

Why, in your opinion, does segregation remain an enduring characteristic for most American cities, despite efforts to address it?

How can visualization of segregation (and its consequences) make a difference?

What can segregation measures capture well? What aspects of segregation are more challenging to measure?

Segregation is always a topic that I have trouble defining because I think it is complicated. I grew up and currently live in Chicago which is commonly considered one of the most segregated cities in the U.S. The interesting part of the segregation to me though, is that it isn't always a negative thing to me. I grew up in Hyde Park which is the most 'mixed' place in the city so I appreciated that. I grew up going to Pilsen for the best Mexican food ever, to Devon street for amazing Indian and Arab food, to Chinatown for dim sum, and to Greektown for some amazing eats. I also grew up seeing Polish festivals, Lunar new year celebrations, and many other events that happened in the segregated neighborhoods of Chicago.

Because of these experiences growing up, I thought about segregation as something that was sometimes negative but could also be positive. I think I confused segregation with neighborhood identity and chain migration though. Many of the characteristics of Chicago that I liked were the results of chain-migration and neighborhood identity, not segregation. The parts of Chicago that made me uncomfortable like violence, 'unsafe' neighborhoods, food deserts, etc. Those are the things caused by segregation.

This is where it is difficult to map and visualize segregation. It is easy to map the racial makeup of cities but it is almost impossible to easily map the reasons for that racial makeup. The south and west sides of Chicago show high concentrations of Black Americans, just like Pilsen shows a high concentration of Latinx Americans. The difference here though, is that the motivation behind segregation is different. Segregation is often the result of populations being forced out of and into certain areas. The neighborhoods I came to love in Chicago were not forced to be there, they chose to be there and live together.

Many Black communities on the south and west sides of Chicago, on the other hand, are forced to be there by higher costs of living elsewhere, historic red lining, few resources, police violence, and chronic imprisonment for minor offenses. These are the things behind segregation that are harder to map, they're harder to easily visualize. These are the things that need to change though. This is why segregation remains, because the issues underlying racism run deep and they are complicated, the issue is hard to define and hard to explain to policy makers who are the ones who need to make changes.