

What are the challenges associated with representing neighborhoods quantitatively?  
What are the benefits of using quantitative data to represent neighborhoods?  
What can we learn? What is likely to be missed?

There are great benefits to representing neighborhoods quantitatively. This allows for quick understanding and analysis, comparison, and other important policy decision making tactics. This quick analysis can lend itself to quicker change and quicker reactions to urban issues.

Unfortunately, there are also challenges that come with representing neighborhoods quantitatively. First of all, it is often difficult to gather quantitative data at the neighborhood level. Many federal and even state level surveys do not show data at the neighborhood level. This means that much of the quantitative data must be collected by those desiring the data. Second, there are some groups, even at the neighborhood level, that are ignored by quantitative data collection means. Homeless populations, minority populations, impoverished populations, and migratory populations are often miscounted, if counted at all. Quantitative data also fails to show the spirit of a neighborhood, there are intangible things in each neighborhood that are key to analysis, but they are ignored in quantitative analysis.

With these challenges and benefits in mind I like to think of quantitative representation as one side of a story. It is an insightful and important story, but it is not the whole story. When presenting quantitative data I think it is important to state this fact. This debate has been on my mind as I am preparing my final project for this class. I am interested in incorporating qualitative analysis techniques into my final project and I am hoping that I will be able to do that with my limited resources and time in this class.

One project I think of when I think about this debate is the folded map project in Chicago. There are quantitative analyses that show the income and racial makeup on the different sides of Chicago are very different. Tonika Johnson shows this quantitative comparison along with qualitative comparisons between the two sides of the city. I hope to capture this holistic approach to analysis in my final project, but also in my future work.