**A critique of “The Lasting Legacy of Redlining” by FiveThirtyEight**

Amber Key

2/21/2022

URL: <https://projects.fivethirtyeight.com/redlining/>

This article examines 138 neighborhoods in redlined cities across the country and found that they were just as segregated as they were when they were first designed. In the article, the writer researched the now defunct Home Owners’ Loan Corporation (HOLC) and their methodology behind grading neighborhoods based on their perceived mortgage-lending risk. What they discovered was that most metropolitan areas where black people lived were graded as a “risk” or “hazardous” and all of the areas that were “best” or “desirable” were overwhelmingly white. Though redlining is now illegal, the impact of redlining is still seen in cities across the United States.

What I believe was most successful about this article was its mix of historic references regarding the history of redlining, what it was designed to do, and how it has impacted communities. Coupled with graphs to help highlight the impacts, I thought the writer did a really great job creating the narrative.

I thought that this particular article was very timely considering the nation’s focus on Black Lives Matter and the uncovering of biases within the black community and home appraisals. One way that I thought this article was successful in using data was through maps of various cities around the country and providing an interactive experience for the reader to see the difference in redlined cities as it relates to white and black residents.

A large portion of redlining is particularly pronounced in the Northeast and Midwest where there was great migration. During the 1910s- 1970s, millions of black Americans fled the south to work in industrialized cities, but because of segregation, blacks could not receive proper loans and had little opportunity to build generational wealth.

What I really loved about this article was the use of maps to speak about different topics within the article such as how anti-black racism and the new great migration contributed to the demographics of different neighborhoods. Being able to see the maps and participate with the data helped narrow the focus of such a vast topic.

One thing that I wish was included in the piece was more maps on the cities that were discussed. I thought that more explanation of where we were looking on the maps could have been useful. The maps gave an overall picture of the cities that were discussed, but I think a narrowed focus on the neighborhoods would have helped bring the story full circle. I also would have liked data on the amount of loans that home approvals that whites receive when moving to different neighborhoods versus blacks. When looking at the maps there were certain pockets on the map that represented locations in the cities.It would have been nice to show what neighborhoods those pockets represented. Another topic that was discussed in the article was white flight and how although whites fled cities for the suburbs in droves back in the 1960’s and 1970’s, it is still happening today. I would have liked more references and numbers to make this point stand out a bit more. At times, I did not think that the maps married well with the story. I thought that the written data and history behind each of the observations were in great detail and made the story interesting. However, with a story as wordy as this one and with so much useful information, I think more interactive data that encourages the reader to participate is necessary in keeping the reader’s attention.

I also believe an addition that may have been useful to the story was a description of how neighborhoods were graded. With grades such as “best”, “desired”, “declining”, and “hazardous”, it would have been useful for the reader to know what these grades mean and where in each cities listed are these grades being given and their qualifiers.

Overall, I think this topic is so important and a conversation everyone should be having. While I liked that the other included hyperlinks to other articles within the story to be used as a source that they probably drew conclusions from, I wish that they used that space for more data or graphs instead. I also appreciated the analysis at the end of the article about how the data was conducted and incorporated into the maps.