

**Racial and Class Segregation Patterns
in the United States:**

Comparing Atlanta and Chicago

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Introduction

Segregation is not a new phenomenon. Its roots can be traced back to places such as ancient China in the 6th Century (Kiang, 1994). Here, during the Sui and early Tang dynasties, 'functional segregation' was the rule where "the strict social hierarchy of society had been reflected and reinforced by the rigid segregation of populations in their respective wards" (Kiang, 1994; 48). Nobility and highly ranked officials were segregated in separate wards from the craftsmen and merchants. Similarly, Lubeck, Germany was segregated with separate quarters for merchants and craftsmen throughout much of the 12th-16th centuries (Parker, 1986). Furthermore, Jews and other religious groups were excluded from living in the city altogether based on their religious backgrounds (Cowan, 1978). So this is nothing new, and has created a serious challenge for cities throughout the centuries.

Segregation patterns throughout the twentieth century vary in their scope and implementation. Most American's are aware of the racial segregation that is apparent in many cities throughout the country. The past century has proven to be a decisive time in the study of these patterns. However, what can be said about segregation along class and economic lines? Does the racial discrimination, particularly between blacks and whites, have any correlation with class segregation? How did these patterns change throughout the twentieth century? Was there any difference between cities of the north versus the cities of the south? These are the questions I seek to answer as I study the segregation patterns of the United States. As a caveat, these are simply questions that I seek to answer; I do not go into this study with any specific hypothesis in mind. In the next section I will discuss my methods and study design more in detail.

Methods/Study Design

This project takes a look at the historical patterns of segregation in the United States throughout the 20th century. In specific response to the differences that are expected to be found between cities of the north and cities of the south; I will be using Chicago and Atlanta as case studies for this exploration. I will be focusing on the upper and middle class black populations of these cities to discern how segregation affected them and to what extent racial segregation patterns affected these groups throughout the 20th century. My research will draw on emergent themes that can be seen in the research.

Segregation amongst upper and middle class blacks is a topic that has been researched and reported on by a variety of authors. Some of that research has focused on quantitative analysis that compares numbers and figures to make conclusions about different groups of people in society. In my opinion breaking down the issue to numbers and figures undermines the importance of the stories that are told and the patterns that have developed based on real life accounts, media coverage, and more qualitative research on the subject. Examples can be seen in related studies; such as Belfrom's study of middle class blacks that used qualitative methods to allow interviewees to openly discuss their experiences as middle class blacks compared to "cultural norms (2012; 31)." Gillborn et al. (2012) used in-depth interviews to understand how class figured into the educational experiences of Caribbean blacks. In Moore's (2008) ethnographic study she felt it was important to understand the context of black middle class identification; again pointing to the importance of in depth understanding of the situation and not just relying on quantitative measures to draw conclusions about what it meant to be in the black middle class during these distinct time periods.

With this context in mind I will be conducting an historical case study that tells a story about the patterns that have emerged in my analysis of various resources. In an almost qualitative fashion, I will be taking an inductive approach, where I allow emergent patterns to guide my research. Since I am focusing on how patterns have changed over time and the fact that I am concentrating on two cities in particular, these seem to be the appropriate methods for conducting this type of research. There will be less emphasis on actual numbers and figures, but instead a focus on trends that have been observed throughout the 20th century, in hopes of telling a story about this very important issue. The strength of this approach is a study that focuses on trends and themes that have been discovered in the research, rather than deducting trends based on hypothesis testing. This method allows for a narrative to be told about the history of segregation in the two cities I have selected.

I chose three time periods in the 20th century to try and break down how segregation patterns have changed over the past several decades. I pulled on several resources, including some focused on my case study cities, to see what patterns would emerge from the previous findings. I will first discuss some of the overall observations made by researchers on segregation in the United States. This will be followed by a more in depth look at my two case study cities of Atlanta and Chicago. Finally, I will wrap up with some conclusions made from these previous findings. To continue my research on this subject I will be analyzing archival documents, conducting interviews with upper and middle class blacks that live or have lived in Chicago and Atlanta, and interpreting biographical information of residents living in Chicago and Atlanta earlier in the 20th Century. My goal is to tell a story about how their lives were influenced by segregation and to understand how class status played into their opportunity structure. I will combine this information with previous findings from my literature review to give an all-encompassing picture of segregation in the 20th century.

Some may argue that there are other methods that are better when trying to analyze segregation. Such as Meade's analysis on the distribution of segregation in Atlanta; which uses hypothesis testing and traditional quantitative methods to conclude that "the most segregated population characteristic is race" (Meade, 1972). What is most limiting about his approach is that other hypotheses, which could have emerged from the data, weren't tested and are completely ignored in the results. There is also Rothwell and Massey's article on density zoning that includes the use of survey data that is derived into several quantitative formulas for "neighborhood gini", "exposure of poor to affluent", and "interjurisdictional poverty dissimilarity index" (2010). While the method produced adequate findings, it didn't go far enough to show how these patterns have changed throughout the 20th century. For these reasons I have decided to approach my research in an historical manner that will tell a story about segregation in the 20th century and the patterns that have emerged out of the research. I will be using the prior literature on this subject to add to and understand the findings in my interviews, archival research and biographical data to provide an all-encompassing perspective on this important issue.

Overall U.S. Observations

Here I present some general observations in the United States that have been noted by various scholars. Rothwell and Massey (2010) discuss the growing inequalities within cities based on wealth and income; pointing out that this gap in income has reached levels not seen since the pre-depression era. Their study also points out the increase in class segregation seen since the 1970's; with different classes concentrating in spatially distinct areas. The main argument made here is that density zoning accounts for the spatially dispersed segregation by income and class. The findings show that:

Restrictive density regulations prevent the construction of high-density multifamily housing, and thereby limit the supply of affordable housing by increasing the average price of units in affluent neighborhoods to the exclusion of lower-income people (Rothwell & Massey, 2010; 1134-1135).

Massey, Rothwell, and Domina's (2009) article discusses how the civil rights laws of the 1960's and 70's created a slow downward trend in racial segregation; particularly white vs. black. However, prior to this time there were large amounts of black residents that fled rural areas to settle in the central cities as white residents were fleeing to the suburbs. This created cities that had black majorities, including one of my case study cities, Atlanta. The article delves further into Income segregation stating that, "the degree of neighborhood segregation between affluent and poor families remained much greater in 2000, than in 1970 (2009; 5)." This is a clear sign that things are not getting any better, but actually getting worse. The authors also put forth some staggering figures that show the income gain for each group between 1973 and 2003 (using constant-dollar figures). Not surprisingly the richest group's incomes increased by 75% while the poorest groups' income increased by just 5%.

Anderson et al. (2003) discuss not only the "spatial segregation" of low-income households, but the concentration of this poverty in certain parts of central cities. The fact remains that even though racial segregation has been reduced over the past few decades, blacks still make up a large percentage of those living in poverty. This can easily be attributed to the opportunities that blacks were segregated from in their neighborhoods. Furthermore, "The decentralized and unevenly funded school systems of the United States perpetuate class and racial segregation because middle class parents avoid communities with poorly funded schools and whites avoid schools in which they are not the majority" (Garner et al., 2007; 65).

These overall findings about the United States in general help to frame the more in depth discussions I will now set forth. These next few pages show the previous findings of scholarly researchers, as well as some popular media articles on segregation in Atlanta and Chicago. This literature review serves as a foundation for the further research that will be done on the subject.

Atlanta

The cities of the south were influenced by segregation in a different way than those of the north (Lands, 2004). For example Atlanta's situation was one of the spatial reorganization of the African American population rather than the great migration of southern blacks to places such as Chicago. In Atlanta, Interstate 20 served as the dividing line between the mostly white north and black south (Beers & Hembree, 1987). Beers and Hembree argued that "Since before the time of the Civil War, it was understood that free blacks weren't to come above this line, and most of them still live south of it" (1987; 358). Furthermore, McWhorter points to the existence of, "contradictions of class underneath the black-and-white surface" (2003; 1). With this pre-text in mind, I will now explore three key time periods in Atlanta's history.

1900-1930

The early 20th century in Atlanta was plagued with divisions among its residents. Lands article on Atlanta discusses the events leading up to Atlanta's comprehensive zoning plan that segregated the city along class and racial lines (2004). Atlanta became the first city in the United States with a comprehensive racial zoning plan when it was approved on April 10, 1922. This plan included residential classifications that would be determined by ones race and class. The precursor to this zoning plan started in 1910 with the fight for a racial boundary line in the Jackson Hill neighborhood (Lands, 2004). However, residents quickly found out that realtors and builders were unstoppable and landlords were willing to rent to whites as well as blacks to collect their rents. Lands points out that:

In Atlanta, racial segregation ordinances were precursors to comprehensive land-use zoning and planning. Just as some interest groups sought to control the presence of noxious industries within residential areas, other interest groups sought to protect property values by controlling the nature of residents, usually by race but later by class (Lands, 2004; 84).

In 1924 the racial portions of the plan were overturned. However, by this time, massive amounts of white flight could be seen as Atlanta's residents moved to the suburbs. Much of this can be attributed to homeowners wanting to protect their investments; who felt that the close proximity of renters, especially blacks, could threaten their complacency. As a result, throughout the 1920's Atlanta's central city was transformed into a mostly black rental area, as whites fled the city. What can clearly be seen here is that Atlanta's segregatory patterns were deeply entrenched in the society of the early 20th century, especially during the 1920's.

1930-1970

Between the 1930's and 1960's blacks in Atlanta lobbied to expand their enclaves, but they ran up against white resistance (Bayor, 2000). This resistance took the form of zoning laws, highways, and placement of public stadiums, civic centers and housing complexes. In 1960, the segregation seen in Atlanta was more easily explained along racial lines than economic status. Throughout the 1950's roads served as dividing lines to separate black and white. One such road even had a "no-man's land" of 100 yards separating the two areas. Some roads were even completely closed off as to not allow blacks easy access to white suburbs. An extreme example of this was the construction of a large barrier wall to "protect the white Peyton Forest neighborhood from black incursion" (Bayor, 2000; 46). "Before Atlanta split into a largely white suburbia and a predominantly black city, it had been intentionally divided along racial lines within the city, a precursor of what lay ahead in the racial divisions of the present" (Bayor, 2000: 46).

Black Atlanta residents were structurally separated from whites and had to contend with barriers, literally and figuratively, to escape their concentrated ghettos. In a 1945 discussion of Atlanta, Perry discusses the lucky poor whites that live in "decent and pleasant low-cost housing" and the black elite

that seem to rise above the racial problems (1945). He also points out that the Atlanta elite have been afforded access to education; which speaks to the idea that class and not race is the limiting factor here. He speaks of the white poor being the greatest enemy of the black population, since the two groups compete for the same jobs. Furthermore, he posits that the white poor have very little, and possibility even less, influence on the white elites than the blacks do.

1970 +

The biggest step for Atlanta's black population was the election of Maynard H. Jackson Jr. as mayor of the city in 1974 (McWhorter, 2003). As McWhorter cites, "Jackson aggressively challenged white financial privilege, redistributing the wealth through that shrine to Atlanta's New South supremacy, the Hartsfield Atlanta International Airport" (2003; 42). Jackson initially demanded that 25% of the contracts for the expansion would go to minority firms; however, the final plan would include a goal of 20-25% of these contracts to go to firms owned by minorities (Dingle, 2003). This provided the black population with what Jackson called "fair access to their share of contracts on a major public works project" (Dingle, 2003; 74). Additionally, he opened up opportunities for black entrepreneurship in the city and fought to increase economic opportunities for the blacks in Atlanta by leveling the playing field. Years later he would be honored with the name change of the airport to Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport (McWhorter, 2003). Overall, Jackson stood as an example of an upper class African American that the black community in Atlanta admired.

Beers and Hembree speak of the 'economic forces' that segregated blacks from the new suburban job market (1987). They view Atlanta as two separate, but starkly unequal places. At the time, the city itself had a majority black population at 68.5%, with some of the highest poverty rates in the nation. This sits in contrast to the "Golden Crescent" which was made up of Atlanta's affluent, white, suburban

communities to the North. Here lies the great divide of the Metro Atlanta area. Cobb and Gwinnett counties were at the pinnacle of this distribution with an almost exclusively white population at 95%. J. Patrick Murphy, who was the senior vice president for economic development of Gwinnett County's Chamber of Commerce, joked that, "I guess, like moss, development just naturally tends to grow on the north side" (Beers & Hembree, 1987; 358). As Beers and Hembree discuss:

Corporate leaders around the country decided that Atlanta, the traditional transportation and commercial hub of the Southeast, would make an ideal location for components of the "new economy" – high-tech research parks, banking and insurance paperwork factories, telecommunications centers and regional distribution centers for Japanese electronics and other foreign goods (1987; 358).

If it wasn't already difficult enough for Atlanta's black community to overcome the companies preferring to employ suburban women who were well educated, white, willing to work part-time with fewer benefits, and who were less likely to unionize; on top of this, the black population who could have profited the most from this growth found themselves left out of the equation. Following is an account from a black woman in Atlanta who had such an experience:

For a recent stint packing boxes of candy in the affluent Stone Mountain area, she would rise at 4 A.M. to take the earliest bus to a downtown rail station and ride the train to the end of the line, arriving at 6:20. There the Temp Force bus would collect her and some forty co-workers, depositing them a half-hour later at the work site. She was spending four hours a day in transit until "all of a sudden they said, we don't need you anymore" (Beers & Hembree, 1987; 358).

What is apparent is that even though the segregation was mostly along racial lines, there was also an economic and class connotation to it especially as we moved past the civil right era.

Chicago

"Segregation in Chicago is a long-term historical phenomenon. Its roots lie deep in U.S. history; contemporary policies have alleviated it only to a limited extent, and new forms are arising with immigration" (Garner et al., 2007; 46). Chicago, along with five other Northeast and Great Lakes cities, is ranked as one of the most hyper-segregated cities in the United States.

Segregation in Chicago is not only a spatial phenomenon but has social, economic, cultural, educational, and political dimensions [...] While economic position – the class structure – is not identical to the ethno-racial hierarchy, the two systems of stratification are strongly intertwined (Garner et al., 2007; 47).

In her review of *Race, Class and Chicago's Past*, Keating discusses how “residential areas are frequently segregated both by class and race” and makes a great point in saying, “not to overemphasize race in exploring the twentieth century” arguing that “race is also mediated by other factors, especially class” (2006, 62-63).

1900-1930

The 1920's saw the emergence of a “black belt” around the city where blacks were segregated from whites (Garner et al., 2007). There was a ‘healthy mixture’ of classes in the black ghettos from 1910 through to the 1970's (Cooley, 2010). This shows how neighborhoods were more economically heterogeneous prior to the civil rights era when middle and higher class blacks were still forced to live in racially homogenous neighborhoods. Some researchers even point to ‘class stratification’ that spatially separated higher and lower status blacks within the ‘black belt’ of Chicago (Cooley, 2010). The large amounts of overcrowding forced many homes to be subdivided into tiny apartments, which some people argued invited “a lower class of people into the neighborhood” (Cooley, 2010; 489), as blacks saw themselves wanting to spend time with those of similar class ranking and social status. Cooley also discusses the ‘black pioneers’ who “were caught between a hostile white world and the declining conditions in the jam-packed ghetto” (Cooley, 2010; 486). As these ‘black pioneers’ moved into white neighborhoods, Chicago was plagued with bombings of black residents homes during the late teens and early twenties. This shows how the middle and upper class blacks were able to escape the black belt, albeit amid much resistance.

1930-1970

Chicago's black community was able to make "advancements in their socioeconomic position" due to the civil rights laws of the 1940's (Cooley, 2010; 498). However, this also began the second great migration of blacks from the rural south that further crowded the ghettos of Chicago with nearly sixty thousand new migrants flocking to the city. This further exacerbated the problem and as more and more blacks began to leave the crowded ghetto, they were met with violent attacks by the whites.

Throughout the 1960's and 1970's, Chicago continued to see violent attacks on blacks that had moved into white neighborhoods, mainly on the south and west sides of the city (Garner et al., 2007). The construction of large, high-rise public housing structures on the black south-side of the city in the 1950's further entrenched the blacks into this ghetto. Similar to Atlanta, Chicago also had roads and freeways that served as dividing lines between white and black. An example was the Dan Ryan Expressway on the south side of Chicago that separated the Robert Taylor Homes that were part of the CHA's (Chicago Housing Authority) public housing project, from the white areas in Back of the Yards.

Keating, in discussing Seligman's book *Block by Block*, talks about how white West Siders in Chicago ran up against their own obstacles in having their voices heard; which was attributed to this groups lack of "financial and political strength" (2006; 68). Seligman also argued that "racism alone does not fully explain what took place on the West Side" (2006; 68) pointing out that the struggle to be heard in city hall was evident even before the black residents arrived in the neighborhood. Keating concluded that, "Chicago provided adequate (and sometimes excellent) services and amenities to its most powerful neighborhoods" (2006; 69) while the poorest neighborhoods would continue to suffer from a lack of services. Overall, "Racial and class segregation often manifested itself most clearly at the neighborhood level" (Keating, 2006; 70). This points to the importance of a focused view of race and class placing

emphasis on the individuals that participated in the small-scale local movements to break down the racial barriers society had placed on them. This discussion shows how class and economic status seem to be the determinants of one's access to services in Chicago.

1970 +

Many blacks were spatially segregated from economic opportunity (Neil, 1980). As Neil discusses, "Factories in the white northwestern suburbs cry out for labor, while idle youths crowd the street corners of the black South and West Sides" (1980; A1). This points to the decentralization of employment that moved out of central cities leaving many blacks excluded from economic opportunity. In 1980, about 85% of the Chicago Metropolitan areas black population lived wholly within the city limits (Neil, 1980). They were still segregated in the same areas of the South and West Sides of the city.

As of the 2000 census, the City of Chicago's racial make-up was 38% White; a large number of these are Hispanics, and 34% African American (Garner et al., 2007). Home prices in the city have soared out of reach for many, and those that are provided with assistance are segregated in poverty stricken communities with little economic opportunity (Garner et al., 2007). Public policy frequently perpetuates class and thus, more indirectly, racial segregation through zoning and design codes (Garner et al., 2007; 67). Recent changes are taking place gradually with some improvements for Latino and Asian residents, but black residents are continually segregated by class and race (Garner et al., 2007).

In an attempt to integrate low-income black families into other neighborhoods of the city and even the suburbs, the Gautreaux residential mobility program was introduced (Keels, 2008). As Keels discusses the program moved over seven thousand families between 1976 and 1998. The goal was to move these families from the concentrated black ghettos of the city to census tracts that made up of less than 30%

blacks. However, when everything was finalized the law did allow for one-third of the participants to be moved into census tracts with more than 30% black resident concentration. So while the initial goal of desegregation wasn't quite complete, the other participants in the program were moved to mostly white, middle and high-income areas. As Keels study cites, the goal of the participants was to provide better opportunities and quality of life for themselves and especially their children. The mothers interviewed in the study did not want to move to predominantly white neighborhoods because they had a white majority, they were preferred because they were deemed safer and had better community resources and schools. Keels points to other researchers who have found that "people use neighborhood racial composition as a signal for the current and future resource capacity of a neighborhood, in which fewer black residents is a signal for higher quality neighborhoods"(Keels, 2008; 552).

Discussion

In comparing Chicago and Atlanta one can see many similarities, but also some distinct differences. While Atlanta, as discussed earlier, became segregated with a predominately black city population and white suburban population, "Chicago retained a very substantial white population, and whites continued to dominate the political and cultural life of the city. These differences among cities could be explained in terms of Chicago's more diversified economy and the attachments of its predominantly white elite to the central city" (Garner et al., 2007; 55). Atlanta has over 20% more racial concentration of blacks within the city than Chicago as of 2010, (U.S. Census Bureau) both cities show a decline in the percentage of blacks living in the city over the past 30 years, which could indicate less racial segregation. As previous research has shown, blacks in both cities and throughout the U.S. have been economically segregated from the same opportunities as whites. Overall segregation throughout the 20th century in Atlanta, Chicago and the United States as a whole, has turned from very overtly racial, to being hidden

in class and economic status. This is why upper and middle class blacks make such an interesting study, since they were able to overcome these obstacles. I will close with a quote from Cooley's article on the pioneering blacks of Chicago:

Upwardly mobile blacks were acting in what they felt to be the best interests of their families, something that the evidence suggests nearly all African Americans sought to do regardless of class. Class was not a static position, and if black families and individuals moved up socioeconomically, a physical relocation usually followed (Cooley, 2010; 498).

This quote provides great perspective into the overall struggle of black communities and how class may be more of a factor in segregation than we had once thought. I would argue that this debate is still going on today, and will continue to go on for years to come.

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