Graphic Detail

Geographic Information Systems (GIS) organize and clarify the patterns of human activities on the Earth's surface and their interaction with each other. GIS data, in the form of maps, can quickly and powerfully convey relationships to policymakers and the public. This department of Cityscape *includes maps that convey important housing or community development policy issues or solutions. If you have made such a map and are willing to share it in a future issue of* Cityscape*, please contact rwilson@umbc.edu.*

The Outlines and Extents of Segregation

Ron Wilson
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
University of Maryland, Baltimore County

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Maps of segregation often highlight concentration patterns of racial or ethnic groups. Patterns at the edges of the segregated areas are not typically shown or discussed in many of these maps. The lack of attention to the edges—transition areas—may be because it is assumed that segregated areas change abruptly from one racial group to another. Exhibit 1, however, as an example, reveals patterns of racial integration that form at the edges and outline the boundaries of the segregated areas in Chicago.

I created a racial diversity index[1] using 2010 census data to depict levels of segregation and integration between the White and African-American populations—the predominant population groups—in the Chicago metropolitan area. The index situates one racial group in a direct relationship with another to create a population context indicating how segregated or integrated the two groups are within a census tract. Values closer to 0 represent segregation. Larger values indicate higher levels of racial integration between the two groups. The index does not reveal which group is the dominant group in a tract. In exhibit 1, African-American segregation is identified with a thick black boundary for each tract in which at least 75 percent of the population is African American. White segregation is identified by census tracts that are white or the lightest gray in color.

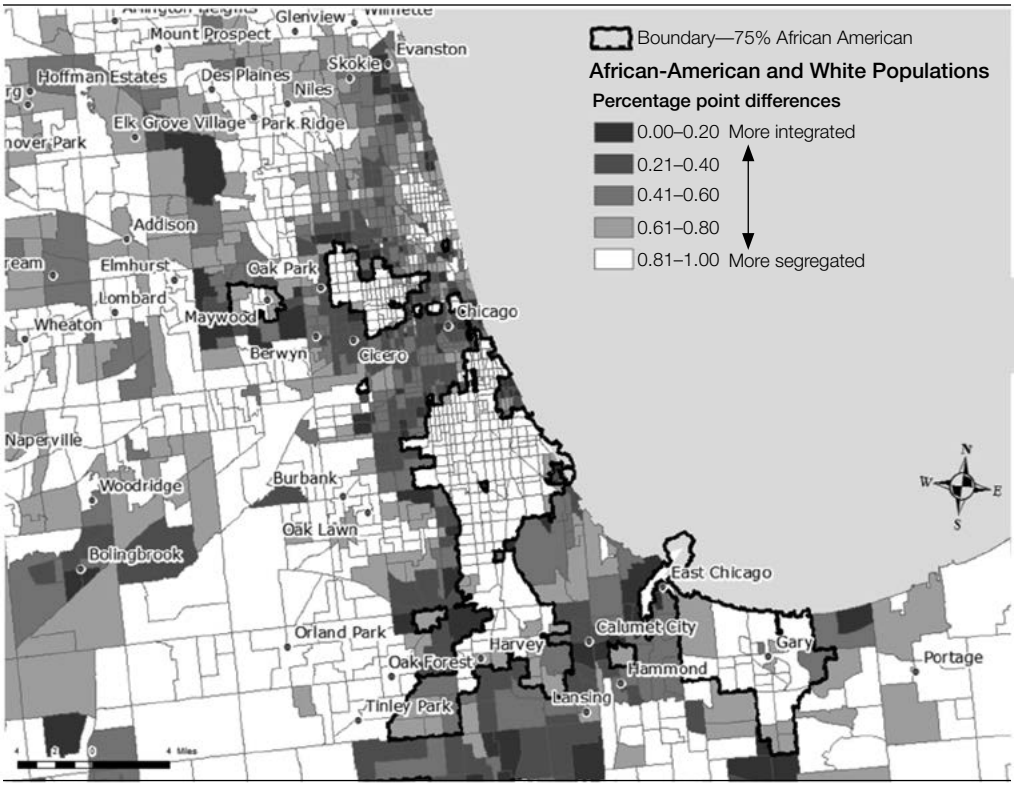
[1] For details on the mechanics of the racial diversity index, see Wilson (2011).

I mapped the diversity index to reveal a series of census tracts that form bands of racial integration that radiate outward from Chicago city center, as seen in exhibit 1. To the immediate east and south of the city center, these bands are split by the areas of high African-American segregation, circumscribe these areas, and then reconverge to form a buffer of diversified neighborhoods between the African-American and White populations. Although more diverse, pockets of African-American segregation are centered on Maywood to the west, on the southern suburbs, and on the Gary, Indiana, area to the southwest. To the extreme north, a pocket of diversity surrounds Evanston and extends southward toward Chicago, but that extension is broken apart by a highly segregated area.

Exhibit 1 reveals that African-American segregation is not confined to the inner city or White segregation to the suburbs. Rather, the patterns of both African-American and White segregation are extensive in center city Chicago, and both extend into the suburbs. Trends of racial integration appear to form along the boundaries where the two population groups meet rather than in the pockets themselves.

Exhibit 1

Census Tract Levels of Racial Diversity by Comparison With the Concentration of African-American Populations—Equal Interval Classification of the Racial Diversity Index



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Author

Ron Wilson is a social science analyst in the Office of Policy Development and Research at the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and an adjunct faculty member of the Geographic Information Systems program at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County.

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