UP 494

Wonjin Jeong

**Week 7 reflection: Segregation**

Given my background as an international student, I had not thought about segregation issues before coming to the United States. While there may be similar symptoms of segregation in South Korea (e.g., negative connotation associated with low-income neighborhoods), it is not that obvious and explicit compared to American settings. During my first year of Ph.D. program working on Chicago’s Large Lot project, I began to learn more about the complicated situations surrounding American cities related to racial segregation. The first question of this week’s prompt regarding the reason why segregation persists would be difficult to answer, as there would be numerous reasons. First, in my research, I learned dominant discourses on Chicago’s urban neighborhoods and how they have been described as a center of problems, reinforcing stereotypes and hostility about communities of color. Due to the neighborhood stigma as well as racism, people may frame these neighborhoods as “unsafe” places, and therefore, they would rather decide to live in areas where have been deemed safe. Interestingly and surprisingly, however, from my experience with Chicago’s neighborhoods, some of the residents in these stigmatized neighborhoods live there by choice as they wanted to stay in a predominantly Black neighborhood. This could be interpreted as personal preferences that people tend to be drawn to the familiar on an unconscious level, but also imply that racial and ethnic minority groups vulnerable to potential discrimination charges.

Visualizing data by itself would not make any substantial change to the way that people perceive other races or segregation issues. Nevertheless, data visualization with a conscious purpose to address the issue would raise awareness of the public towards segregation issues in American cities, and more importantly, make people care about their communities associated with segregation. We can capture racial segregation in urban neighborhoods well and describe certain patterns and unfairness issues more clearly by visualizing data, whereas racial segregation in certain rural areas may have not enough population size to develop some visible patterns and narratives.