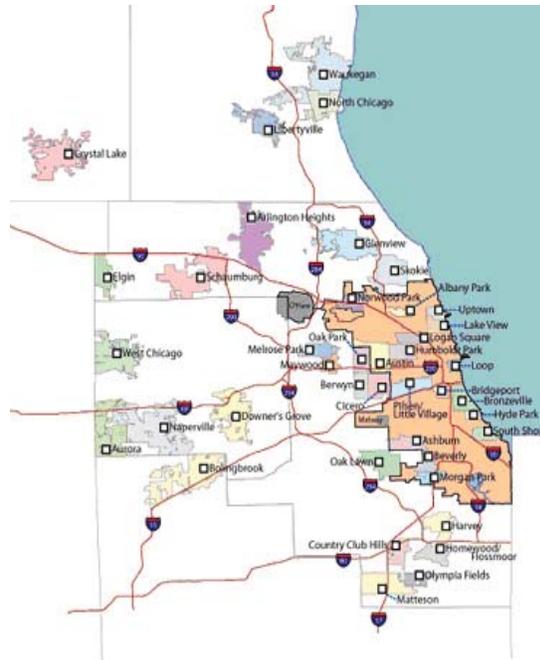




# RACIAL BLIND SPOTS

*A Barrier to Integrated Communities in Chicago*

*A Critical Issues Paper*



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## THE PROBLEM

The Chicago metropolitan area is and has long been among the most racially segregated cities in America (Mumford Center 2001). While historically a “black-white” metropolis, as with many U.S. cities, the area has seen a great increase in racial/ethnic diversity in recent decades. As of the 2000 Census, the six collar counties comprising the Chicago metropolitan area were approximately 17 percent Latino, 57 percent non-Latino white, and 19 percent non-Latino black (U.S. Census 2000).

Despite this diversity, it is still the case that blacks are particularly residentially segregated from whites, though Latino-white and Asian-white segregation levels are also quite high. For example, according to the Lewis Mumford Center (2001), in 2000, one of the most common indicators of the level of racial residential segregation (the dissimilarity index) ranked Chicago as the fifth most segregated in terms of black-white segregation (index of dissimilarity of 81), and the third most segregated in terms of black-Latino segregation (index of dissimilarity of 77). White-Latino segregation is lower—both relatively and absolutely—ranking 11th in the country (with an index of dissimilarity of 62).

Regardless of the Fair Housing Act of 1968, which banned discrimination on the basis of race/ethnicity in the sale and rental of housing, now 40 years later, patterns of housing segregation in the Chicago metropolitan area have changed little. Despite being illegal, discrimination in housing persists, albeit somewhat less frequently and often in more subtle ways than in the past (e.g., Turner et al, 2002).

But discrimination is just one of the barriers to housing integration. In this report, we draw attention to another: racial “blind spots” in community knowledge. In particular, we explore whether there are substantial racial/ethnic differences in the communities that people know about, and, further, whether the racial/ethnic composition of a community importantly shapes whether a person knows about a community. If community knowledge is patterned in this way, these “blind spots” may be a mechanism through which housing segregation is perpetuated. That is, knowledge of a community is most surely a precursor to a successful move to a particular community. To take one example, if racially integrated communities are only well-known among a certain racial/ethnic group, then its prospects for maintaining that integration are uncertain.

Residential segregation is either perpetuated or diminished through the aggregation of many individual-level decisions about where to move. Based on a considerable amount of research, we know quite a lot

about what kind of places people say they would like to live, vis á vis racial composition (Farley et al. 1994; Charles 2006). Based on these data, it has been argued that whites and African Americans hold incompatible preferences about the racial composition of the neighborhoods they would like to live in: whites want relatively few African Americans in their neighborhood while African Americans prefer a more even mix of whites and blacks.

However, it is also the case that the kinds of neighborhoods in which whites and blacks say they would be willing to live generally are more integrated than the neighborhoods and communities in which they actually reside. This disjuncture is likely due to a variety of reasons including a range of discriminatory treatments, as well as the possibility that whites, in particular, overstate their interest in integration when asked in opinion surveys.

This report centers on an additional reason—people of different races and ethnicities have different knowledge—or “blind spots”—about communities and so lack the tools necessary to ultimately make moves that fit these preferences.

## THE DATA

In 2004-2005, the Survey Research Laboratory at the University of Illinois at Chicago conducted the Chicago Area Study, a scientific survey of 789 randomly selected adults 21 years and older living in households in Cook County, Illinois (Krysan, et al. 2005). The pool of respondents was about equally divided among whites, African Americans, and Latinos. The Chicago Area Study was an in-person survey that lasted about an hour, and included questions about neighborhood characteristics, housing experiences, and a variety of attitudes.

To measure individuals’ levels of familiarity with various kinds of communities, the survey respondents were given a map identifying 41 communities throughout the Chicago metropolitan area (see Figure 1). The communities included both suburbs and neighborhoods within Chicago. They were asked to identify any of the communities or neighborhoods that they “don’t know anything about”. The communities were selected so that they included a variety of communities—those in the city and outside; those with expensive housing and those with more modest home prices; those that are racially segregated and those that are integrated.

## DO BLACKS, WHITES, AND LATINOS HAVE DIFFERENT COMMUNITY “BLIND SPOTS”?

Because we are interested in barriers to integration, our focus throughout this report is on the absence rather than the presence of knowledge. That is, we are interested in whether community “blind spots” are the

same or different depending on the racial/ethnic background of the survey respondent. Our first picture of this comes from asking the question: Which communities did at least one-third of survey respondents say they “know nothing about”? And, in particular, does this differ depending on the race/ethnicity of the respondent?

Table 1 shows the list of communities that 33 percent or more of the survey respondents within a particular racial/ethnic group said they “didn’t know anything about.” The first clear message is that Latinos have more than twice as many communities as whites and blacks that meet this criterion. Despite the greater number of communities on the Latino list as compared to the white list, however, it is also the case that whites and Latinos have more of the same “blind spots” compared to whites and African Americans.

In particular, there are 10 communities that at least one-third of whites and one-third of Latinos similarly “know nothing about” (shown in bold on the table). In contrast, there are just three communities that more than one-third of whites and more than one-third of African Americans (and one-third of Latinos) “know nothing about.” It is striking that none of the communities appear only on the black and white lists. Thus, the “racial blind spots” of whites and blacks are only minimally overlapping; and while Latinos have more “blind spots” than whites, the communities that appear among those “blind spots,” are quite similar for Latinos and whites in Chicago.

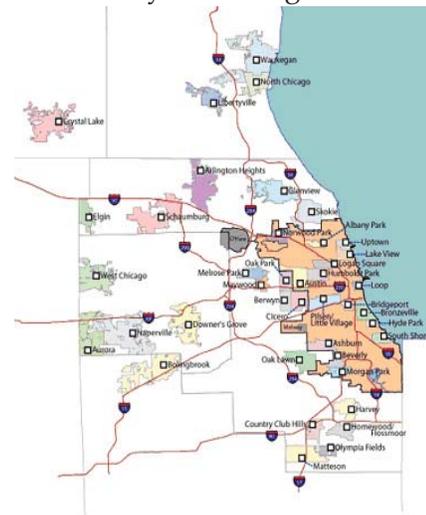
Generally, the communities that are unknown by more than one-third of whites are those that have some or a substantial African American population. These range from all-black neighborhoods like Bronzeville and South Shore to racially mixed neighborhoods like Beverly, Homewood/Flossmoor, and Matteson. It is noteworthy then, that the “blind spots” for whites include several communities that are racially integrated—some of which are majority white (Beverly and Homewood/Flossmoor).

The pattern for African Americans is different. Their list of relatively unknown communities includes all-white and geographically distant communities like Libertyville and Crystal Lake as well as a handful of racially and ethnically diverse Chicago neighborhoods (Uptown, Albany Park, and Logan Square).

More than one-half of the 41 communities were “unknown” by one-third or more of the Latino respondents. It is difficult to summarize the “community type” because it includes communities that are segregated (Arlington Heights, Bronzeville) and integrated (Bridgeport, Uptown); that are in the city (Hyde Park, Ashburn) and far away (Libertyville, Aurora). The only kind of community that is not a “blind spot” for

**FIGURE 1**

Map used to measure Chicago area resident “blind spots” in community knowledge.



Latinos are those where there is a substantial Latino population—places like Humboldt Park, Cicero, and Pilsen/Little Village.

**DO BLACKS, WHITES, AND LATINOS OF THE SAME SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC BACKGROUNDS STILL HAVE DIFFERENT RACIAL “BLIND SPOTS”?**

Because housing is segregated by income as well as by race/ethnicity, some racial/ethnic differences in community knowledge may be due to differences in social and economic background and other factors, such as length of time in the metropolitan area. Our next analysis takes into account these differences, and asks a slightly different question from the previous one: to what extent does the lack of knowledge about any given community differ for whites, blacks, and Latinos, above and beyond any differences in background? Table 2 summarizes the results of a series of analyses that control for background differences and tests whether white, black and Latino knowledge differences are eliminated or whether they persist even after these controls are included. Our discussion of the results begins with white-black comparisons, then moves to white-Latino, and finally black-Latino comparisons.

**1.) HOW DO LEVELS OF COMMUNITY KNOWLEDGE COMPARE FOR WHITES AND AFRICAN AMERICANS?**

Column 2 in Table 2 summarizes the comparison of white and black community knowledge for the 41 communities and shows that there are 20

**TABLE 1**

Communities where 33 percent or more of a particular racial/ethnic group don't know anything about a community (CAS 2004).

<b>Whites</b>	<b>African Americans</b>	<b>Latinos</b>
<i>North Chicago (39%)</i>	<i>North Chicago (41%)</i>	<i>North Chicago (45%)</i>
<i>Norwood Park (39%)</i>	<i>Norwood Park (54%)</i>	<i>Norwood Park (44%)</i>
<i>West Chicago (44%)</i>	<i>West Chicago (43%)</i>	<i>West Chicago (54%)</i>
<b>Ashburn (65%)</b>		<b>Ashburn (69%)</b>
<b>Beverly (43%)</b>		<b>Beverly (50%)</b>
<b>Bronzeville (55%)</b>		<b>Bronzeville (46%)</b>
<b>Country Club Hills (43%)</b>		<b>Country Club Hills (63%)</b>
<b>Harvey (42%)</b>		<b>Harvey (56%)</b>
<b>Homewood/Flossmoor (38%)</b>		<b>Homewood/Flossmoor (63%)</b>
<b>Matteson (49%)</b>		<b>Matteson (68%)</b>
<b>Morgan Park (56%)</b>		<b>Morgan Park (60%)</b>
<b>Olympia Field (45%)</b>		<b>Olympia Fields (71%)</b>
<b>South Shore (48%)</b>		<b>South Shore (45%)</b>
	<i>Arlington Heights (37%)</i>	<i>Arlington Heights (42%)</i>
	<i>Crystal Lake (54%)</i>	<i>Crystal Lake (60%)</i>
	<i>Downer's Grove (34%)</i>	<i>Downer's Grove (47%)</i>
	<i>Libertyville (55%)</i>	<i>Libertyville (64%)</i>
	<i>Uptown (33%)</i>	<i>Uptown (37%)</i>
	<i>Waukegan (46%)</i>	<i>Waukegan (49%)</i>
<i>Pilsen/Little Village (35%)</i>	<i>Albany Park (43%)</i>	<i>Aurora (47%)</i>
	<i>Elgin (42%)</i>	<i>Bolingbrook (46%)</i>
	<i>Glenview (40%)</i>	<i>Bridgeport (37%)</i>
	<i>Logan Square (35%)</i>	<i>Hyde Park (46%)</i>
		<i>Lakeview (33%)</i>
		<i>Naperville (44%)</i>
		<i>Oak Lawn (38%)</i>
		<i>Skokie (37%)</i>
		<i>Schaumburg (37%)</i>
<b>n=14</b>	<b>n=13</b>	<b>n=28</b>

Codes:

On both black and Latino lists.

*On black, white and Latino lists*

**On white and Latino lists**

*On one racial/ethnic group only*

Note: There are no communities that overlap white and black only.

The percentages in parentheses after each community are the percentage of each group who said they "didn't know anything about" the community.

communities where whites and blacks have the same level of knowledge (identified by the “=” sign). These include two of the six “all white” communities, all of the “mostly white” communities, and many of the racially mixed communities that include significant percentages of Latinos. In short, some of the relative racial “blind spots” for African Americans have disappeared once taking into account background characteristics: all-white Downer’s Grove and Norwood Park are equally (un)known among whites and blacks of similar social and economic backgrounds.

Of the remaining 21 communities where whites and blacks had different knowledge levels, whites have more relative “blind spots” than blacks (indicated in the column as “W > B” for whites “don’t know” at higher levels than blacks). Whites’ “blind spots” included many racially mixed communities from mixed but majority white communities of Beverly, Homewood/Flossmoor, and the Loop to mixed but majority black communities like Matteson, Olympia Fields, and Morgan Park. “Blind spots” also include all of the communities that are “all black” and two of the three “mostly black” communities. Indeed, just four of the 21 communities that had racial differences are ones where blacks have less knowledge than whites (indicated by “B > W” on Table 2): Waukegan, Libertyville, Crystal Lake, and Arlington Heights. Three of these four relative “blind spots” are all-white suburban communities, and the fourth is a racially mixed community in the far north (Waukegan).

In summary, the results in Column 2 of Table 2 show that patterns of community knowledge are certainly shaped by race: whites are far less likely than blacks to be familiar with communities that are racially diverse or predominately African American. Additionally, blacks are less familiar than whites with communities that are both distant from the city and predominately white.

## 2.) HOW DO LEVELS OF COMMUNITY KNOWLEDGE DIFFER FOR WHITES AND LATINOS?

Twenty-two of the 41 communities show similar knowledge levels between whites and Latinos. Of the remaining 19 communities (where Latinos and whites differed in their level of knowledge), the vast majority (14) are communities where whites are less knowledgeable than Latinos (indicated by a “W > L” in Column 3). These communities are about divided between those communities comprised of about one-third Latino residents and those with substantial black populations. Thus, Latinos know more than whites about communities where their own group lives (e.g., Pilsen/Little Village, Melrose Park); but Latinos are also more likely than whites to know about areas with

substantial black populations like Austin, Bronzeville, South Shore, Maywood, Morgan Park, and Beverly. The five communities that whites are more knowledgeable about than Latinos—once controlling for respondent background characteristics—are all/mostly white Arlington Heights, Crystal Lake, Libertyville, and Schaumburg, and racially mixed Waukegan.

## 3.) HOW DO LEVELS OF COMMUNITY KNOWLEDGE DIFFER FOR LATINOS AND AFRICAN AMERICANS?

Twenty-five of the 41 communities are equally unknown by Chicago area Latinos and African Americans. This includes a wide range of communities with different racial compositions—from all white to racially mixed. Of the remaining 16 communities, there are a few more that Latinos are less likely to be familiar with (the 10 that are indicated with a “L > B” in Column 4 of Table 2) than that African Americans are less likely to be familiar with (the six that are indicated with a “B > L” in Column 4 of Table 2). However, there is a clear racial pattern. Most of the communities that Latinos are less familiar with are those with more than a handful (though not necessarily a majority) of African Americans. For their part, all of the communities that African Americans are less familiar with are communities where almost one-half or more of the residents are Latino—places like Cicero, Berwyn, Pilsen/Little Village, Melrose Park, Humboldt Park, and Logan Square.

## CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Knowledge of a community likely has an important impact on where people end up living. If one does not know anything about a community, one is probably unlikely to search there; or at the very least, the costs associated with acquiring information about “unknown” communities is much higher than “known” communities. Those who consult with real estate agents in the process of a search may be introduced to communities they never considered. But it is likely that many people approach an agent with a particular geography already in mind.

Moreover, in another question in our survey, we learned that there is substantial racial matching between client and agent: the great majority of whites, blacks, and Latinos are assisted by a real estate agent of their same racial/ethnic background. Thus, although agents’ “blind spots” are likely to be fewer than those of their clients, this race-matching of agent and client may further aggravate the barrier of community knowledge, or at the least it minimizes the improvements that a real estate agent might offer.

What do our maps tell us about the racial features of community knowledge? First, many of Afri-

	black v. white	Latino v. white	black v. Latino
<b>All White</b>			
Arlington Heights	B>W	L>W	=
Crystal Lake	B>W	L>W	L>B
Downers Grove	=	=	=
Libertyville	B>W	L>W	=
Norwood Park	=	=	=
Oak Lawn	W>B	W>L	=
<b>Mostly White</b>			
Glenview	=	=	=
Lake View	=	=	=
Naperville	=	=	=
Schaumburg	=	L>W	L>B
<b>All Black</b>			
Austin	W>B	W>L	=
Bronzeville	W>B	W>L	=
South Shore	W>B	W>L	L>B
<b>Mostly Black</b>			
Country Club Hills	W>B	=	L>B
Harvey	W>B	=	L>B
Maywood	W>B	W>L	=
<b>All Hispanic</b>			
Pilsen/Little Village	W>B	W>L	B>L
<b>Mostly Hispanic</b>			
Cicero	=	W>L	B>L
<b>Mixed B-W White Majority</b>			
Beverly	W>B	W>L	=
Homewood/Flossmoor	W>B	=	L>B
Loop	W>B	=	=
Oak Park	=	=	=
<b>Mixed B-W Black Majority</b>			
Matteson	W>B	=	L>B
Olympia Fields	W>B	=	L>B
Morgan Park	W>B	W>L	L>B
<b>Mixed H-W White Majority</b>			
Berwyn	=	=	B>L
Elgin	=	=	=
<b>Mixed H-W Hispanic Majority</b>			
Melrose Park	=	W>L	B>L
<b>Mixed A-W White Majority</b>			
Skokie	=	=	=
<b>Mixed Two Groups</b>			
Humboldt Park	=	W>L	B>L
Logan Square	=	W>L	B>L
West Chicago	=	=	=
<b>Mixed Three Groups</b>			
Albany Park	=	=	=
Ashburn	W>B	W>L	=
Aurora	=	=	=
Bolingbrook	=	=	=
Bridgeport	W>B	W>L	=
Hyde Park	W>B	=	L>B
North Chicago	=	=	=
Uptown	=	=	=
Waukegan	B>W	L>W	=

**TABLE 2**

Racial/ethnic differences in lack of community knowledge, by community racial composition.

Notes:  
 "=" means no statistically significant difference between the two groups; B>W means blacks "don't know" more, etc.  
 Results based on logistic regression models controlling for education, income, age, gender, presence of children under 18 years in the household, whether currently married, number of years living in the Chicago metropolitan area, and if the respondent was born in the U.S.

can Americans' (relative to whites) "blind spots" can be explained away by social class characteristics. Once we compare whites and blacks with equivalent social and economic characteristics, it is the distant and all-white suburbs that are more unknown among African Americans. Whites, for their part, are largely unaware of heavily African American communities. But importantly, they are also less likely than African Americans to know about some of the black-white integrated communities. Of the mixed black-white communities included in this study, only Oak Park is equally well-known among blacks and whites. Interestingly, Latino-white integrated communities are equally "unknown" among blacks and whites.

Latinos, again once controlling for background characteristics, are quite knowledgeable about a wide range of communities; more so than whites and blacks. The patterns are predictable: compared to blacks, they know more about the heavily Latino communities but less about heavily African American communities. Compared to whites, they are more knowledgeable about heavily African American communities and in just a few cases less knowledgeable about all white communities.

Taken together, we see that each racial/ethnic group's knowledge of communities is, perhaps not surprisingly, generally greater about communities in which their group has a presence than about communities where few of their co-ethnics live. But in comparison with Latinos and African Americans, whites are much more unaware of integrated black-white and Latino-white communities. African Americans (compared to whites of similar social class characteristics) are quite knowledgeable about a range of communities, but to the degree that African Americans have "blind spots," it is for all-white suburban communities. Without such background controls, it is clear (from Table 1) that community knowledge is racialized for blacks, whites, and Latinos.

Based on community awareness alone, segregation will be perpetuated if racial/ethnic groups are only knowledgeable about communities in which their racial/ethnic group predominates. Our results suggest that this is largely the case for whites, but less so for blacks and Latinos. Since whites also make up a majority of the region's population, their lack of knowledge could disproportionately perpetuate segregation. Communities that are already integrated, in order to maintain that integration, will require continued movement into them by members of all racial/ethnic groups. Our results suggest that some such places—like Homewood/Flossmoor and Beverly—constitute a racial "blind spot" among whites. Efforts should be made to overcome this, to ensure that all racial groups

are aware of all the options available to them.

Among African Americans, the challenge is slightly different. Particularly once controlling for background characteristics, African Americans are, if anything, more knowledgeable (than whites especially) about a wide range of communities. The questions then become: Why aren't African Americans moving to some of these places? What are the further barriers to integration in these neighborhoods?

One possibility is that African Americans' knowledge about these communities is negative. That is, perhaps these communities are perceived by African Americans as heavily white, and hostile to African Americans. In this case, working to dispel the stereotypes—or realities—of these communities as unwelcoming of African Americans is necessary.

Finally, among Latinos, we see the interesting pattern that once controls are included—especially for the length of time living in the metropolitan area—Latinos are quite knowledgeable about a wide range of communities. However, without these statistical controls (in Table 1), the message is quite clear: Latinos, many of whom are newcomers to the Chicago metropolitan area—are unaware of a great many different communities—at levels far higher than whites or African Americans.

The Fair Housing Act of 1968 prohibits racial/ethnic discrimination in the rental and sale of housing and enforcing this is an important goal of this act. But a perhaps less well-known feature of the Fair Housing Act—one that was reinforced by President Clinton's Executive Order 12892—is that HUD is compelled to "affirmatively further" the goals of equal/fair housing. That is, in addition to its responsibilities to ensure that housing discrimination does not occur, it is also obligated to create programs that help to break down other barriers to racial residential integration.

At a most basic level, racial integration requires that individuals of different racial and ethnic backgrounds move to similar places. But if there are substantial racial "blind spots" about the options in one's metropolitan areas, then affirmative moves by all races and ethnicities are less likely. Getting people of all races/ethnicities to consider—and ultimately make—moves that further the goal of racial integration in housing is an important component of fair housing policy and legislation. Our results suggest that this kind of affirmative marketing—educating residents about the variety of housing options available—is a critical first step in this process: there are substantial racial "blind spots" in community knowledge which must be overcome.

Affirmative marketing policies and programs that attempt to make individuals aware of the broad

range of possible communities in which they might live—that is, to shed light on these “blind spots”—are a fruitful direction for policymakers and community leaders. Such programs are less intrusive than other forms of racial integration policies that have recently come under constitutional review and political attack. Many fair housing organizations rightfully focus on enforcement of fair housing laws, and researchers and government agencies necessarily conduct studies to gauge the extent of discrimination. Given the continued evidence that fair housing laws are violated, these efforts are critical. But this research highlights that affirmative marketing programs are an important complement.

In the Chicago region, the Oak Park Regional Housing Center (<http://www.apartmentsoakpark.org/>) has been working on this problem for decades. It works to make apartment seekers aware of housing options that break down their racial “blind spots” by providing a free apartment referral service that encourages affirmative moves. That whites, blacks, and Latinos are all equally likely to be knowledgeable of Oak Park is one measure of their success. To break down the racial “blind-spots” of the entire region, though, a regional solution is necessary.

A new non-profit based in the Chicago area, MoveSmart.org ([www.movesmart.org](http://www.movesmart.org)), is another example of an innovative program seeking to break down community “blind spots.” In this case, the organization is working to create an online, interactive af-

firmative marketing resource. Given the increasing use of the Internet in housing searches (in our 2004 survey we found that 38 percent of people who had searched for housing in the last 10 years had used the Internet; a number that has and will surely continue to increase), this is a potentially powerful tool for reducing racial “blind spots” in the metropolitan area. The resource seeks to provide homeseekers with a single website that provides an array of neighborhood information that is currently available in sometimes difficult-to-reach and disparate locations on the Internet. It will contain information about neighborhood amenities, quality of life indicators, affordable housing opportunities, services, programs and community-based organizations. It will also include guides, tools, calculators, worksheets, and an innovative social network tool to facilitate connections between new neighbors and with various community organizations.

These and other programs that seek to increase awareness across all racial/ethnic groups about the kinds of communities that are in their “blind spots” are called for and resources targeted at this problem would be a fruitful step towards breaking down the persistent pattern of racial residential segregation.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Maria Krysan is a member of the IGPA faculty and an associate professor of sociology at the University of Illinois at Chicago. Her research focuses on racial residential segregation and racial attitudes.



She is co-author (with H. Schuman, L. Bobo and C. Steeh) of the book *Racial Attitudes in America: Trends and Interpretations* (Harvard University Press, Revised Edition, 1997), and is responsible for a website that updates the data from that book (<http://www.igpa.uillinois.edu/programs/racialattitudes>).

In addition to a recent edited volume with Amanda Lewis, called *The Changing Terrain of Race and Ethnicity*, her most recent work has appeared in the *Annual Review of Sociology*, *Demography*, *Social Problems*, *Social Forces*, *Social Science Research*, and *The DuBois Review*. She is a principal investigator on an NIH-funded grant, “How Does Race Matter in Housing? Search Strategies, Experiences and Preferences,” a project that continues her interest in racial attitudes and residential segregation.

Krysan received her Ph.D. from the University of Michigan in 1995.

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