



Book reviews

Segregation: The rising costs for America. James H. Carr and Nandinee K. Kutty (Eds). New York and London: Routledge, 2008. 352 pp., 12 illus., 30 tables, index. \$ 36.95 (Internet price). ISBN 978-0-415-96533-0.

The main purpose of this book is to document how discriminatory practices in the housing markets during the last 100 years have produced extreme levels of residential segregation in the US which have produced significant disparities in access to good jobs, quality education, homeownership attainment and asset accumulation between minority and majority households. The book is recommended to students in social sciences and public policy, as well as policy makers and city planners. A preface and 11 papers written by 15 authors are presented in this book. The contributors have had wide experiences with working and researching on similar issues and come from different academic backgrounds: economics, urban/regional planning, law, sociology, public health, educational policy, and social epidemiology.

The book can possibly be divided in three parts. The first part (Chapters 1–3) mainly provide a general overview of the book and the origin of racial housing segregation in the US. The introduction chapter by the editors is an overview of the whole book but also a review on the twentieth century's racial residential segregation in the US and its obvious connection to discriminatory laws, regulations and public policies. Chapter 2 is a historical review of the ghettoisation and the origin of ghettos as a process only touching Afro-Americans, a process mainly caused by structural discriminations, restrictions and racial violence from the whites against the blacks. Chapter 3 focuses on how racial residential segregation caused by discriminatory lending systems restricts black people to their home ownership/sustainable homeownership.

In the second part (Chapters 4–7) the authors describe a connection between disparities in housing/neighbourhoods and differences in access to important opportunity structures in the society. Chapter 4 discusses this link between housing and access to education. Chapter 5 raises the same questions for access to jobs while Chapter 6 concerns access to better health. Chapter 7 explains, finally, the connection between housing and disparity in access to important social network resources. An overall conclusion from these chapters is that housing decides an individual's access to good education, good jobs, good health, good networks and social and economic mobility in the long term.

The third part of the book (Chapters 8–11) consists of discussions on some past, recent, current and possibly future trends, some prognoses and concluding remarks. Chapter 8 provides

an overview of trends in residential segregation over the past century, some possible causes of racial segregation, while considering the roots of segregation for Asians and Hispanics, and finally explores policy implications. Chapter 9 examines some recent social and economic trends (like jobs, education and health care) in the US. Especially the gaps in wages have grown among different social groups and are expected to increase in the years ahead. In view of some current problems, Chapter 10 argues in favour of creating a fair housing enforcement and stresses the weakness of the actual system in giving Afro-Americans good housing possibilities. Instead of affected racial minorities, the system has changed focus to a diversity of protected classes (i.e. religious groups, families with children, disabled people and sexual minorities). Finally, Chapter 11, which is written by the editors, is a continuation of the two previous chapters but also a concluding chapter for the whole book. The authors address the access to the possibility structure and conclude that promoting a socioeconomic mobility for racial and ethnic minorities hopefully reduces housing segregation and leads to benefit all Americans. Access to job, education, good service, good network, good housing are the keys to such mobility upwards, conclude the authors.

As the book limits the focus on Afro-Americans as the only studied group, the readers get possibility to gain a both deeper and wider understanding of the worst type of housing segregation in the US. Another virtue of the book is its focus on just one explanation model (discriminatory practices) and not on several different models. The book is also based on both new and old data which makes it possible for the readers to follow the whole segregation problem in a historical perspective since the beginning of last century. The diversity of the contributions is an extra point for the book and the authors approach the problem from different perspectives and research backgrounds.

One shortcoming of this book is the absence of American urban geographer among the contributors. Urban geographers in the US have provided many contributions to the field during recent decades. Another shortcoming in the book is the absence of a theoretic chapter on different types of segregation, most common explanation models and some relevant definitions. The class issue is mentioned indirectly throughout the book, but the contributors have avoided using it directly as a functional concept.

As is clear from the book title and the content of the book, it is sending a warning signal to all Americans to solve the problem if the nation wants to keep its global competitiveness and economic vitality in the long term. The book has also reached the main purpose which is to show how discriminatory practices in combination with passive or inefficient laws have fostered the current racial segregation and its reproduction over time. The book also strengthens the theoretic framework of structural explanation including institutional discrimination in the generation of racial and ethnic residential segregation. This also supports the thesis (conceptual framework) that housing segregation essentially is a class issue and a question of resources rather than a cultural issue. This book is highly recommended to other readers like researchers on segregation and integration issues.

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