



nextLI/Newsday

2019 Focus Group Report
December 13, 2019

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Project Background and Report Content

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

ABOUT THE GROUPS:

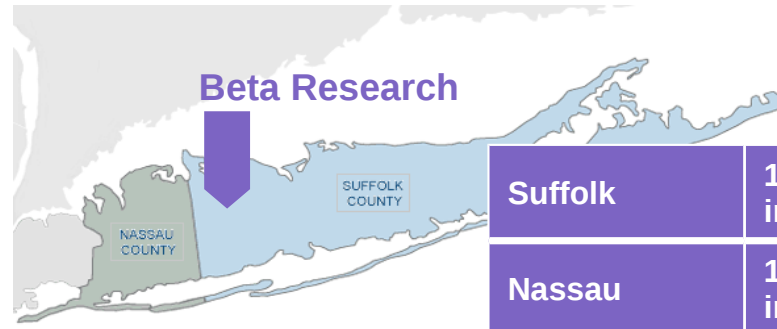
- The groups were held on December 4th at 6pm and 8pm in Syosset, NY.
- Participants were recruited through Beta Research, which hosted the focus group sessions.
- To qualify, participants had to be between 18 and 79 years of age. While no hard quotas were set, emphasis was placed on ensuring a strong representation of African-American and Hispanic recruits as well as individuals earning under \$100,000 per year.



As a follow-up to the 2019 nextLI/Newsday research that looked at “younger” Long Islanders (ages 18-34), nextLI/Newsday contracted with YouGov to conduct two (2) focus groups to look at the future of diversity and housing on Long Island. These focus groups addressed the following topics:

- 1 Views on the changing demographics on Long Island**
- 2 Perceptions of Long Island’s multicultural climate**
- 3 Racial and ethnic diversity in Long Island communities**
- 4 Role of school districts in Long Island’s racial and ethnic diversity**
- 5 Reactions to nextLI/Newsday’s investigation of housing discrepancies**

Summary of Participants in each Group



Group 1 (6:00 pm)

Age	
18-34	5
35-59	4
60+	3

Gender	
Male	5
Female	7

Ethnicity	
White	3
Hispanic	3
African American	5
Asian	1

Income	
Under \$50,000	5
\$50,000 - \$150,000	6
More than \$150,000	1

Total	12
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Group 2 (8:00 pm)

Age	
18-34	2
35-59	7
60+	2

Gender	
Male	6
Female	5

Ethnicity	
White	3
Hispanic	2
African American	4
Asian	2

Income	
Under \$50,000	4
\$50,000 - \$150,000	5
More than \$150,000	2

Total	11
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Key Findings: Overall State of Diversity on Long Island

- At the beginning of each group, participants mostly described the words “diversity” and “multiculturalism” with neutral and benign descriptors (such as “array,” “togetherness,” and “change”). As the discussion continued, these terms – particularly diversity – called to mind a unique combination of discomfort but also opportunity.
- When elaborating on these two points, it was evident that terms like “diversity” & “multicultural” could take on a positive or negative connotation based on:
 - The political climate/context of the conversation or time in general
 - The participants involved in the conversation
 - The reasoning behind the conversation – professional or training settings tend to make more people feel uncomfortable
- Participants acknowledged that their communities on Long Island have changed (in the past) or are currently changing to become more diverse. This diversity is reflected of many of their own experiences – many moved from more diverse parts of New York City to towns on Long Island that were less diverse. As more individuals shared this story, participants saw their communities as naturally becoming more diverse.
- While Long Island as a whole and certain towns/communities have become more diverse, participants focused on specific areas of the town that were much more segregated. So while a town could have a good mix of races and ethnicities, participants demonstrated that a close look will reveal primarily Caucasian areas of town vs. primarily majority-minority areas of town.
 - This segregation was frequently coupled with vast discrepancy in local services, quality of school districts, etc. between the predominately Caucasian areas of a town compared to areas with larger minority populations.

Key Findings (continued)

- Communities with multiple school districts or high schools reinforced the differences within a community. Communities that funnel into multiple high schools tend to have a higher quality (primarily Caucasian) school and what are perceived as lower quality, more diverse schools.
 - These discrepancies in local services – particularly school districts – reinforce gaps in property values between certain sections of the town, thus exacerbating the issues.
 - While participants did not have anything explicitly against diversity in their neighborhood, they saw this as a potential risk to their investment (i.e. property value), and also many reported they simply wanted what was best for their children by sending them to the best school.
- In general, participants were open to the idea of more affordable housing in some of Long Island’s more homogeneous communities. However, many warn against the negative perception of what “affordable housing” implied and how the infusion of this type of housing could impact some of the issues already reported with property values.
- Conversely, participants – particularly in minority communities – also had a concern that “gentrification” could impact their community and make staying in their home more difficult in the face of rising property taxes.

Key Findings: NextLI/Newsday’s “Long Island Divided” Piece

- Initial reactions to the nextLI/Newsday’s investigation indicated participants were surprised by the extent of the issue, the intention of real estate agents and some of the “founders” of Long Island towns (such as William Levitt) to establish segregated communities, and what was perceived as a lack of consequences for those involved.
 - The scale of the steering issue was particularly surprising to participants, as evident through the consistency of the results uncovered by the tests in nextLI/Newsday’s investigation.
 - Further, participants were surprised that real estate agents could potentially steer potential home buyers to areas with lower property values – even at the expense of their own profit. The assumption is that people in these professions would be driven solely by money.
- Many participants indicate having personal experiences being “steered” in their home buying experience and/or hearing stories from others, yet many are still surprised by the extent to which nextLI/Newsday uncovered steering in their investigation. This makes some who felt like they weren’t steered question their own home buying experience.
- On the important topic of school districts and the role they play in deciding where to live, confusion existed over how some districts are intentionally parsed within communities. While some saw these actions as active efforts to keep areas segregated, others felt it was more reactionary to growing communities.
- When looking towards the future, participants indicated that this was a multi-generational problem on Long Island that would require multi-generational solutions. They pointed towards the next generation having less built-in biases, having more integrated friend groups, and being less “jaded” than the current generation.

Key Findings (continued)

- Some participants felt that internet searches helped them not be steered and could correct some housing discrepancies. Initially, participants were surprised by the level that the testers relied on the insights and recommendations of real estate agents in their home search, with younger participants saying they would rely more heavily on their own internet searches before talking to real estate agents.
- Again, specific to the nextLI/Newsday investigation, participants saw the role of nextLI/Newsday as a combination of raising awareness, but also highlighting counter narratives.
 - Many saw the value of this investigation as the first piece of the puzzle. While there is a value raising this awareness, it could also reinforce some of the negative preconceptions that exist on Long Island.
 - As a compliment to this type of reporting, participants would like to also see features on great things being done by communities, teachers, school districts, or residents in cities/towns/communities that currently have negative perceptions in the public.
- Finally, participants saw the refusal of real estate agents to return to the camera to justify their actions as a tacit admission of guilt. Thus, greater accountability for these professionals – and their trainers – might be the best short term solution for the issues in the housing market. However, it was also acknowledged that larger systematic change is necessary to correct the underlying issues.

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Diversity evokes uncomfortable feelings but also sense of opportunity

“The reason why I said it [opportunity] is because it's an opportunity to learn so many different things about people that come from different places that have different cultures. It's a learning opportunity, that's kind of what I meant.”

– Maria

When thinking about diversity, words that come to mind are...

- "Rainbow"
 - "Togetherness"
 - "America"
 - "Melting pot"
 - "Fairness"
 - "Array"
 - "Opportunity"
 - "Change"
-
- "Race"
 - "Sex"
 - "Religion"
 - "Languages"
 - "Age"
 - "Culture"
 - "Mixed"
-
- **"Uncomfortable"** (mentioned in both groups)
 - "Frustration"
 - "Segregated"
 - "Challenge"
 - "Divided"
 - "Training"
 - "Different"

When thinking about multiculturalism, words that come to mind are ...

- "Food"
- "Everybody"
- "More than one culture"
- "More focused"
- "Politically correct term"
- "Challenge of something new"
- "Opportunity to learn something new"
- "Languages"

When asked to elaborate, it is evident that terms like “diversity” & “multicultural” take on the context of a larger conversation, whether it be the...

...political climate at the time

Participants acknowledge that their answers on diversity may have been different in a different political climate or even just a couple of years ago. Now, the word “diversity” appears to be more of a loaded term that invariably connects to the larger political context of the changing demographics of the country at large.

“I mean, it's just so interesting in the current political climate, I'm not sure that diversity is something that represents America or that's something that everybody says should be what the symbol of America is.”

- Ann

...person saying it

The words “diversity” or “multiculturalism” could be relatively benign if it is being discussed among friends or people of similar backgrounds. However, many mention that you need to take into context the person who brought it up. You can read much into evaluating how an individual feels on diversity by reading their tone, facial cues, etc.

“It could be many different things. I can take something totally different the way... It can be the way somebody's tone, it can be the way their facial expression. I mean, I could take something totally different than a relative that is the same nationality, religion, whatever. I totally agree with her.”

- Tracy

...reason why it's discussed

More natural conversations about race and diversity tend to make for a more positive conversation. Formalized, professional, or forced interactions – such as diversity training exercises - tend to make people more uncomfortable and, in a way, force people back into their corners.

“I said uncomfortable because when I do training, even though we have so many similarities, when you look at the differences that do divide us, it makes people uncomfortable.”

- Evonne

Why can diversity make you feel uncomfortable?

“I think it's the fact of the unknown because you don't know that person or what their background is, and people don't take the time to know that.”

-June

Long Island is changing; most think it is a positive, more inclusive change

"I don't really think of it as 'positive' or 'not positive.' I think it's a subject where it makes people uncomfortable to speak about, unless it's not spoken about on a day-to-day basis. I feel that sometimes when we're hesitant to speak about diversity or culture, it's more of fear of, I'm not saying, I don't want to come off of saying the wrong thing. When you really just really try to express what you're saying, you're just having a conversation, so it's not a matter of I'm trying to be disrespectful, it's just a conversation that has not often taken place."

- Rebecca

Small communities act as a microcosm for changes across Long Island

- Most participants across both groups acknowledged that their community/ town had become more diverse in the recent past.

"So, when we first came, my mom said that there wasn't many black people living in the part that we are now. Now there's a bunch of African-Americans, Indians, there are some Asians, some Jews, which you know, it's pretty diverse now over there versus when she moved and got the house, that was literally all white."

- Ryan

- Many participants say they are originally from the greater New York City area prior to moving to Long Island. The assumption was that as more people from the City move out to Long Island, communities will take on the "melting pot" characteristics typical of New York City.
- Generally, the shifting demographics are seen as a positive for the area as a whole. However, opportunities for improvement still exist. Within a given area, pockets of minority communities begin to emerge and cluster. Participants described many towns – particularly Amityville and Hicksville – that are de facto segregated in which one section of the town remains primarily Caucasian while other sections of town have larger African-American or Hispanic populations.
- Further, the main theme that emerged in this area is discrepancy in local services, school systems, etc. between the predominately Caucasian areas of a town compared to areas with larger minority populations.

Diversity for the sake of diversity can lead to clustering or divided communities

Personal experiences reflect the statistics that Long Island is a divided community

- While many participants acknowledge that Long Island is growing more diverse, focusing in on specific areas demonstrates that individuals of particular race, ethnicity, or cultures tend to cluster around people with similar backgrounds as themselves.

“Some of the not so positive changes is that the general socioeconomic background of Copiague has fell a little bit not because of the people, just because it's hard to find jobs in certain areas. It is a very diverse town. It doesn't look that way when you pass through certain areas because you might see a row of Polish stores and then might see a row of Italian stores, might see a row of Black stores. So it looks like there is a distinct boundary in certain areas.”

- William

- Communities with multiple school districts or high schools reinforce these differences within a community. Communities that funnel into multiple high schools tend to have a higher quality primarily Caucasian school and what are perceived as lower quality more diverse schools.

“Let's say even driving by the Division area, when kids come out of school, I've seen it's very diverse. Blacks, Hispanics, Pakistani, Indian. You have all races in Division. So if I really cared about it, that's where we want to move. But when we did our research, we saw that MacArthur had the best qualifications ”

- Michael

- This was not seen in a negative light early in the discussion; however, as the conversation transitioned to the nextLI/Newsday investigation participants acknowledged there was intent behind how some of these communities came to exist.

No clear answer as to how to make Long Island's communities more diverse

“One way I think personally is that if your neighborhood begins to become diverse, that cannot affect your property value. ...or if there's this thing where someone's literally a contagion, so like one person moves, then your value goes down. Sometime it doesn't have to be actually hatred. It could just, I need my \$400,000 house to stay at market value. To me, I think that is very important, the economic portion.”

- Kimberly

Connections between property values, taxes and the diversity of the town should be uncoupled

- Ideas for how to make communities on Long Island more diverse go beyond the real estate agents' actions featured in nextLI/Newsday's investigation. Participants note that it was clear from the training real estate agents received that they were “being steered to steer,” suggesting the problem starts from the top.

“Obviously, based from that video, this is how they're being trained. So it's coming from up above. It's coming from the powers that be within the real estate industry, because obviously, I didn't get that they took it upon themselves to start steering as the trainer, they showed the trainer training them, steering them.”

- Mercedes

- Beyond that, many participants equated neighborhoods becoming more diverse with an adverse effect on property values. So while these participants did not have anything explicitly against diversity in their neighborhood, they saw it is a risk to their investment (i.e. their home).
- Some participants were “confused” on how property values were tied to the community at large. Others thought it was just perception; that it did not necessarily have an effect on home value but rather just made it more difficult to resell your home if the neighborhood was more diverse.
- One final recommendation was to put some controls – whether through legislation or other ordinances – in place that would mitigate rising property taxes in certain communities.

Affordable housing could diversify communities, but carries a negative connotation

“So rich communities, they fight against it. There's something happening now where they don't want affordable housing in their community because they're afraid of the type of people that it's going to attract.”

- June

This type of housing could cultivate more diverse neighborhoods on Long Island

- In general, participants are open to the idea of more affordable housing in some of Long Island's more homogeneous communities.
- However, many warned against the negative perception of what “affordable housing” implied and how the infusion of this type of housing could exacerbate some of the issues already reported with property values.
- Also, participants want more information on how to define “affordable.” One participant notes an affordable housing program in New York City requires an income of \$84,000 per year (which they do not perceive to be affordable). Another indicates their experience is that there may be only one or two affordable housing units in a much larger complex of higher priced real estate, thus not addressing the issue on a holistic level.

“I worked in the city, I worked in the city for a number of years and you know, I've considered, cause I wasn't sure if I was going to get an opportunity to [work on the] Island. I looked at her as a teacher. I wasn't sure. So I was looking at how I like how they have the new affordable housing units are going up in the city based on your income. And I really think that Long Island should take that into consideration.”

- Rebecca

Participants concerned about getting priced out of current communities

“My point is that I think they're gentrified because even in Amityville in different parts, pockets of Long Island, I can say this cause I live right there. They build up these nice, beautiful apartment buildings. I can't afford to live in that apartment though. A one bedroom, it's almost \$3,000 for oneAnd they're getting filled, but they're getting filled by, all I see now are these high-end cars high-end this... So that means now, all the working class, middle-class that's been sitting in there, the taxes are good soon go up and then soon you have those that can't afford to live there. So now I feel that.”

-Rebecca

Gentrification stretching out onto Long Island

- On the flip side of an infusion of affordable housing into communities across Long Island, many participants also have a concern that “gentrification” could impact their communities and make staying in their current homes more difficult.
- This was particularly the case among participants in minority communities that see a influx of the development of “luxury” homes and apartment complexes that have attracted higher income – typically Caucasian – residents.

“We got to start by beautifying the straight path. You get all this garbage out of there. You don't see none of that stuff no more. The mom-and-pop stores, they're gone and they're going straight down, straight back to the Parkway. And that's what they're doing. Those houses that you see over there now, those brand new apartments? Oh, they're not cheap.”

- Terence

- Again, property taxes came up in this section of the discussion. Participants mentioned that even if they had paid off their home and/or can afford their current mortgage, rising property taxes could make their current dwelling unaffordable in years to come.

Forging new communities takes effort on behalf of all parties involved

“I feel like it's a two-way street. You know, there has to be tolerance to accept change, but just kind of curtailing [...], there has to be a willingness to change too.”

-Viviana

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Initial reactions to the investigation indicate participants were surprised by the...

...level of the issue

While most participants are not surprised that issues – such as “steering” – exist, many are surprised by the data behind the investigation. The scale of the issue became evident through the consistency of results returned throughout the investigation.

“I wasn't surprised, but I was surprised to the level, I thought maybe a little pockets or something, but they were like across the board.”

- Viviana

...intent behind the issue

Participants across both groups are also surprised by the history of Long Island and how communities were initially set up to be segregated. In addition, many indicated there seemed to be an intention on the part of real estate agents to keep communities segregated – even at the expense of their own profit.

“Sure. I was surprised to read that in the editorial section of article I read, the focus of one of the pages was that segregation in Long Island was intended originally. I never thought of that before and I'd never read something like that before. I consider myself relatively well read. Threw me for a little bit of a loop, I guess.”

- William

...lack of consequences

After the initial surprise of many of the findings of the investigation, some participants naturally turn to what they perceive as inadequate accountability for the real estate agents involved in the testing.

“I'll tell you the thing that surprised me the most. These people were caught red-handed, blatantly breaking the law and I didn't see anybody had to suffer any consequences for what they did. So if there are no consequences to this, it's never going to stop. That's the thing that surprised me the most. Caught red-handed. You know, it's a crime. People get caught doing a crime, there's consequences, but apparently for this type of thing, there are no consequences.”

- Maria

Steering appears to be more widespread than some would assume

“You wouldn't even know. I mean when I bought my house, I'm not that type of person to allow somebody to tell me where to go. So I was the one that was on top of it and saying, looking at listings and telling the agent, I want to see this house, I want to see that house. But I'm guessing there's other people out there that rely on somebody who has the expertise. But you're not aware that they're steering you in one area or another.”

- June

Steering could touch everyone – directly or through stories from others

- Many participants indicate having personal experiences being “steered” in their home-buying experience and/or hearing stories from others, yet most are still surprised by the extent to which nextLI/Newsday uncovered steering in their investigation.
- Among those that may not have experienced such issues, many had heard of such stories from others.
- Further, many of the older participants recalled times when Long Island was more explicitly segregated. They recalled stories of being denied homes in a certain area and having neighbors shun new homeowners of color.
- Even more concerning was that the nextLI/Newsday investigation made participants re-evaluate their own home-buying experiences; questioning whether they would have even known if they were steered.

“I was surprised that everybody was surprised. Look at the area. If you live in the area and there are no one out of your ethnic group, how did you think that happened? Don't you think that was done by design or we just, all black folks wanted to live in one area, or all Asian folks just wanted to live in one area. When I bought my house in 1998 in Wyandanch, the realtor said to me, “Oh, you don't want to buy a house there.”

- Evonne

Steering reinforces most negative stereotypes

“But we were being steered towards Hicksville and comments were being made that it's an Indian community. I'm not even Indian, but it's an Indian community, you'll like the stores there, you'll like the food there. We were like, we don't want to live there.”

- Tyrell

Money does not appear to be an equalizer

“Yes. I pretty much felt the same way. I was about to say the same thing. I thought real estate agents were all about the monetary gain. I don't understand really what they have to gain from steering people from one direction to the other. The other thing I found was that the real estate trainers, the people that actually trained to real estate agents, were actually giving messages like kind of...”

-Allen

Participants surprised real estate agents “steered” despite their economic interests

- One of the more concerning themes that emerges across both groups is the perception that real estate agents are acting against their own economic interest.
- Participants across both groups are surprised that real estate agents were not solely driven by money. There assumption was that, despite any personal misgivings about race or racist tendencies, real estate agents would try to sell any prospect the most expensive house that they possibly could – regardless of race.
- One participant goes on-to theorize whether results of the investigation would be different if they include higher-priced homes on Long Island’s North Shore (i.e. homes of \$1 million or more). The assumption was that at a certain price point, real estate agents would sell the home to anyone that could afford that level of “luxury.”

“So one issue I had is that they didn't show a specific type of neighborhood. And by that I mean developing neighborhoods on the North shore. [...] they didn't include that and they kept it only on working class neighborhoods, which completely excludes a whole part of Long Island, that is actually some of what Long Island is known for. They're known for the wealthy North shore and that was excluded. So in in my head I feel like luxury doesn't discriminate because if you have the money you can afford the house, they're not going to say you can't live here if you don't have the money.”

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- Tyrell

School district drives home buying decision, but not tied to diversity in people's mind

"I was going to say that, as far as like bringing people into Amityville because I actually when I was looking at houses a couple of years ago and I was faced with the same thing Massapequa or Amityville school district and I was basing it on resale value of the house, how is that going to be affected, students' grades, I think I read a statistic, it was like 35% of people are proficient in Math and 38% are proficient in reading. And then it's rated as like a C in like the patch.com I remember reading it, and Massapequa school district was one of the top and one of the greatest. So that kind of shifted my search a little bit for what school district I wanted to be in. Because at the end of the day people don't want to be sending their kid to a school that's rated a C versus an A, 35 versus 80 you know, you want the best for your kids. I don't know."

-Michael

"Good schools" the top priority regardless of any other factors

- Aspects of a school district that factor into participants decision where to live include:
 - Website ratings/real-estate website school grades
 - Graduation rates
 - Programs/resources for students
- None of these school district attributes are tied, at least explicitly, in participants' minds to the diversity of the school district. However, everyone agree that high quality schools on Long Island typically have higher Caucasian populations.

"So they moved to Hicksville. So if I had children and I was looking for a neighborhood, I honestly wouldn't look at diversity. I would look at a school district, taxes, and price point."

- Tracy

- African-American and Hispanic participants were more open to sending their child(ren) to districts where they would be a distinct minority if they have better opportunities to succeed.
- Other participants said that diversity in schools created the opportunity for more diverse clubs, extra curricular activities, and a higher likelihood of findings "friends like them."

Lack of clarity around how school district borders are drawn

“I went to West Bend School District because of the fact that Hicksville, we felt like it wasn't accepting of us at the time when we were younger and I was still in Westlake Schools, my brother actually ended up going to Hicksville and he felt attacked all the time, let's just say. So as we've gotten older, I ended up going to Hicksville school and it's become diverse. It wasn't always like that. So, certain parts of Long Island aren't diverse.”

- Ryan

Many think school district lines are fluid, can evolve to reflect changing demographics

- Some participants thought that school districts were intentionally drawn to reinforce the segregation that is evident within different communities.

“My question I wanted to ask before a question/statement. Did you ever wonder why one school district had three schools? Did we ever look at Amityville and wonder while we had Northeast and Northwest, because Northwest was completely white at one time and Northeast was completely black. It is done by design.”

- Evonne

- Other's felt that school lines were changed as a reaction to new racial and ethnic groups moving into an area. There was an idea that school districts were attempting to choose their students, rather than families/individuals choosing where to live or their school district.

“They redraw school lines all the time. So once they noticed that, and this was passed down to me from people that lived prior to Amityville before I was born, that the lines were redrawn once blacks started moving in that area, and then they decided to redraw the lines to have them go to Amityville versus them coming into the Massapequa school district.”

- Rebecca

Case study: Amityville/Massapequa

“There's so many divides and you probably know if you're in Amityville village, you have your own police department. If you're North Amityville, you don't. When we look at money and putting together a budget for our school district, we are comparable to districts such as Smithtown, as far as district wealth, but then when you look at how many children are on free or reduced meals, it's 70 something percent, 70% so it really is a tale of two cities there. And then you throw in where I grew up in East Massapequa and then you're all confused, you're all confused because you are in Nassau County going to school in Suffolk. When you need to call the police, Nassau County shows up, if you want to go to schools that's Suffolk County, if you want to use the fire department, if your house is on fire, that's Nassau County, but if you want to use the library, that's Suffolk and then you're thrown into this thing.”

-Juan

One community discussed at length was Amityville and its relationship with greater Massapequa

Participants who live in or near Amityville referenced it several times throughout the groups as a great example of all of the issues mentioned throughout the groups; segregated communities/schools, steering and the negative connotations of diverse communities on Long Island.

Segregated communities/schools	<p><i>"It all depends on the side of town you live on really, too. The North side of the Amityville versus the South side of Amityville, there's a big difference. When it comes to the North side of Amityville, you basically have your blacks and Latinos and different backgrounds, and then on the other side you have the white, and I feel I haven't really been so much engaged so much on the South side as much as cause my high school was down there on the South side, but what I noticed is as I've moved from middle school to high school, a lot of my friends that were white left and did not go to the high school."</i></p> <p>-Rebecca</p>
Steering	<p><i>"[Real estate agent said] Terence, why don't you let me show you your house in Amityville, saying to me, this is where you belong. You don't belong to Dix Hill, you don't belong over that way."</i></p> <p>-Terrence</p>
Negative perceptions of diverse communities	<p><i>"I remember the year that they changed Amityville into Massapequa. I live next door to the gentleman that fought to have that changed. Until the day he died, he fought. We were definitely red lined because my parents paid taxes for both schools."</i></p> <p>- Evonne</p>

Despite some feelings of fruitlessness, participants saw opportunities to improve the multicultural climate on Long Island in the future

- When initially asked what opportunities exist to improve the situation on Long Island in future years, many participants spoke with a sense of hopelessness or feelings of being overwhelmed. In this section of the discussion, many referenced the history of Levittown again as evidence of a multi-generational issue. As they were pressed, however, there was a growing sense that things could change for future generations. As more generations are exposed to diverse communities it was expected that there would be natural changes to the status quo, but change will also need to occur on a systematic level in order to correct larger scale issues such as the discrepancy in school quality.

“So the years of experience, because what I noticed too, I consider myself a millennial and I'm, I feel like my group of friends that I graduated with, we made a nickname or so we called ourselves “The United Nations” just because there were so many different cultures and that's how we operated, and I don't see that much in my experience around my age group because I think we want to see that change and that's what I wonder, how long those other real estate agents has been, how long they have been around.”

- Ryan

- Further, specific to the nextLI/Newsday investigation, participants saw the real estate agents' refusal to return to camera as a positive sign that things would improve in housing. They saw this as an acknowledgement and admission the behavior they engaged in is wrong.

“It was good to come out because now some of those people were too ashamed even to come back to the camera. At least the one guy came back and said, “Oh well that's not who I am as a person. It's not in context”. So, okay, I give him that because at least he had enough, he wasn't a coward. The rest of those.”

- Carol

“As to what you were saying, they were caught red handed, and then you have the real estate agencies, referring you to a lawyer who basically gave a disclaimer and to me you're brushing the problem aside and what, nine out of the 12 agencies, were basically caught and for those who said, well we addressed the matter, but are these reps still working?”

- Carl 29

Some participants felt that internet searches helped them not be steered and could correct some housing discrepancies

- Initially, some participants were surprised by the level that the testers relied on the insights and recommendations of real estate agents in their home search.
- Many participants – especially the younger individuals – indicate that they did their “homework” online before meeting with a real estate agent. They believed that they could not be steered because they already had neighborhoods or specific homes in mind before starting the official process with a real estate agent.

“This is what would happen. We have gone on Zillow and Trulia, we saw some houses and I printed out the listings because I do know that some real estate agents can show you listings from other properties even if they're not licensed to show it to you. It's just like, it's just a cut between them and the listing agent.”

-Tyrell

- Moving forward, the role of real estate agents could diminish and steering problems may begin to naturally correct themselves. Penalties may also become easier to enforce as steering efforts could become more blatant if they were encouraging prospects to look away from homes/communities they found online.

“I mean when I bought my house, I'm not that type of person to allow somebody to tell me where to go. So I was the one that was on top of it and saying, looking at listings and telling the agent, I want to see this house, I want to see that house. But I'm guessing there's other people out there that rely on somebody who has the expertise. But you're not aware that they're steering you in one area or another.”

- June

Participants saw the role of nextLI/Newsday as a combination of raising awareness and highlighting counter narratives

- Many see the value of investigations such as the one nextLI/Newsday performed with real estate agents, but only saw it as the first piece of the puzzle. While there was the value in this type of exposure, it could also reinforce some of the negative preconceptions that exist about Long Island.
- As a compliment to this type of reporting, participants would like to also see features on communities, teachers, school districts, or residents in previously maligned cities/towns that were doing great things to improve their areas. This could encourage potential home buyers to look in different communities.

“That comes from positive stories. That comes from reinforcement about change. That comes from maintaining a level of comfortability around people that aren't like you. Not being afraid to live in Windage or East Islip regardless of whether you look like you or you or you or me or him or whomever. Those are the things that if anything would change, it would be that, not a story that has a distinctly negative spin. And I'm not saying that the story didn't have some type of positive intention somewhere, but to me exposes are exposing trash..”

- William

- Finally, some participants – particularly younger individuals – wanted additional transparency in the investigation. They indicated being alienated or distracted by what could have been missing from the piece, the use of actors, and other editorial decisions.

“It's dividing us. They didn't show any information. They just, “Oh, here's a ten second clip, here's a whole bunch of data. Oh, here's another ten second clip. Here's a whole bunch of more data.”

- Michael

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Wrap-up

Long Island residents believe solutions can be developed; transparency and accountability act as important first steps

“There was a part in the article where they said with the Levittown houses, back in I think 1954, when they first put out an article on Levittown, they took accountability that they should have been more active and bringing this to the attention of the community of the state officials to do something about it back then. And I think with the article that they have now, I felt like that's what they're trying to do is bring it to the attention of people.”

-Viviana

- The focus group participants did not seem hopeful for immediate changes to the issues of segregation, housing discrimination, and unequal treatment of different races/ethnicities on Long Island. However, the belief was that status quo will change in years to come through Long Island naturally becoming more diverse, but also through concerted efforts from stakeholders on Long Island.
- nextLI/Newsday's investigation is an important part of adding these efforts. It is a valuable step in beginning to correct the issue by bringing the scale of the problem to the attention of community, political, and local leaders in the area.
- As part of this effort, participants place a value on accountability and, thus, appreciate Newsday's own admission that their initial coverage of places like Levittown in the 1950's did not reflect their values and they could have done more to bring these issues to the attention of community, political, and local leaders at the time.
- Next steps could include the collection of additional information, via an online survey, related to the issues discussed and uncovered in both the investigation and subsequent focus groups. As noted, many participants in the groups came from just a few towns. A quantitative online survey will provide insights from a greater cross-section of Long Island residents and include findings from areas underrepresented in the focus groups (North Shore, Eastern Long Island, etc.). These results can help confirm results of the focus groups and provide further insights.

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