed, but there's a slight chance that the neighborhood that was here pre-2000s will be gone, and then you won't have any diversity, you'll just have a young increased social/economic community, instead of a mix. I think that it is positive to have a mix. But if it gets out of hand, you won't have that diversity. (Darryl, African American, 13-year resident)

Thus, valuing and seeking diversity are key factors undergirding the social and consumption dynamics experienced by residents of these neighborhoods. It is also apparent, based on these narratives, that residents experienced and interpreted ethnic and racial heterogeneity in different ways, resulting in tensions. Our participants expounded on these tensions both in terms of their social interactions and consumption opportunities.

## Social Interactions

There were several accounts of positive relations and interactions between longer-term residents and newcomers as well as across social groups. Participants talked about pleasant encounters with neighbors, and the shared spaces, such as public areas and restaurants, in which these interactions occur. According to Tach (2014), these kinds of spaces are necessary to foster cross-group interaction and engagement.

The interacting, from what I see in my neighborhood, is kind of welcoming. So as things are changing, the newcomers and the long-established residents are welcoming and being embraced on both sides. (Darryl, African American, 13-year resident)

I think that because there are so many different kinds of people you're of course going to find people who interact. You may be sitting at Busboys and Poets and see an old white guy with a young Howard [University] student having a conversation. It's not out of the question. (Don, African American, 25-year resident)

Nonetheless, more often residents' narratives reflected a divide between newcomers and longer-term residents. Participants described community interactions primarily in transactional terms rather than in terms of developing ongoing, personal relationships.

I still see it as segregated where the newcomers aren't interested in the old-timers and vice versa. That probably leads to some trust issues where the communities don't truly integrate. (Monty, Caucasian, 1-year resident)

In Columbia Heights, you have a Red Rock pizza establishment on 11th Street and Park Road. For a long time, that was the watering hole for the newcomers, primarily Caucasian, who were in the community. You rarely saw people from the community at that restaurant. Clearly, they weren't barred, but who knows why there wasn't mixing. (Leslie, African American, 15-year resident)



Although residents extolled the virtues of a diverse community, they also noted cultural differences as a key factor in the limited interactions, as Peter describes:

The obvious benefit is bringing different backgrounds together. You can learn from that. One of the drawbacks is that different perspectives don't always know how to "jive" with one another, and you have to teach people curiosity and empathy and willingness to engage people who don't look, talk, and sound like them or have the same values or cultural background. Sometimes that's a challenge to manage. It isn't always harmonious. (Peter, Caucasian, 1.5-year resident)

In fact, tensions flared between newcomers and longer-term residents about community norms of social engagement and sharing of space. Longer-term residents expressed resentment and mistrust of newcomers and described newcomers' blatant disregard for established norms, such as everyday greetings.

In this neighborhood, people oftentimes sit on their porches. I did not notice until I moved in this neighborhood. I think that there are a lot of southerners here, so they sit out. What you have to do, no matter what, is wave at your neighbors. If you don't wave, you have to give them a head nod or something, you have to communicate, that's a part of the process. You had newer individuals here who didn't get those smaller nuances of the environment here, so they didn't wave or say hello. There started to be this tension building among the newer and longer-term residents about whether they wanted to acknowledge the residents or be a part of the community. (Karen, African American, 15-year resident)

These tensions were recognized by residents, as reflected by a strategy Monty references that was employed in his neighborhood (Hughes 2014) to decrease neighborhood tensions ascribed to diversity:

I was reading an article that talked about saying hi to people on the street, even if it's a stranger, acknowledging them provides a present [sic] opening for conversation. It makes the community feel better and makes people feel like they are a part of the community. Even if you don't start the conversation, saying hi is the beginning. (Monty, Caucasian, one-year resident)

Participants who were longer-term residents also described how newcomers failed to respect certain unwritten community traditions—for example, parking protocols.

I can remember a distinct conversation that I had with a longer-term neighbor on Quincy Street when I saw that a parking space had been marked off on 13th street in Columbia Heights by a homeowner who felt that he or she was entitled to that parking space. Never, ever, would that have happened 20 years ago. If you missed a parking space, you just found another one. I don't think it was legal. These are the kinds of tensions I'm talking about. I don't think it was legal for someone to mark off a parking space on a public street. They marked it off with trash cans and a piece of wood, basically. It was a makeshift marking of their parking space. In our view, those of us who have been here for a while, it was a reflection of arrogance. For all of these years, people who have lived in this community understood that parking was bad. You just had to find a space that was somewhere else and walk. Those are the kinds of tensions that come in. Newcomers have this sense of entitlement and it is noticed when these things happen by those of us who have been here and have had to accommodate crowded parking, etc. (Leslie, African American, 15-year resident)

Social interactions, shared traditions, and shared space are essential aspects of community life. These findings suggest that in gentrifying and gentrified areas, residents value diversity but

face challenges when social groups differ in terms of expectations and norms of engagement. Residents described that there are few natural forums for communication, such as commonly shared spaces, which may contribute to a mutual lack of understanding and mistrust. Both public and private neighborhood spaces—such as parks, street fronts, retail and service establishments, schools, community recreation centers, and libraries—provide potential settings for cross-group interaction and engagement. These settings also provide opportunities for marketing strategies to support social integration.

There was widespread acknowledgment that the gentrification process has benefited these neighborhoods in various ways, including through increased public safety and improved public services. Many of the longer-term residents implied that these benefits were due to the presence of newer, more affluent, and politically influential residents.

The neighborhood was predominantly black and Hispanic and we wouldn't organize. Since 1992 there has been an influx of Caucasians in the neighborhood, and they tend to get more attention. (Bob, African American, 23-year resident)

It [gentrification] brings in new business models and forces the government to find ways to improve things that they've been neglecting because new residents are going to want different kinds of services. For example, the power has gone out several times in the neighborhood. People started agitating for buried power lines, which is more expensive, but it provides more protection against outages. It seems sometimes that the city government might be more open to listening to more vocal newer residents than nonvocal long-time residents. It seems like some people just get used the facts that the power outages happen, and so they don't agitate for the things that they should be demanding, like the city should provide services to the whole city. (Mark, Caucasian, 12-year resident)

These findings are consistent with previous research, which has shown that power dynamics are critical to understanding interactions between social groups within neighborhoods (Bridge, Butler, and LeGalès 2014; Hyra 2015, 2017). These authors also suggest that negotiation, domination, and, ultimately, displacement result from these power differentials.

## Consumption Opportunities

Our participants' stories identified how gentrification-related changes in these neighborhoods have affected consumption patterns and opportunities. Consumption in this context refers to goods, services, and activities provided commercially (e.g., restaurants) or publicly (e.g., parks). Our interviews revealed a sense of marginalization and a displacement of consumption opportunities for longer-term residents by consumption opportunities for new residents. Some of the same participants who embraced neighborhood diversity raised issues of race, income, and related power dynamics and explained how these issues have fueled the tensions and antagonisms that accompany changes in commercial establishments and consumption opportunities.

Our analysis of narratives from longer-term versus newer residents revealed perceived differences in access to products, services, and amenities in these areas, largely based on differences in income, culture, and norms. As Travis and Sandra explained, different norms result in a preference for different neighborhood amenities:



In Shaw, there was a hair braiding place that closed down and will be replaced with a taco/burrito store. People of African descent, whether it's in the Caribbean or Africa, or African American, where hair gets braided is a place that people hang out and come together. It's a different place where culture can be expressed and exchanged. I think that people may not see that as a hangout place, they see coffee house as a hangout place. (Travis, expert).

Your tastes are shaped by your experiences and your culture and your socioeconomic status. I personally love arugula, goat cheese, pine nuts, and other high-end foods. Those are my tastes. Does everyone have those tastes? No. Those are middle-class tastes. The populations that are primarily benefiting from gentrification tend to be middle class. (Sandra, resident/expert)

Marketing theory suggests that effective segmentation and targeting activities would ensure that any viable market segment would be served by marketers (Wind and Bell 2008, p. 222). On the contrary, our participants suggested that marketers were ignoring the norms and preferences of longer-term residents. The recent increase in the number of high-end establishments, gourmet food shops, and particularly coffee shops, were recurrent themes.

Yes, it's a big change. We have a coffee shop on 14th street. It's like a mall on 14th and Irving. It's just a different feel to the neighborhood. (Bob, African American, 23-year resident)

Other stores right on 14th, closer to where we are, tend to be specialized. There's a skateboard shop on the corner called Federal, and they sell expensive sneakers there as well. There's an organic grocer, Yes Market, within walking distance. There's a CVS. There's another place called Smucker Farms, which is pulling in local produce from the area and selling it. (Tony, Caucasian, 3.5-year resident)

When asked about neighborhood changes, Feather, a neighborhood resident and owner of a retail shop noted,

The type of restaurants that have come in and the types of commitment from the store owners and restaurant owners has made a vast difference from when I first moved here in 2003. There are a lot of different types of stores opening up on this street. As result, homes that were once \$370,000 are now ranging [between] \$800,000 and \$900,000 within a two-mile radius of this street. Real estate and retail has been huge. (Feather, African American, 2-year resident)

The narratives of longer-term residents described how many of the longstanding goods and services available in their neighborhoods have been replaced by products and amenities that are designed to appeal to tastes and preferences of the newer residents. Longer-term residents were also more likely to explicitly identify race as a factor in these changes:

There are very few minority-owned businesses that remain in the neighborhood. You have Ben's [Chili Bowl], Cream, but the overwhelming majority of the new retail establishments have been owned by non-African Americans, particularly Caucasians. There has been a tendency for residents in the neighborhood to treat businesses differently. I've seen what I would consider to be discriminatory action against Ethiopian restaurants or Ethiopian operators. I've seen this as it relates to other minority operators. (Don, African American, 25-year resident)

There were also frequent mentions of affordability concerns, such as housing prices and the costs of high-end goods and services, which highlight the significance of income differences

between old and new residents. As opposed to targeting, which is a deliberate attempt by marketers to select a segment to which they will cater, longer-term residents describe perceptions of being *detargeted*, whereby the available products, services, establishments, and amenities have been diverted toward the consumption preferences of new residents. Detargeting leads to consumption displacement, which occurs when consumers experience a reduction in the availability of goods, services, and amenities to which they are accustomed. This construct encompasses economic marginality, which results from a lack of participation in production or when there is deprivation in the consumption of goods or access to services (Cohon 1981). This theme also reflects cultural displacement, which occurs when the norms, behaviors, and values of the new resident cohort dominate and prevail over the tastes and preferences of longer-term residents (Zukin 2011) and can lead to "cultural withdrawal" (Hyrá 2015).

Participants also related the influx of new residents to changes in the identity and appeal of longstanding neighborhood establishments. For example, Ben's Chili Bowl, a popular eatery in the U Street Corridor, is one of the oldest surviving black-owned businesses in the area. It has come to symbolize the effects of gentrification on consumption opportunities and was frequently mentioned by both longer-term and newer residents, as reflected in the following comments.

I remember I was here during the metro construction, and Ben's was almost going out of business. I would literally go and buy a hot dog from Ben's just to help them out. They've come along way. They don't need my help anymore. Sometimes there's a bus that pulls around there, and people are in line to get to Ben's Chili Bowl. What's amazing to me is that the last time I went to Ben's at lunch time and looked around, I was the only African American person in Ben's Chili Bowl. I said, "Oh my goodness! Look at this. I'm the only black person in Ben's Chili Bowl!" And that's just how the neighborhood is now. (Don, African American, 25-year resident)

I have a friend that I work with ... he's an elderly gentleman. He refuses to go to Ben's Chili Bowl now, even though it's in his community because it's not the place that it once was. It's not the place where his community bonded. Now, it's a place full of tourists, and he doesn't feel like it's for him anymore. No one's arguing and saying that is should stay this cute, little thing, but there's a loss and a gain of culture in it. (Tony, Caucasian, 3.5-year resident)

Discussions about public services, including spaces such as municipally controlled dog parks and bike lanes, also reflected similar concerns.

We see bike lanes and dog parks being created where folks would really like to see better bus service or maybe get their streets cleaned and have the roads repaired. (Gary, expert)

Another discussion would be the issue of bike lanes. That's a very contentious issue. Bikes are great exercise and a great way to get around, but people complain that before those bike lanes were established, no one asked if it was something that they needed in their communities or if this was something that they wanted. So, you would imagine that people feel alienated because they see resources pouring in that have nothing to do with them. (Sandra, resident/expert)

Our participants emphasized the role of both residential and commercial real estate development in consumer marginalization and consumption displacement in these areas. In many

cases, the availability of new and expanded retail and other commercial alternatives was viewed as a positive change, because chain stores such as Target and specialty grocers were previously not present in these neighborhoods.

We didn't have Frozen Yo or the selections. We certainly didn't have department stores like Target, any number of banks—Bank of America. We did have Riggs Bank, but we didn't have Bank of America and BB&T. We did not have that kind of investment. I also know for a fact that during that time, that area was red-lined in terms of business insurance. I'm sure it's not anymore. (Leslie, African American, 15-year resident)

It's a good thing that the neighborhood is upgrading and that we have all of this diversity but a lot of it is displacing folks. (Dorothy, African American, 33-year resident)

Thus, although they appreciate the new and upgraded amenities, longer-term residents also considered the loss of traditional cultural elements and felt less included in the newer spaces.

### Faux Diversity

These resident narratives both highlight the appreciation of diversity and describe interactional tensions, while some, mostly longer-term residents, describe feelings of marginalization and displacement in social interactions and in consumption opportunities. These experiences seemingly conflict with the notion of a sense of community amid diversity. Many residents noted that social interactions were limited between the new and longer-term residents and expressed that those interactions were largely superficial. For example, Bob describes,

I don't know most of the people because we have a lot of new condos, a lot of new neighbors coming in. Do I actually get the chance to meet them? No. But, again, it's still kind of a diverse neighborhood. (Bob, African American, 23-year resident)

While residents appreciate the neighborhoods' diverse demographic mix, they also perceive segregation in local consumption activities.

The types of businesses that are there seem to be attracting the same kind of people. You walk into a restaurant of a neighborhood that is diverse and you see the same types of people, which is kind of a weird and odd feeling. (Lana, Caucasian, six-month resident)

It's like a poor representation. You would think that in a diverse neighborhood you would have people of all backgrounds in that restaurant, but it's people just like me, so where's the diversity? (Monty, Caucasian, 1-year resident)

The evidence on the relationship between gentrification and neighborhood diversity from previous research is mixed and depends largely on the way gentrification is measured and conceptualized (Freeman 2009). The diversity-seeking construct conceptualized "living" as a deeper level of engagement built on the desire to "learn" about another culture. Our findings revealed a disconnect between these aspects, whereby new residents cite interest in living in a diverse area but are not proactive in learning about diverse others in the manner envisioned by the diversity-seeking construct. These findings are consistent with previous research, which has demonstrated that diversity seeking has both stable and context-dependent components (Motley and Perry 2013). That is, a person could

have a high diversity-seeking tendency in terms of learning about diverse others but may not value living among or interacting with diverse others, or vice versa. We refer to the effects of this apparent disconnect on social interactions as "faux diversity." Faux diversity also characterizes the observed consumption and marketplace dynamics.

Our residents' narratives implicate differences in political power and social capital as the key forces leading to faux diversity in these social relationships and consumption practices.

It's probably just the way certain people do business. When you bring diverse people together, sometimes there isn't a comfort level. When you don't have a comfort level, you resort to the political, the legal: "These are the rules. Let me use the rules to accomplish my goal." When it's homogeneous, there's a little more accommodation and the lines of communication are more open. That's the difference. (Leslie, African American, 15-year resident)

That tension hovers over many of our neighbors who bought houses 30 to 40 years ago. Then you have people who move in who buy houses for seven, eight, nine, or ten times the price. The assumption there is that these people are worth more than they are and they might think that they are better than they are. It's a very low-level vibration that builds in the community when these same people don't speak or don't have similar community habits as the people who live there.... Why is it that we only see them conversing with people who just bought their homes here as well? (Karen, African American, 15-year resident)

Participants also described social class differences between newer and longer-term residents, although some of these differences were described in terms of race and ethnicity. This is consistent with DeSena (2012), who argues that social class is a "residential separator" that creates separate networks and cultures within communities.

### Sense of Community

Although our participants all suggested they were connected to the neighborhood, there was less evidence in participants' narratives to suggest they were connected to other neighborhood residents. Our participants' narratives also thus intimated how the relationship of gentrification and diversity influenced the sense of community (DeVincenzo and Scammon 2015; McMillan and Chavis 1986) among neighborhood residents. This construct is important, because previous research has linked sense of community to better mental and physical health, economic benefits, and increased political and community involvement (Davidson and Cotte 1989; McMillan and Chavis 1986; Nation, Fortney, and Wandersman 2010). McMillan and Chavis (1986) include belongingness, shared emotional connections, reinforcement, and influence as components of sense of community. Many participants felt emotionally connected to their neighborhoods regardless of the length of residence.

Our block is pretty small, and there are kids of all ages who play together in clusters. That's something that I love seeing because in my city experience, I haven't seen that at all. At night, you can hear them. That's an example of community on our street, that's what I like and appreciate. (Lana, Caucasian, six-month resident)

We had a huge snowstorm this winter. I went out to clean the front sidewalk and everyone was out cleaning up the sidewalks. It didn't matter if it was their sidewalk. To me, that's what's special and beautiful about where we live. (Monty, Caucasian, 1-year resident)

I remember distinctly that my mom came to visit after I brought the house. My neighbors were like, “We know that she’s by herself so we’re going to watch [out for] her.” I definitely felt that sense of community that I was being looked after in a way. (Karen, African American, 15-year resident)

Participants described several types of reinforcement in the form of community “perks” and benefits as well, representing another aspect of sense of community (McMillan and Chavis 1986).

There’s the 17th Street festival every summer and the 17th Street high-heel race every October. I think that they bring in a lot of people from other parts of the city to participate, but the core of those events feels very local to the neighborhood.... Also, on U Street, there are so many jazz venues that have been around for decades. It still feels like that’s a community hub for people to who like to see jazz performed. (Jerry, Caucasian, 14-year resident)

However, the belongingness aspect of sense of community was missing in some cases, due to the newly transient nature of these areas:

There’s a little bit of that community feel, but in my three years of experience, it’s been too hard to make connections because people are in and out. There are a few neighbors that have been there in the area that everybody knows, but the majority of me and my roommates and people moving into the district, they’re gone in two or three years. I’ve had to re-meet neighbors at the same house. (Tony, Caucasian, 3.5-year resident)

Newcomers aren’t as willing to talk, but Lana and I make an effort to say hello to everybody. You can get a sense when people aren’t willing to get into a conversation. People have things going on. They might just be throwing the trash away and not looking to get into a conversation. With the newcomers it hasn’t been as easy to get into these street conversations as with the neighbors or the people who have already been there whether they are African American, Hispanic, or Ethiopian. (Monty, Caucasian, 1-year resident)

Participants also described concerns regarding the effects of a lack of belonging on consumer well-being:

Individuals have lost their social networks as a result of being displaced, and it makes them very vulnerable. We’ve had people who have lost their lives and have died because they didn’t have anyone to check in on them. That’s very important. Those kinds of networks are not just social. They can be connected to getting your medicines from the pharmacy or getting food that you may need, being emotionally and mentally healthy and not slipping into a depression or feeling isolated. Those kinds of factors are related to well-being. (Sandra, resident/expert)

There was also skepticism about the belongingness aspect of sense of community because of a perception of differential benefits for newer, wealthier residents.

Finally, participants across the board acknowledged the history of these areas and viewed the changes in the neighborhood identity and character as detrimental to the sense of community.

I’d have to say no, I don’t feel a sense of community. I feel like there *was* a sense of community, and that’s beautiful.... I don’t want to be overly pessimistic and say that community is dead there, but it certainly has shifted in my view to sort of a transitional area. (Tony, Caucasian, 3.5-year resident)

There is a sense of community. Now, *who’s* in the community is another question. (Don, African American, 25-year resident)

## General Discussion

Managing and nurturing harmonious neighborhoods amid community diversity is an important question for policy makers and marketers, as this has effects on consumer well-being, especially for members of historically disadvantaged groups. Neighborhoods represent an important consumptionscape where diversity “plays out,” yet they have received limited attention in consumer, marketing, and public policy research. The present research examines gentrifying neighborhoods to gain insight into the interactive roles of diversity and consumption in the development of healthy, stable, viable communities. Our findings illustrate the relationship of diversity and gentrification to consumption opportunities and social interactions and explain how these dynamics affect the sense of community. As in prior research (Brumbaugh and Grier 2013), we find that diversity-seeking tendencies influence preferences for these neighborhoods, yet differences in the two levels of diversity seeking are manifested in neighborhood interactions. Our interviews suggested that new residents are often drawn to these areas to fulfill their desire to live among diverse others. The presence of these demographically diverse newcomers, however, did not necessarily lead to increased interaction with longer-term residents from different economic, racial, or ethnic profiles. Participants revealed that there were few places or circumstances that fostered interaction between groups and that, despite residential proximity, integration is rare. This finding is consistent with research demonstrating that different racial, and ethnic groups use public spaces in different ways and to differing degrees (Florida and Mellander 2014, 2016; Hyra 2015, 2017).

The segregation among residents in these neighborhoods was also apparent when participants talked about their opportunities to consume available goods and services from both commercial and public sources. Many participants noted the differences in the retail mix, including the influx of upscale coffee shops, bars, and restaurants into these areas. In terms of public goods, participants provided examples such as dog parks and bike lanes as evidence of the influence of newer residents on local political and economic regimes. These observed differences formed the basis of perceptions of consumption detargeting by longer-term residents. These consumption displacement effects, coupled with high housing costs, were linked in these narratives to residential displacement of longer-term residents and an assault on consumer well-being. This displacement is not only a matter of perception. Many former residents of these neighborhoods have tended to move to suburban areas where housing and taxes are less expensive (Dickersin-Prokopp 2015). In addition, recent research has found compelling evidence that supposedly race-neutral mechanisms in consumer markets may perpetuate inequitable access to goods and services between groups and perpetuate segregation (Charron-Chénier, Fink, and Keister 2016; Strahilevitz 2006). Consumption displacement may be one such mechanism and is a potentially fruitful area for future research.

Taken together, differential consumption opportunities and a lack of social interaction do little to foster a sense of community among longer-term or newer residents. The result is faux diversity, in which diversity seeking manifests as living among—but not learning about—diverse others. From a theoretical standpoint, these findings extend what we know from



previous research about diversity seeking, which has conceptualized the desire to learn about diverse others as a precursor to an interest in living among diverse others. The paradox that has emerged from these narratives is that new residents often chose these neighborhoods because they were seeking diversity; yet the consumption opportunities and interactions that have resulted from the influx of these new consumers have reduced the diversity that attracted them in the first place. Instead of fulfilling the learning component of the diversity-seeking tendency, these narratives suggest that newer residents are living in close proximity to longer-term residents without interacting with them. Indeed, our informants were more likely to describe segregation and community tensions rather than substantive relationships between diverse residents. These findings are the opposite of what we believe is the desired end state in gentrifying areas: meaningful interactions between members of different racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic groups.

### Implications for Marketers and Consumer Researchers

Research has not considered the role and impact of marketing and consumption in supporting consumer well-being in these changing areas. Thus, our research contributes to the body of knowledge on marketplace inclusion/exclusion (Henderson and Williams 2013) and the meaning of home (Hill 1991). Race is a central concern in many gentrifying areas given the high correlation of race and income, and both research and practice have highlighted the role of race in gentrifying areas (e.g., Pattillo 2005; Prince 2014; Zuk et al. 2017). Prior research in marketing has demonstrated that racial and ethnic minorities frequently face discrimination when accessing products and services (Bennett, Hill, and Daddario 2015; Bone, Christensen, and Williams 2014), including negative stereotyping and racial profiling (Crockett, Grier, and Williams 2003). In addition, consumer research has given us important insights into the multidimensional significance of home as a special possession (Hill 1991; Hill and Stamey 1990). The present research extends the notion of home to consider the neighborhood as a possession and the sense of community amid changing demographics.

Our findings extend our understanding of the diversity-seeking construct and suggest several provocative avenues for further exploration. In particular, our characterization of faux diversity implies that there is a disconnect between individuals' interests in other cultures and an interest in the *people* of other cultures. The popular press is abuzz with discussions of tensions created by "cultural tourism," "ethnic voyeurism," and other characterizations of consumer behavior that suggest a desire to "pick and choose" the aspects of an ethnic culture they enjoy while leaving others. Research has suggested that some consumers who select gentrifying neighborhoods are interested in diversity as a neighborhood amenity (Brown-Saracino 2010). Diversity is indeed marketed as a neighborhood amenity in gentrifying areas within many "place making" efforts. For example, Modan and Wells (2016, p. 316) describe how the current Washington, DC, landscape of high-end amenities results from such intentional efforts by city officials, the business community, and neighborhood residents. The

original conceptualization of the diversity-seeking construct did not delineate between interest in the people of a culture versus their representations and material and symbolic associations. In addition, prior research did not examine potential differences in diversity seeking on the basis of specific group memberships. Future research exploring the variety of motivations underlying diversity seeking, the types of diversity to which people are (not) attracted, and the role of marketing strategies in evoking attraction can enhance our ability to use marketing to facilitate and support more inclusive diversity.

At a more practical level, in terms of segmentation and targeting, it is unclear whether marketers have been reactive versus proactive in determining what products, services, and activities to make available in gentrified areas. Many of our participants noted that despite an increase in offerings, most were not patronized by or perceived as targeted to longer-term residents. By exclusively targeting the segment of new higher-income, younger consumers, marketers may be ignoring substantial underserved market segments and, as a result, may perpetuate faux diversity. Future research can identify specific marketing "crossover" strategies to reach diverse consumers simultaneously. However, our findings also highlight the potential unintended effects of crossover strategies. Places that are mainstreamed and gain patronage from new groups may lose their traditional patrons. Crossover has traditionally been defined as the movement of a product from margin to mainstream, but not vice versa (Garafalo 1993). Further conceptualization and empirical examination of crossover from a marketing perspective can enhance our understanding of practical strategies to attract diverse consumers simultaneously to sites of consumption (Grier, Brumbaugh, and Thornton 2006). Of course, as our findings highlight, bringing members of diverse groups is not sufficient to create perceptions of inclusion. Therefore, strategies must also consider ways to promote meaningful interaction within diverse consumptionscapes.

There are conflicting priorities among those seeking to preserve the historic identity and composition of gentrifying areas and efforts to revitalize them. Due to recent changes in the dominant political paradigm, diversity is not likely to be a major public policy priority. If public policy makers are not willing or able to actively support efforts to advance inclusive community diversity, there are opportunities for marketers to have a positive impact in these areas. For example, developers are working with community groups and city officials in Charlotte, North Carolina, to preserve historically significant predominately black neighborhoods amid urban redevelopment (Jarrell 2016).

There are also opportunities for marketer-led initiatives that promote diversity. In a recent example, Nando's, a South Africa-based restaurant chain, posted a sign in front of its locations stating, "Everyone welcome" (Clabaugh 2017). There is also a role for social marketing strategies that focus on behavior change by public, private, or nonprofit organizations. For example, organizations may use marketing to promote social interaction such as the "Say hi to your neighbor" campaign mentioned previously (Hughes 2014). Community building can also be fostered by the development and promotion of arts and cultural events that have widespread, diverse appeal and can highlight the importance of preserving significant aspects of a community's identity (Grodach 2010; Newman, Curtis, and Stephens 2003).

## Implications for Public Policy

The Fair Housing Act of 1968, the Community Reinvestment Act, and associated policies such as the Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing and Affirmative Fair Housing Marketing regulations were designed to reduce discrimination and increase neighborhood diversity. These may promote fair and equal access, but they may not affect the sense of community. For example, Keller et al. (2013), in a study of a HOPE VI redevelopment site, found that residents valued diversity before redevelopment but experienced a diminished sense of community after redevelopment. In other cases, the underlying assumptions of these federal programs are inconsistent with what we have learned from this and other studies on gentrification. A key thrust of the HOPE VI program has been to promote mixed-income communities on the assumption that the presence of higher-income residents will attract better services from the government, private, and retail sectors (HUD 2015b; Keller et al. 2013).

Our participants conveyed a general perception that the quality of commercial and public service offerings have improved with the influx of new, more affluent residents. However, to the extent that these offerings are perceived or experienced as noninclusive of less affluent residents, they may encourage faux diversity. Thus, findings highlight the need for research in marketing that investigates strategies to facilitate and support inclusion.

At the local level, previous research has identified approaches for improving the sense of community. Public spaces provide a forum for connection and interaction between distinct groups in a shared environment (Kuo et al. 1998), although research has demonstrated the challenge of attracting diverse audiences to public parks (Francis 2015). While policy makers divert resources to establish and maintain public spaces, marketers within proximity of these spaces can ensure that their offerings are attractive to the diverse consumers who are expected to take advantage of these spaces.

In 2016, HUD launched the “Prosperity Playbook,” a program in selected cities across the United States designed to provide best practices and access to other federal resources to local governments for increasing inclusive opportunity in their communities (Ross 2016). Also in 2016, the White House published a toolkit developed for local policy makers on reducing locally imposed barriers to affordable housing as a means of addressing concerns about gentrification and displacement. The recommendations include implementing inclusionary zoning practices (e.g., requiring developers to designate affordable housing units), streamlined development requirements (e.g., eliminating required off-street parking) and approval processes (e.g., in lieu of public hearings or legislation) (The White House 2016). However, based on the findings from the present study, to truly advance community inclusion, these toolkits should provide guidance to private sector marketers and should address social interaction and consumption opportunities. The findings from this research also underscore the importance of preserving local and small businesses, which play a key role in maintaining diverse product and service offerings in gentrifying areas (Hyra 2015, 2017).

## Conclusion

This research examined the role of diversity seeking, consumption, and community in neighborhoods undergoing urban revitalization. The findings reveal that despite its benefits, diversity can impose important costs on neighborhoods with regard to social dynamics, consumption opportunities, and overall sense of community. The insights of our qualitative study provide a foundation for additional transformative consumer research, which explores how consumptionscapes, including retail and public facilities, can reduce social distance between customers, support meaningful resident interaction, and contribute to the development of inclusive, healthy, and sustainable diverse communities.

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