
Jan Doering
McGill University

ABSTRACT

Street crime can easily agitate residents and cause distrust and division in integrated neighborhoods. How does this sensitive issue materialize in local politics? This article examines 25 years of electoral campaigning for the position of city council representative (“alderman”) in two integrated Chicago neighborhoods. It reports three main findings. First, crime became and—at least in one neighborhood—remains a central issue in local electoral campaigning even as the crime rate continued to drop over the study period. Second, the politics of crime often spilled over into racial politics as candidates charged each other with inciting racial division or discounting legitimate fears. Third, despite nearly identical crime rates in the two neighborhoods, crime as a political issue eventually declined in one neighborhood, while remaining highly salient in the other. This finding suggests that neighborhood politics influence local discourse and produce divergent perceptions of crime. Implications for scholarship on the politics of crime and race, as well as urban neighborhoods, are discussed.

KEYWORDS: politics of crime; perceptions of crime; racial integration; electoral campaigning; neighborhoods.

After decades of entrenched racial segregation, black-white integrated neighborhoods are slowly becoming more common in the United States (Logan and Stults 2011), but concerns about street crime complicate and decelerate this process (Gould 2000; Hwang and Sampson 2014). White residents worry about street crime and systematically overestimate its prevalence in proportion to the presence of black (and Latino) residents (Chiricos, McEntire, and Gertz 2001; Quillian and Pager 2001). To no small measure, whites’ acceptance of racial integration depends on their perceptions of crime and safety (Taub, Taylor, and Dunham 1984). African Americans, on the other hand, often appreciate the better conditions that integrated neighborhoods offer in comparison to segregated neighborhoods (Peterson and Krivo 2010), but they can feel alienated by a climate of unease and surveillance and the failure of white residents to distinguish the majority of law-abiding from the...
minority of criminal black residents (Anderson 1990). Thus, street crime can undermine interracial community and even the very viability of residential integration.

Given its fundamental importance, crime should be an important item on the local political agenda. How does the sensitive issue of street crime materialize in neighborhood politics, especially electoral campaigning? This question matters all the more as studies of crime and race in state-level and national campaigning reveal that political leadership deeply affects voters’ attitudes and perceptions (e.g., Beckett 1997; Kinder and Sanders 1996; Mendelberg 2001). It is therefore plausible that electoral campaigning could make a crucial difference in shaping local discourse and volatile perceptions of crime in integrated neighborhoods. Politicians may try to activate or strategically amplify already elevated levels of fear—especially among whites—in order to use them as a political resource. Despite their possibly critical importance, however, electoral politics and political leadership in diverse neighborhoods have received little systematic attention.

This article addresses this gap in the literature by examining 25 years of electoral campaigning (1991-2015) for the position of city council representative (“alderman”) in two integrated Chicago neighborhoods—Rogers Park and Uptown. The article draws on a set of campaign documents, journalistic accounts, online texts, and in-depth interviews that provide insights into the content and dynamics of local electoral campaigning. Three main findings emerge. First, crime served as a central campaign issue although the crime rate continuously fell over the study period. Electoral challengers highlighted the prevalence and dangers of street crime, while their opponents reassured residents that crime was declining. Second, the politics of crime often engendered racial politics. As challengers validated residents’ fears, their opponents charged that campaigning on crime aggravated racial division and reinforced racist stereotypes. Finally, while crime mattered in both neighborhoods, it eventually declined as a political issue in Rogers Park but not in Uptown, although the neighborhoods’ overall crime rates were similar and homicides—caused mostly by gang-related shootings—were in fact more frequent in Rogers Park than Uptown.

These findings have significant implications for scholarship on the politics of crime and race, as well as urban neighborhoods. First, scholars of racial politics have so far focused on how politicians can harness stereotypes of black criminality to mobilize white voters. Adding to this, the article reveals that opposing candidates can mobilize racial concerns about stereotyping, harassment, and gentrification to counter tough-on-crime messages. This political tactic demands scholarly attention particularly in light of how the black lives matter movement is changing national discourse about crime and race. Second, the different trajectories of electoral politics in the two neighborhoods demonstrate that structural factors—such as crime or sociodemographic composition—cannot explain the dynamics of electoral politics. Instead, the findings suggest that electoral campaigning is a mechanism that mediates the impact of crime on local discourse and perceptions on crime. I elaborate on these implications in the discussion section.

Literature Review

Residential segregation is the lynchpin of racial inequality in the United States (Massey and Denton 1993; Peterson and Krivo 2010). Integrated neighborhoods are therefore crucial test cases for envisioning the beneficial effects of desegregation. Scholars have measured how integration shapes mobility-related outcomes, especially the frequency and strength of cross-cutting social ties (Chaskin and Joseph 2010; Putnam 2007; de Souza Briggs 1998). Unfortunately, scholars consistently find that cross-cutting ties tend to be relatively rare and fragile in diverse neighborhoods. One obstacle is crime. Fear of crime creates distrust that can keep white and black residents apart, thus preventing the development of durable relationships and trust (Anderson 1990; Chaskin and Joseph 2010). Based on a comparative study of 14 diverse neighborhoods, Philip Nyden, Michael Maly, and John Lukehart (1997:509-10) argue that “because of commonly held perceptions in the broader society (fed by long-standing racism) that the presence of minorities translates into crime,” integrated neighborhoods are highly sensitive to crime.
Independent of crime’s actual prevalence, perceptions of crime depend on a complex array of factors (Skogan and Maxfield 1981; Warr 2000). Importantly, whites systematically overestimate crime rates on the basis of the presence of black and Latino residents (Chiricos et al. 2001; Quillian and Pager 2001). Perceptions of crime are also shaped by third parties, such as political leaders. Some neighborhood studies suggest the importance of political actors in framing the problem of crime (e.g., Pattillo 2007; Vargas 2016), but the politics of crime in integrated neighborhoods have not recently received much attention (for older work, see Molotch 1972; Taub et al. 1984). Additionally, most neighborhood studies ignore electoral campaigning as a key moment of local political life.

Scholarship on state and federal elections demonstrates that electoral campaigning has a crucial impact on perceptions of crime and race (e.g., Beckett 1997; Kinder and Sanders 1996; Mendelberg 2001). Crime serves as a tool of racial politics. Campaigning on crime, politicians can mobilize racial resentment and fears among white voters without overtly appealing to white racial superiority (Mendelberg 2001). The most famous example is the Willie Horton advertisement for George H. W. Bush’s 1988 presidential campaign in which threatening images of a black criminal were used to depict Bush’s opponent Dukakis as soft on crime. At the same time, campaigning on crime further escalates fear of crime—and attendant racial stereotypes—and thus keeps crime on the political agenda (Beckett 1997).

Against this background, campaigning on crime would appear to be a promising strategy in integrated neighborhoods. White residents are already highly attentive to the problem of street crime (Anderson 1990; Quillian and Pager 2001; Taub et al. 1984) and may thus prove receptive to shrill political campaigning. At the same time, however, crime could also be a particularly risky campaign issue in integrated neighborhoods. Given that black and other minority residents may be concerned about stereotyping, police harassment, and gentrification, aggressive tough-on-crime campaigning could unite them against the candidate in question. Liberal white voters may join them, especially when they become convinced that campaigning on crime builds on racist stereotypes (Mendelberg 2001; Metz and Tate 1995).

Given these strategic considerations, it is unclear how crime may materialize in electoral campaigning in integrated neighborhoods. How do politicians use or avoid this powerful but potentially explosive political issue? Their decisions in this regard may be quite consequential, because campaigning may leave a durable imprint on interracial community and place-based culture (Brown-Saracino 2015; Goodman 2014; Molotch, Freudenburg, and Paulsen 2000). Elections could conceivably be critical junctures that shape how residents think about crime as well as their neighbors, and thus produce uniquely local discourses and perceptions of crime.

**DATA AND METHODS**

This article is part of an ethnographic project that examines the interrelations of crime, race, and community in Rogers Park and Uptown (see also Doering 2016). I selected the two neighborhoods as a strategically matched pair of cases, which enabled me to compare how social processes—here, electoral campaigning—unfold differently in similar environments (Paulsen 2004). Specifically, the neighborhoods closely resemble each other in that both exhibit stable black-white integration and experience gang activity and related forms of street crime. Through my fieldwork—500 hours of participant observation and 78 in-depth interviews conducted between 2011 and 2014—I learned that electoral politics constituted vital turning points for local discourse about crime and race. As one component of the overall study, therefore, I made a targeted effort to illuminate the history of electoral campaigning in both neighborhoods.

The article draws on a diverse set of sources. First, I systematically gathered and analyzed all accounts of electoral campaigning and aldermanic politics in Rogers Park and Uptown I could find (full bibliography available upon request). I collected 106 relevant articles from newspapers (e.g., *Chicago Defender, Chicago Sun-Times*) and magazines (e.g., *Chicago Reader, Time Out Chicago*). I also retrieved
about 200 online documents, ranging in origin from large, citywide news portals (e.g., CBS Chicago) to hyperlocal blogs (e.g., Graceland-Wilson Neighbors Association). Furthermore, I assembled a set of 103 aldermanic campaign mailers and flyers from the 2007, 2011, and 2015 elections in Rogers Park and Uptown, which I analyzed as primary evidence of campaign issues and strategy.

I analyzed the historical material by making frequent comparisons across cases (neighborhoods) as well as within cases (different elections) (George and Bennett 2005), which helped to distinguish processes from idiosyncrasies. I also collected and analyzed additional field data to extend and contextualize the historical data whenever possible. For reasons of space, I cite data from only a handful of interviews (and no field observations), but in direct support of this article I conducted 20 in-depth interviews that provided vital information. Specifically, I interviewed three current or former aldermen, three prior aldermanic candidates, four current or former aldermanic staffers, a campaign strategy consultant, seven campaign volunteers, and two journalists about the role of crime in local politics. These interviews helped to complement and often also triangulate data from the historical sources.

The newspaper and magazine texts covered elections reaching back as far as 1979 (an artificial starting point I chose), but the density of available data for each election increased markedly in the 1990s and 2000s—the more recent the election, the more I could incorporate informants, online sources, and printed campaign materials to supplement journalistic accounts. The article begins with the 1991 elections and examines seven elections over a period of 25 years. Since the article focuses specifically on the politics of crime, it analyzes in more detail those elections in which crime became a prominent campaign issue. To fulfill this criterion of “prominence,” crime did not have to be the only campaign issue, but there had to be at least one candidate who consistently emphasized the prevalence and dangers of crime in their public statements and campaign materials.

**STUDY CONTEXT**

Rogers Park and Uptown are located on Chicago’s Far North Side along Lake Michigan (see Figure 1). They are two of only a handful of Chicago neighborhoods that exhibit stable black-white residential integration (Nyden et al. 1997). African Americans integrated the neighborhoods in the 1960s and ‘70s during a period of disinvestment and white suburbanization. In addition to African Americans, both neighborhoods attracted substantial numbers of Asians, Latinos, and other immigrant groups. The share of non-Hispanic whites declined until 2000, when it reached 32 and 42 percent, respectively, in Rogers Park and Uptown (see Table 1).

As throughout Chicago, crime rates peaked in the early ‘90s and then fell (Skogan and Hartnett 1999). At least since 1998, when the police department began to report crime rates by neighborhood, the two neighborhoods consistently exhibit rates of index crime beneath Chicago’s average (see Figure 2). Nonetheless, residents express a great deal of concern about street crime, especially about the presence of (black) street gangs. Indeed, the gang presence distinguishes Rogers Park and Uptown from other neighborhoods on Chicago’s North Side, which is widely considered “the safe part of town.” Between 1998 and 2014, a yearly average of six were killed in Rogers Park and four in Uptown, most of them through gang-related shootings.

Residents can help to fight street crime through CAPS, Chicago’s community policing program. CAPS holds regular beat meetings, which enable police officers and residents to identify and target chronic safety problems (Skogan and Hartnett 1999). CAPS also supports block clubs and neighborhood watch groups that aim to fight or prevent crime. These groups exhibit their own politics of crime and race, which I examine elsewhere (see Doering 2016).

Most residents agree that street crime and the gangs pose a serious problem, but some argue that the more pressing issue is gentrification (see also Bennett 1997; Berrey 2015; Brown-Saracino 2009; Burke 2012). Gentrification gained momentum in the 1990s and the number of non-Hispanic whites rebounded as middle-class residents moved into new or refurbished condos and apartments.
Fieldwork revealed that debates about gentrification and street crime are closely connected. For example, critics of gentrification argue that calls to get tough on crime are simply intended to accelerate gentrification and to control minority residents, while others claim that “development” must be an element of any crime-fighting strategy.

Table 1. Sociodemographic Composition of Rogers Park and Uptown

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1980</th>
<th>1990</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2010</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rogers Park</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>55,525</td>
<td>60,378</td>
<td>63,484</td>
<td>57,559</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White (%)</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American/black (%)</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian (%)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic/Latino (%)</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor families (%)</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median family income (% in relation to Chicago)</td>
<td>18,784(100)</td>
<td>27,330(89)</td>
<td>34,999(82)</td>
<td>51,211(96)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uptown</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>64,414</td>
<td>63,839</td>
<td>63,551</td>
<td>54,995</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White (%)</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American/black (%)</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian (%)</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic/Latino (%)</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor families (%)</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median family income (% in relation to Chicago)</td>
<td>14,455(77)</td>
<td>22,378(73)</td>
<td>38,754(91)</td>
<td>58,195(109)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Data for 1980 and 1990 conceptualize Hispanic/Latino as an overlapping ethnic identity. Data for 2000 and 2010 count Hispanics/Latinos as a unique group without overlap.

Figure 1. Rogers Park and Uptown in Chicago
How does the issue of street crime shape local politics in Rogers Park and Uptown? In the following two sections, I discuss the role of crime in electoral campaigning. These sections reveal three main findings. First, crime was a central campaign issue in both neighborhoods throughout a prolonged period of decreasing crime. Second, the politics of crime often spilled over into racial politics. Electoral challengers attempted to legitimize and mobilize the issue of crime, while incumbents charged that campaigning on crime constituted racial fearmongering. Third, political conflict about crime remained more acrimonious in Uptown than in Rogers Park, despite the fact that crime rates were similar in both neighborhoods. After separately describing the dynamics of electoral campaigning in their specific neighborhood contexts, a third section extracts and discusses these findings.

**THE POLITICS OF CRIME IN UPTOWN (46TH WARD)**

From 1987 to 2011, the alderwoman of the 46th ward, which contains most of Uptown, was Helen Shiller, a white woman and a staunch supporter of subsidized housing and social services for black and low-income residents. Shiller had outspoken critics in Uptown from the beginning of her tenure, but until 1999 elections in Uptown revolved more around Shiller’s opposition against Chicago Mayor Richard Daley than any local issue like crime or gentrification (Bennett 1997). During the 1990s, Shiller was one of Mayor Daley’s fiercest critics on Chicago’s city council. The mayor in turn supported Shiller’s electoral opponents—Michael Quigley in 1991 and Robert Kuzas in 1995—to replace her with another reliable “rubber stamp” alderman (Joravsky 2007; Kleine 1999). Because Quigley and Kuzas received campaign support from the mayor and his allies, both of these elections were quite contested—Shiller won with 53 percent in 1991 and 57 percent in 1995. But despite peaking crime rates throughout Chicago in the 1990s, crime played no detectable role in these races.

Beginning in 1999, however, Shiller’s opponents turned to the issue of crime and challenged Shiller on the basis of her alleged unwillingness to control crime and gang violence. Shiller’s advocacy for subsidized housing was interpreted as an aggravating factor in this regard. Over the following decade, conflict over the politics of crime and the (allegedly) related issue of subsidized housing became increasingly impassioned and contentious.
In the 1999 general election, three candidates ran against Shiller and forced her into a runoff election. Her opponent in the runoff was Sandra Reed, an African American resident who had gained political visibility in Uptown as a community policing activist. Reed’s campaign focused almost exclusively on crime. It denounced Shiller for endangering “the safety of children amid a growing population of shelters in the area that serve the homeless, drug addicts, and sex offenders” (Struzzi 1999:4). Reed also warned that Shiller’s housing policies would turn Uptown into “another ghetto.” (Garza 1999:1).

As a black candidate, Reed had unique political opportunities. She could invoke the “ghetto” and the attendant imagery of rampant crime and racial turnover without being vulnerable to charges of racism, as a white candidate would have been. Thus, one political commentator called Reed a “trump card” for Shiller’s white and middle-class opponents, arguing that “they can now safely claim their opposition is not about race or class” (Kleine 1999). Being black, Reed was able to legitimize residents’ fear of crime and to call for tough-on-crime policing. In fact, her candidacy itself deracialized the issue of crime. If Reed worried about crime and ghettoization, how could it be racist for white residents to do so? Additionally, Reed could hope to mobilize not only disgruntled whites but also African American voters, one of Shiller’s core constituencies.

Reed’s promising position notwithstanding, Shiller won reelection with 56 percent of the vote. But Reed’s campaign successfully elevated crime to the center of the neighborhood’s public discourse. Over the next decade, the issue of crime polarized residents into “pro-Shiller” and “anti-Shiller” camps. Critics complained that Shiller was an obstacle rather than a resource in the fight against street crime, while Shiller and her supporters insisted that these critics were producing false perceptions in the interest of mobilizing fearful residents. In the aftermath of the election, Shiller withdrew her support from community policing—through which Reed had emerged as a candidate—arguing that it had become a platform to attack affordable housing and her work, even though the crime rate was actually going down. In an interview, she said: “What they realized, I think, was that, if you make it about crime—and they’ve made it about crime since the ‘99 election—then you create at least the perception that it’s worse and that’s all you need, politically.”

In 2003, Sandra Reed again ran against Helen Shiller, continuing to focus on street crime. Reed charged that Shiller had failed to make Uptown residents feel safe. At a press conference, Reed said: “People are scared to walk the streets. One businessman told me, ’My business is suffering because of the loitering. Customers don’t want to go in. There’s drug dealing’” (Kleine 2003). As in 1999, Reed conjured and legitimized fears, especially residents’ reluctance to walk and shop in the neighborhood. According to Reed, crime deterred residents from frequenting public spaces and local businesses and thus fed a spiral of neighborhood decline. Reed called for a heavier police presence and security improvements that would allow residents to reclaim Uptown. Shiller did not change her position on crime, but surprisingly she secured an endorsement from Mayor Daley, with whom she had made peace (Brown 2003). Reed now lacked the crucial funds, office space, and campaign staff that Daley had provided her in 1999 (Brown 2003) and so Shiller won the 2003 election with relative ease (58 percent). Meanwhile, the issue of crime continued to spark bitter conflicts among Uptown residents and community organizations (Roeder 2006).

In 1999 and 2003, Shiller and her supporters could not easily charge Sandra Reed with inciting racial division by campaigning on crime—after all, Reed was black—but things changed in 2007, when James Cappleman, a white community policing activist, ran as Shiller’s only challenger. Cappleman built on the widespread perception that crime, especially gang violence, was getting worse. In bold letters, a series of Cappleman’s campaign mailers featured the words “fear,” “gangs,” and “vacancy” (see Figure 3). The “gangs” mailer included a map of gang territories in the 46th ward and stated that “violent gangs and their major stock-in-trade—drug sales—flourish in many sections, jeopardizing the safety of all residents.” A passage of the “fear” mailer asked: “Afraid of walking home from the ‘L’ at night? Afraid of walking down trash-littered streets with empty stores and boarded-up windows? You’ve got reason to be—neglect breeds criminal activity.” Like Sandra Reed before him, Cappleman
assured residents that street crime posed a significant threat and that residents had every reason to feel unsafe.

Shiller tried to dispel the notion that crime was rising. The cover of one campaign mailer proclaimed: “Crime reaches 40 year low in the 46th ward!” Inside, citing police data, Shiller’s campaign claimed that Uptown’s police districts were among the safest in Chicago. The mailer also featured a photograph of a black resident, who was quoted saying that when he and his neighbors “had trouble with gangs and drugs—Helen Shiller was there for us.” In invoking support from a black resident, Shiller could defend her record on crime without appearing to betray her core constituency of black and low-income voters.

In addition to the battle over the prevalence of crime, race became a big factor in the election. Shiller accused Cappleman of “using polarizing language to rally higher-income, mostly white residents” (Dumke 2011). Conversely, Cappleman charged that Shiller was using race to silence legitimate grievances. He stated that Shiller “regards the persistent street crime, gang-related murders, and international drug trafficking as facts of urban life that residents should simply get used to, or, in her words, ‘move to Lincoln Park,’ [a wealthy, white neighborhood on Chicago’s North Side]” (Dumke 2007b). In a more blatant manifestation of this conflict, Shiller’s supporters distributed flyers that portrayed Cappleman as a racist. As the former editor of a local newspaper told me: “A week before the election, some people went around the neighborhood handing out flyers at the public housing buildings that said [. . .] that Cappleman was a member of the Ku Klux Klan. They even spelled him with a ‘K’ so that it would fit in with ‘Ku Klux Klan.’”

---

1 I unsuccessfully tried to secure a copy of this flyer. For one partial scan, see: www.uptownupdate.com/2009/08/wow-alderman-shiller-really.html (retrieved January 27, 2015).
After the election, Cappleman commented on the charges of racism, noting that “Shiller’s campaign literature went out to some people stating that I wanted to round up all the neighborhood kids and have them arrested on sight. I will still speak up about crime, but I’m also aware there’s a price to pay.” Given the racialized political conflict, “neighborhood kids” here almost certainly refers to young African Americans. While Cappleman’s campaign strongly resembled Sandra Reed’s 1999 and 2003 campaigns, he could be charged with racism but Reed could not.

I cannot assess what impact the charges of racism had on the election’s outcome, but Shiller narrowly won with 53 percent of the vote, remaining in office for a final term. In light of Uptown’s changing demographic composition, however, it seemed less and less likely that Shiller could continue to win reelection. Most of those moving to Uptown were white and middle class, and hoped that Uptown would continue to gentrify and that the gangs would soon be pushed out. Speaking to their neighbors and reading local blogs, these newcomers were informed that Shiller had to leave in order to accomplish this goal. In the summer of 2010, to the cheer of her detractors, Shiller announced that she would not seek reelection in 2011.

No fewer than 11 candidates ran for the office in 2011 and not one of them attempted to downplay the problem of crime (Esposito 2011). Two candidates promised to at least partially preserve Shiller’s progressive legacy, but even they acknowledged street crime as a major problem. Ultimately, two of Shiller’s fiercest critics made the runoff election, James Cappleman and Molly Phelan. Phelan, who like Cappleman, was white, had distinguished herself by spearheading the fight against a subsidized housing project that Shiller had placed in Uptown.

Cappleman portrayed himself as a seasoned community activist, who had long been fighting crime through the community policing program. One campaign mailer showed Cappleman standing in a gritty street (see Figure 4). The mailer claimed that, through his community policing efforts, Cappleman had “cleaned up” what he dubbed “blood alley” for its pervasive muggings and violent crime. The mailer also stated that Cappleman had “identified 31 sex offenders living illegally within 500 feet of schools, day care centers, playgrounds and playlots” and then worked with the state’s attorney to enforce the law—evicting the sex offenders. The mailer concluded that Cappleman had “proven he is the leader we need to keep us safe.” Molly Phelan could not invoke similar accomplishments, but promised to hire more police officers and also touted an endorsement from the Fraternal Order of Police. In the runoff election, Cappleman received 55 percent of the vote and was thus elected alderman in his second attempt.

Between 2011 and 2015, Cappleman worked hard to reduce crime and gang activity. Conflict in Uptown did not subside, however, because Helen Shiller’s remaining supporters tried to thwart Cappleman and his initiatives. Among other things, community activists charged Cappleman with attacking affordable housing and criminalizing black teenagers (Dumke and Warwick 2011; Emmanuel and Woodard 2013). In the 2015 election, a white resident named Amy Crawford challenged Cappleman on the grounds of persistent street crime as well as Cappleman’s alleged racial divisiveness. Crawford vowed to be more effective in reducing crime, while also being more sensitive to race. At a campaign event, Crawford said that Cappleman had “not been effective at getting the things done that he has said were priorities [reducing street crime]. At the same time I think he’s exacerbated some of the tensions that we have in our diverse community” (Washington 2015).

In combination with another candidate, Crawford forced Cappleman into a runoff election. One of Crawford’s campaign mailers (see Figure 5) showed a chalk outline of a body lying on asphalt together with an image of an inert-looking Alderman Cappleman. The mailer charged that police patrols had declined under Cappleman’s watch and that “last year [2014] alone, homicides increased 400%.” Indeed, homicides in Uptown had increased by that rate—from a single one in 2013

---

(an unusually peaceful year) to five in 2014—but this figure made the trend appear much more dramatic than it actually was. Ironically, it was now Cappleman’s task to downplay crime. He told a journalist that, before he took office, “we had five gangs and they were selling drugs like a lemonade stand and we were seeing massive amounts of fighting in the middle of the street. We are now seeing gang members who feel threatened they will go extinct” (Riley 2015). A campaign mailer depicted Cappleman shaking hands with a police officer and reported that Cappleman had “reduced crime by as much as 80% in crime hot-spots.” Given that Crawford had been virtually unknown in Uptown before she ran for office, many observers were surprised that she was able to mount a formidable campaign against Cappleman, but Cappleman ultimately prevailed in the runoff election with 54 percent.

THE POLITICS OF CRIME IN ROGERS PARK (49TH WARD)

In Rogers Park’s 49th ward, crime has been an important electoral issue since 1991. Concerns about peaking crime in Rogers Park in the early 1990s (see Hardy 1991) were compounded by alarm about the rapidly growing black population—between 1980 and 1990, Rogers Park’s share of black residents increased from 9 to 27 percent. As in Uptown, the construction of subsidized housing, which residents associated with low-income African Americans, brought out anxieties about “ghettoization” (Welter 1982).

In 1991, no established incumbent was running for reelection in Rogers Park as David Orr, the long-time, left-leaning incumbent, had recently been elected to a county office. Mayor Daley had appointed Robert Clarke, a white man, to serve out the remaining months of Orr’s term. In the election, Clarke was challenged by Joe Moore (also white), who had worked closely with David Orr and promised to continue his leftist politics. Since Orr and Moore were perceived as advocates of racial integration rather than tough crime fighters, Robert Clarke oriented his campaign around crime, trying to...
blame Orr and Moore for rising crime in Rogers Park. The *Chicago Reader* (Joravsky 1991) reported: “‘Crime is the issue,’ reads a flier distributed by Clarke’s campaign. And wherever he goes, Clarke recites local crime statistics. ‘Public safety is a legitimate issue in this campaign,’ says Clarke. ‘It’s what’s on people’s minds.’”

Moore countered that perceptions of crime were the real problem that he would tackle as alderman. He said: “Trim a tree and suddenly it’s not dark and shadowy on the block and someone is grateful because they’re not so scared to walk home at night. It’s those simple things that have the most meaning” (Joravsky 1991). Additionally, he charged that Clarke’s focus on crime was “irresponsible” for fanning “these flames and these fears.” Moore framed campaigning on crime as illegitimate, because, he argued, it intensified fear of crime and undermined racial harmony. Indeed, one of Moore’s former campaign volunteers claimed that Moore’s campaign routinely invoked Clarke’s focus on crime to portray Clarke as a racist. The informant recalled campaigners “going door to door and saying, ‘Don’t vote for this racist [Clarke].’” With three additional candidates in the race, neither Moore nor Clarke succeeded in securing 50 percent of the vote in the general election. In the runoff, Moore narrowly beat Clarke with 52 percent.
Moore has served as the alderman of the 49th ward ever since. In accordance with his position in the 1991 election, Moore pursued a cautious approach in addressing crime, supporting community policing and civic initiatives to fight crime (Anon 1995), but also warning against hyperbole that could divide the neighborhood along racial lines. Consequently, Moore never became as polarizing a figure as Uptown’s Helen Shiller, who reacted much more defiantly when portrayed as soft-on-crime. In an interview, Moore said that street crime “unfortunately stokes racial fears and encourages profiling, not only from police but from community residents. And so one of the things that I think is important is to address crime in a very responsible fashion.”

Some Rogers Parkers interpreted this perspective as “liberal hand-wringing.” Outspoken anti-crime activists complained that Moore did not sufficiently support the fight against street crime. In the 1990s, Moore’s most vocal critic in this regard was a white woman named Karen Hoover, the director of the Coalition for a Crime-Free Rogers Park, a community organization. Hoover ran against Moore in both 1995 and 1999. In her campaigns, Hoover argued that Moore had approved too many “group homes and halfway houses” (Ihejirika 1995). She also warned of the dangers gangs posed for residents: “Our business districts are faltering. They’re unsafe and congested. We have gangs you’ve never even heard of, one for each ethnic group.”

Crime thus remained a prominent issue in Rogers Park’s electoral politics, but Hoover’s campaigns nonetheless failed. Moore won the 1995 and 1999 elections with comfortable margins—69 percent and 64 percent, respectively. One resident who lived in Rogers Park at the time said that Hoover’s campaigns failed to gain traction because “she was a terrible campaigner and she’s the kind of campaigner that, when she campaigns, she turns people off.” Since Hoover was reportedly quite blunt in the way she campaigned around crime, the resident explained, it was easy to discredit her campaign.

In the 2003 election, Hoover did not run again. Moore’s strongest challenger was Michael Harrington, a gay African American man. Crime played no major role in this election. Rather, Harrington tried to beat Moore by charging that Moore had abandoned his progressive roots and that he had become too closely aligned with Mayor Daley and Chicago’s political establishment. However, Harrington’s efforts proved just as unsuccessful as Hoover’s campaigns, since Harrington received only a quarter of the vote.

The 2007 election constituted a more serious threat for Moore. In the general election, three candidates ran against Moore, with two of them focusing heavily on crime. Moore barely missed the benchmark of 50 percent and thus faced a runoff election against a white candidate named Don Gordon. The runoff election became heavily contested, with both sides spending unprecedented amounts of campaign funds (Becker and Mihalopoulos 2007).

Don Gordon’s campaign revolved around crime as well as Moore’s alleged disinterest in local development and ward management. Most of his campaign material highlighted the dangers of street crime in Rogers Park. One of his mailers quoted an Asian woman, saying: “I want to feel safe walking alone on our streets.” Another mailer charged that Moore was “more concerned about the war in Iraq, which we all oppose, than the war on Howard Street.” Moore had sponsored a City Council resolution opposing the Iraq war, and Gordon used this as evidence of Moore’s disinterest in local problems. Howard Street, by contrast, was the main artery of a majority-black census tract and a well-known center of gang activity. In this context, the notion of a “war on Howard Street” suggested that gang violence was so rampant that it produced war-like conditions in the neighborhood. Yet another mailer criticized Moore’s longtime strategy of calming residents by showing decreases in the crime rate. The mailer read, “Joe claims ‘crime is down.’ That’s about all we get.”

Indeed, Moore emphasized continued decreases in crime. One mailer proudly proclaimed that Rogers Park had “proven skeptics wrong” by showing that “economically and racially diverse communities like ours can be stable, safe, and prosperous.” At the same time, Moore asserted that he took crime seriously. One campaign mailer (see Figure 6) depicted a black senior who was quoted as saying that “Joe Moore drove the gangs and drug dealers out of this building. Now, senior citizens
from our community call it home.” Just like Helen Shiller in Uptown, Moore chose testimony from a
black resident to signal that he was fighting crime for black residents, not against them.

Continuing the parallels to the 2007 election in Uptown, a fierce battle over legitimacy and racial
division ensued. At a campaign event, Jesse Jackson Jr., a member of the U.S. House of
Representatives at the time, used grandiose rhetoric to endorse Joe Moore as a warrior for racial just-

ice (Dumke 2007a):

You might not have been there for Rosa Parks, you might not have had the chance to walk
across Edmund Pettus Bridge [in Selma, Alabama], you might not have been there for
Mandela when he went to jail, you might not have been in the grape fields with Cesar Chavez,
but in 2007 you can be right here for Joe Moore in the 49th Ward.

At the same event, Moore charged that Gordon conspired with “those very same people who have
been fighting the diversity in this neighborhood, who have been fighting against opening our doors
to everyone” (Dumke 2007a). As evidence, Moore invoked Gordon’s focus on street crime, especially
one of Gordon’s campaign mailers that depicted a white woman walking alone in the neighborhood at night and that ominously posed the following question: “Do you feel safe in the 49th ward?” Moore interpreted the flyer as a deliberate play on racial fears. In an interview in 2013 he told me, “[the mailer] had a photograph of a young white woman clutching her purse and there was this silhouette, a dark silhouette of someone there in the background. It was just pretty blatant of what that was referring to.” One resident who supported neither Gordon nor Moore explained how Moore used this mailer to discredit Gordon’s campaign.

Towards the end of the campaign, Gordon officially responded to the charges of racism in an open letter: “You [Alderman Moore] attacked my character by suggesting that I am a racist. I certainly am not. […] Let us celebrate our racial diversity by honoring and respecting it. Do not use our diversity as a weapon.” Thus, Gordon tried to neutralize the charges by characterizing them as a divisive but baseless political maneuver. Nevertheless, Joe Moore narrowly prevailed in the runoff election with 52 percent of the vote.

After nearly losing in 2007, Moore replaced his chief of staff and substantially changed his style to reduce discontent about crime. He became more visibly involved in community policing. He also hired a staff member who concentrated specifically on “problem buildings” and their contribution to crime in the neighborhood. Perhaps as a result, crime played no role at all in the 2011 election. Instead, Moore was challenged by Brian White, a white candidate promising to protect Rogers Park from gentrification. But White’s campaign suffered from a lack of publicity—not a single citywide newspaper even covered the race—and so Moore easily won the election with 72 percent of the vote.

In 2015, Don Gordon decided to run against Moore once more. As in 2007, Gordon claimed that Moore did not pay sufficient attention to street crime. Gordon discussed crime less aggressively than during his 2007 campaign, however, and instead focused his attack on Moore’s reliance on campaign donations from big developers. To distinguish himself, Gordon vowed to accept no donations at all and ran his entire campaign on $2,500 of his own money (Woodard 2015). Given these financial constraints, it is not surprising that Gordon’s campaign failed to reach a sufficient number of voters.

In his own campaign, Moore continued his strategy of emphasizing reductions in crime while claiming to take each incident seriously. One campaign mailer (see Figure 7) showed Moore at a community policing meeting “discussing the successes of community policing in Rogers Park.” It also featured Moore’s campaign slogan “Stronger Together,” which underlines Moore’s commitment to diversity and racial harmony. Moore won reelection with two thirds of the vote.

**ANALYTIC SUMMARY**

In this section, I extract three main findings from the preceding accounts of Rogers Park and Uptown’s electoral histories: (1) crime remained a major campaign issue even as crime rates dropped; (2) the politics of crime often prompted racial politics; (3) the politics of crime were more contested in Uptown than in Rogers Park despite nearly identical crime rates.

Table 2 reveals the critical role crime played in most of the elections I described in the previous two sections. In 9 out of 14 elections, crime served as a prominent campaign issue. Crime did not matter in Rogers Park’s 2003 and 2011 elections; Michael Harrington and Brian White presumably...
avoided campaigning on crime because this might have conflicted with their effort to run “to the left” of the incumbent. The 2015 election was an intermediate case in which crime was just one among several issues in Rogers Park. In Uptown, crime emerged as a political issue in 1999 and remained highly salient through 2015.

Crime thus constituted an important political issue in both neighborhoods and this prominence could not be explained as a simple product of their crime rates. First, crime as an issue persisted despite steep declines in the two neighborhoods’ crime rates—from about 70 index crimes per 1,000 residents in 1998 to about 25 in 2014 (see Figure 2). Second, in Uptown, crime emerged as a political issue only in 1999, notwithstanding the fact that crime had actually been higher in 1991 and 1995. These findings strongly support the conclusion that discourse about crime does not necessarily correspond to crime rates (Warr 2000). Rather, political campaigns constructed crime as a social problem in Rogers Park and Uptown. And the issue appeared to be available in these integrated neighborhoods even when crime was declining.

4 I thank an anonymous reviewer for pointing this out.
Second, the politics of crime frequently engendered racial politics. This reveals the risk of campaigning on crime. Just as some politicians mobilized fears of crime, their opponents could mobilize suspicions about tough-on-crime campaigning, which, to some residents, smacked of racial stereotyping, harassment, and gentrification. Thus, Helen Shiller and Joe Moore repeatedly discredited their opponents’ campaigns as irresponsible fear mongering that would divide residents along racial lines. Similarly, in 2015, Amy Crawford attacked Uptown’s new incumbent James Cappleman by arguing that his tough-on-crime policies were both ineffective and racially divisive. Going further, politicians also made full-fledged charges of racism when rallying voters against tough-on-crime candidates, especially during closely contested races. Joe Moore’s campaign interpreted the shadow looming over a white woman in Don Gordon’s mailer as evidence that Gordon was invoking anti-black stereotypes. And Shiller’s supporters in Uptown charged that “Ku Klux” Cappleman, if elected, would summarily arrest young black men. Interestingly, these charges were made without unambiguous evidence. Moore took the shadow in Gordon’s mailer as a “blatant” reference to stereotypes of black criminality, but white criminals also cast dark shadows. And Shiller’s campaign framed Cappleman’s focus on crime as a sign of racism, although a black candidate (Sandra Reed) had previously run against Shiller on a nearly identical platform. The fact that charges of racism were nonetheless made suggests that candidates expected a significant number of residents to find charges of racism plausible even in the absence of conclusive evidence. In other words, just as challengers could tap fear of crime as a political resource, their opponents could tap concerns about racism.

Candidates running on crime tried to legitimize their campaigns, as well as voters’ concerns about crime. They claimed that residents already were afraid and that this fear was in fact warranted. Messages of this kind appeared in almost all tough-on-crime campaigns. For example, Robert Clarke stated that crime was a “legitimate issue” because “it’s what’s on people’s minds.” James Cappleman assured residents that they had good reasons to be “afraid of walking home from the ‘L’ at night.”

### Table 2. Summary of Electoral Contests in Rogers Park (49th Ward) and Uptown (46th Ward)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Runoff</th>
<th>Incumbent</th>
<th>Percent (Main)</th>
<th>Challenger</th>
<th>Percent (Main)</th>
<th>Role of Crime</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Clarke (white)</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>Moore (white)</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Moore (white)</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>Hoover (white)</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Moore (white)</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>Hoover (white)</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Moore (white)</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>Harrington (black)</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Moore (white)</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>Gordon (white)</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Moore (white)</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>White (white)</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Moore (white)</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>Gordon (white)</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Runoff</th>
<th>Incumbent</th>
<th>Percent (Main)</th>
<th>Challenger</th>
<th>Percent (Main)</th>
<th>Role of Crime</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Shiller (white)</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>Quigley (white)</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Shiller (white)</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>Kuzas (white)</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Shiller (white)</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>Reed (black)</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Shiller (white)</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>Reed (black)</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Shiller (white)</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>Cappleman (white)</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>/</td>
<td>/</td>
<td>Cappleman (white)</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Phelan (white)</td>
<td>45</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Cappleman (white)</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>Crawford (white)</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: For reasons of simplicity, this table lists only the two most successful candidates. In cases in which a runoff election took place, percentages reflect candidates’ results in the runoff election.
And Sandra Reed could validate fears of Uptown becoming “another ghetto,” because as a black candidate she could legitimately enter this treacherous rhetorical territory without the risk of racial repercussions. All of these campaign messages endowed fear with an aura of legitimacy, which aimed to shield the campaigns against attributions of racism. Additionally, these messages were probably intended to alleviate possible racial quandaries that voters might have about basing their votes on crime: being afraid was appropriate and therefore not a sign of prejudice.

Third, the politics of crime were substantially more contested in Uptown than in Rogers Park. Note the difference in rhetoric. In Uptown, challengers consistently spoke of such things as “cleaning up blood alley,” a “400% increase” in homicides, and offenders endangering “the safety of children.” Candidates in Rogers Park rarely made comparably shrill claims—Don Gordon’s reference to a “war on Howard Street” was the exception rather than the rule. Furthermore, it appears that crime as a campaign issue is waning in Rogers Park, because crime played only a limited role in 2003, 2011, and 2015. By contrast, there are no signs of crime waning as a political issue in Uptown (see also Riley 2015).

This difference is particularly noteworthy because the neighborhoods’ index crime rates have been and remain practically identical (see Figure 2). And since gang violence was the main concern in both neighborhoods, it should be noted that homicides were actually more common in Rogers Park than in Uptown. Between 1998 and 2014, Rogers Park experienced 104 homicides and Uptown 68, a non-trivial difference given that both neighborhoods have approximately the same population. Over this period, Rogers Park saw more homicides than Uptown in 12 out of 17 years, including the most recent three years. Clearly, differences in the neighborhoods’ electoral politics cannot be explained on the basis of their crime rates.

**DISCUSSION**

The issue of crime poses a substantial problem for residential integration in the United States. Concerns about street crime complicate integration by influencing whites’ decisions to move into or out of integrated neighborhoods (Gould 2000; Hwang and Sampson 2014; Taub et al. 1984). In this way, perceived crime slows and sometimes reverses residential integration. Additionally, crime threatens community within those stably integrated neighborhoods that exist (Nyden et al. 1997). Concerns about crime disrupt trust and thus obstruct the formation of cross-cutting social ties (Anderson 1990; Chaskin and Joseph 2010). This article extends scholarship on the complex relationship between crime and residential integration by examining how crime materializes in electoral campaigning in integrated neighborhoods. Since electoral campaigning shapes discourse and perceptions of crime (Beckett 1997; Mendelberg 2001), it may have a significant impact on neighborhoods’ community climate and perhaps even sociodemographic change.

First and foremost, I find that crime has been a prominent campaign issue in Rogers Park and Uptown—two integrated Chicago neighborhoods—over the past 25 years. Even as the crime rate continued to fall, electoral hopefuls forcefully charged that gangs, muggings, and other forms of streets crime acutely threatened residents. This reveals that crime can be mobilized as a political resource in integrated neighborhoods more or less independent of the actual crime rate. This is not to say that campaigning on crime always worked; no matter what issues they campaigned on, most candidates failed in challenging incumbents—probably because incumbency provides a strong bonus in local, nonpartisan elections. However, in choosing their main campaign issue, electoral challengers often picked crime. No decline in crime, no increase in safety could fully eclipse street crime as a political issue.

In campaigning on crime, were candidates trying to capitalize on racial stereotypes and fears? Since their campaigns avoided references to race, this is difficult to assess. Perhaps the most one can safely say is that, in focusing on crime, these candidates inevitably affirmed the notion that living in integrated neighborhoods is dangerous (Chiricos et al. 2001; Quillian and Pager 2001). What can be
said with certainty, however, is that their opponents could frame tough-on-crime campaigning as an illegitimate practice that stoked racial fears and divided the community along racial lines. Thus, the politics of crime often engendered racial politics as candidates clashed over the racial legitimacy of campaigning on crime. Just as fear of crime represented a political resource to some candidates, their opponents could mobilize racial suspicions about tough-on-crime campaigning—unless the candidate in question was black, as was the case with Sandra Reed in Uptown.

This finding extends the literature on racial politics. Prior scholarship has shown how politicians can marshal anti-black sentiments by invoking black criminality and other racial stereotypes (Beckett 1997; Gilens 1999; Kinder and Sanders 1996). However, scholars have paid less attention to how opposing campaigns can neutralize such tactics and possibly even use them against their exponents (but see Mendelberg 2001; Metz and Tate 1995). In Rogers Park and Uptown, candidates repeatedly accused their tough-on-crime opponents of inciting racial division or charged them with racism, even when these opponents avoided racial terminology and imagery. This demonstrates that left-leaning candidates expected a portion of the electorate to be convinced—or convincible—that campaigning on crime was “really” about race. Future research should continue to examine how charges of racism can be used to rally minority voters and liberal whites, especially as the black lives matter movement and graphic videos of police brutality increase public awareness that the “war on crime” has high racial costs. As a result, it is almost certainly becoming easier to mobilize voters against tough-on-crime politics. For instance, in the 2014 Senate elections, Democrats invoked the shooting of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri, stating that “if you want to prevent another Ferguson [...], vote” (Peters 2014). Will the changed national discourse about racism fundamentally alter the politics of crime, perhaps by undercutting the potential to mobilize voters with tough-on-crime messages?

In addition to the political dynamics of electoral campaigning, this article reveals place-based differences in the politics of crime. While crime mattered in both neighborhoods, the politics of crime were more contested in Uptown than in Rogers Park despite their essentially identical crime rates. It appears that crime as campaign issue is declining in Rogers Park, while it is as salient as ever in Uptown. This political (and cultural) difference in the face of structural similarity attests to the importance of “place” in shaping social processes (Brown-Saracino 2015; Goodman 2014; Molotch et al. 2000). The concept of place enables scholars to think about neighborhoods and other places as unique social worlds with (partly) self-referential and path-dependent cultural patterns. In light of the findings presented in this article, there are good reasons to conclude that electoral campaigning both reflects and influences place-based urban culture. For reasons of space, I discussed the ways in which politics shaped the neighborhoods’ culture and discourse only in passing. In a nutshell, however, one can say that Alderwoman Shiller’s perceived resistance against fighting crime polarized Uptown and enshrined crime as a defining issue in local politics—even beyond her exit from public office. In Rogers Park, the politics of crime never produced a similar degree of polarization, which may explain why crime as a campaign issue is now declining together with the crime rate. Thus, the role of crime in electoral races depends not only on crime rates, but probably also on cultural patterns that entail a certain degree of political path dependence (Molotch et al. 2000).

This latter finding of place-based difference—which electoral campaigning both reflects and produces—also complements research on discourse and perceptions of crime in diverse urban environments. Prior scholarship has shown that whites overestimate crime in relation to the presence of black and Latino residents (Chiricos et al. 2001; Quillian and Pager 2001). The findings in this article expand this scholarship by uncovering local politics as another salient factor. Crime constitutes a larger issue of concern in Uptown than in Rogers Park not only despite similar rates of crime but also a significantly lower proportion of black and Latino residents in Uptown (see Table 1). While the data do not allow causal inference, the findings strongly suggest that campaigning shapes local discourse about crime—and discourse, in turn, influences perceptions of crime (Skogan and Maxfield 1981). Studies in political psychology also support this conclusion (Gilens 1999; Kinder and Sanders 1996;
Mendelberg 2001). Overall, therefore, it seems likely that political campaigning is an important mechanism that shapes the impact of crime on integrated neighborhoods.

Future scholarship should address a number of issues that this study raises through its findings as well as its limitations. As a case study, the article illuminates the politics of crime and race in two integrated neighborhoods. Case studies can identify social processes and mechanisms, but they cannot generalize about the universe of unobserved cases (George and Bennett 2005). Given that other studies of integrated neighborhoods identify crime as a salient issue (e.g., Nyden et al. 1997), it seems probable that local politics often play a significant role in mediating local discourses and perceptions of crime. On the other hand, Chicago’s long history of racial conflict may increase local contestation over the politics of crime. Ultimately, quantitative research is needed to measure the prevalence and the causal influence of campaigning on crime, especially as compared to other factors, such as neighborhood racial composition (Quillian and Pager 2001). Researchers should trace changes in local perceptions of crime as a result of salient campaign issues in racially diverse as well as homogeneous urban neighborhoods. Additionally, this article examined a historical series of elections, but it did not home in on the micro dynamics of any specific election. This represents an opportunity for urban ethnographers, who could, for example, embed themselves within electoral campaigns to study decision making about campaign issues and strategy, and monitor political interaction, such as discussions of crime in the context of door-to-door canvassing. Detailed ethnographic data might produce more specific insights into how perceptions of crime are negotiated, as well as how residents think about the racial legitimacy of crime as a political issue.

In conclusion, more broadly, this article indicates that urban scholars must take seriously the role of politics in shaping neighborhood dynamics. Over the past decade there has been a revival of interest in neighborhoods and culture, particularly under the umbrella of neighborhood effects research (for summaries, see Sampson 2011; Small, Harding, and Lamont 2010), but in this process few scholars have systematically examined the impact of local politics on urban culture (but see Marwell 2007; Small 2004), even though political actors clearly have both the incentives and the power to reshape neighborhood discourse and perceptions. Consequently, research on neighborhoods—whether ethnographic, historical, or quantitative—may stand to benefit from more seriously incorporating the effect of local politics on urban culture.

REFERENCES


5 I thank an anonymous reviewer for significantly improving my thinking about these limitations and opportunities for further research.


