

Measuring Segregation

The Evolution of Segregation
and Education

Due Date: Wednesday, February 7 at 6pm

5% of final grade

EC 970: Sophomore Tutorial
Harvard University Department of
Economics

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What does it mean for a school district to be segregated? This assignment familiarize you with how segregation is measured in the academic literature.

This should be 4-6 pages in length (double-spaced, Times New Roman 12 pt font, 1-inch margins).

Please submit your papers to canvas as a word or PDF document by **6pm on Wednesday, February 7**. Please name your file lastname_a2.

Your assignment should include citations and a works cited page. For guidance on how to incorporate citations, see [Writing Economics](#), pgs. 14-19.

Assignment structure

[Massey and Denton \(1988\)](#) reviews the measures of segregation developed by sociologists through the late 1980s. In 2020, the Urban Institute introduced a new measure of segregation: [the Segregation Contribution Index](#). In this assignment, you will review both sources, then write a 4-6 page paper on the advantages and disadvantages of different measures of segregation.

To prepare to write this, please read:

- The entirety of [“How Much Does Your School Contribute to Segregation”](#)
- The following sections of [Massey and Denton \(1988\)](#):
 - Pgs. 281-289
 - The first paragraph of 3. CONCENTRATION
 - The first paragraph of 4. CENTRALIZATION
 - The first paragraph of 5. CLUSTERING
 - Table 1. “The Dimensions of Residential Segregation and Their Measures”
 - Pgs. 301-303
 - Pgs. 309-312 “Summary”

Your paper should have the following structure. If you need to adjust the number of paragraphs for each section, that is fine, but keep the ratio of content approximately the same (for example, do not spend half of your paper summarizing the 5 dimensions)

1. 3-4 paragraphs summarizing the 5 dimensions described by Massey and Denton (1988) and the advantages and disadvantages of each.
2. 3-5 paragraphs describing the relationship between school segregation and residential segregation.
 - This is not covered directly by Massey and Denton (1988) and will require some outside research. Make sure to cite your sources! This means that you should have in text citations and a works cited page at the end of your paper.
 - The indices covered in Massey and Denton (1988) pertain to residential segregation, but school segregation is mentioned throughout. How should we translate each of the *dimensions* of segregation to the context of school segregation?
3. 3-4 paragraphs discussing the segregation contribution index. How do these compare to the indices Massey and Denton discuss? Which of the five dimensions do you think it measures?
4. 3-4 paragraphs concluding by discussing your preferred method(s) of measuring segrega-

tion.

- The dissimilarity index, the isolation index, and the interaction index (commonly referred to as “the exposure index”) are all popular choices for measuring segregation in the economics literature. Why do you think that is?
- Do you agree with the common practice of using these three measures? Do you have a preferred method of measuring segregation that is different than these three indices? Why / why not?
- Pretend you are an economist writing a paper on school integration. How does your choice of index vary with the setting of your paper? How does it vary with the relationship between you are trying to measure? (Here, relationship refers to the arrows from treatment to outcome that we have drawn in class)
 - If it is helpful, pick a couple of theoretical project scopes (for example, studying the impact of court ordered integration on graduation rates in the 1960s vs. studying the impact of residential segregation on school segregation in New York City in 2010) and describe how and why your choice of index changes
 - (E.g. in scope 1, X dimension is most relevant so you pick Y index. In scope 2, Z dimension is most relevant, so you pick P index)

Rubric.....

You will be graded on the thoroughness of your response and the organization of your paper.

- Demonstrates understanding of concepts in readings 50%
- Thoughtful discussion of relationship between residential segregation and school segregation with citations 25%
- Demonstrates understanding of strengths and weaknesses and applicability to different scenarios 20%
- Organization 5%

References

Massey, Douglas S. and Nancy A Denton. 1988. “The Dimensions of Residential Segregation.” *Social Forces* 67(2): 281-315

Neugeboren, Robert. “Writing Economics: A Guide for Harvard Economics Concentrators.” Mimeo, Harvard University, 2014.

Urban Institute. “How Much Does Your School Contribute to Segregation?” Accessed 15 January 2024. <https://apps.urban.org/features/school-segregation-index/>