

Study Examines Racial 'Blind Spots' in Chicago Area Communities

November 30 2009

(PhysOrg.com) -- Racial residential segregation in the Chicago area may be perpetuated by a lack of knowledge of communities across racial lines, according to a new study led by a University of Illinois at Chicago researcher.

"It would be unlikely for someone to move to a community that they didn't know anything about," says Maria Krysan, associate professor of sociology and the study's lead author. "Possibly, if they knew about more neighborhoods with different racial composition, they could make moves that could counter the segregated patterns we observe in [Chicago](#) and other major metropolitan areas."

The study, titled "Racial Blind Spots: Black-White-Latino Differences in Community Knowledge," is based on a 2005 survey of more than 700 adults ages 21 and older living in Cook County, Illinois. It explores how whites, blacks and Latinos differ in their awareness of towns and neighborhoods in the Chicago region.

As part of the survey, respondents were given a map booklet highlighting 41 communities located in and around Chicago. They were asked to mark any area they "didn't know anything about" -- areas the researchers call community blind spots.

The 41 areas were selected to include a variety of communities, Krysan said -- "those in the city and outside, those with expensive housing and those with more modest home prices, and those that are racially

segregated and those that are integrated."

The study found that blind-spot communities for whites and blacks rarely overlapped, meaning that the two groups' knowledge of communities was very different from each other.

Among other research findings and recommendations:

- Whites were generally unfamiliar with communities that featured a significant black population. Other blind spots for whites included several racially integrated communities, including a few with majority white populations, like Beverly and Homewood/Flossmoor.
- The relatively unknown communities for at least one-third of blacks included distant suburbs with majority white populations (Libertyville, Crystal Lake), as well as racially and ethnically diverse neighborhoods within city limits (Uptown, Logan Square, Albany Park).
- Latino respondents, compared to whites and blacks, had more than double the number of blind-spot communities, but their lists of communities mostly overlapped those of whites.
- With more than half of the 41 communities considered unknown by one-third or more of the Latino respondents, their blind spots did not represent a specific community type.
- There were fewer racial/ethnic differences in knowledge of communities when respondents from similar social, economic and geographic characteristics were compared.

Krysan, who also holds a research faculty appointment in the university's Institute of Government and Public Affairs, said it is not surprising that each racial group's knowledge is greater for communities in which their group has a presence.

"But the pattern is stronger for whites than African-Americans and Latinos, who overall have fewer racial blind spots," she said.

The researchers recommend that community leaders and policy makers give greater attention to affirmative marketing policies and programs that make all citizens aware of other communities and available housing options.

The study, funded by the National Science Foundation, the Ford Foundation, the University of Michigan and UIC, appears online and in the latest issue of the journal Social Problems.

Michael D. M. Bader of the University of Pennsylvania is the co-author. Data analysis was supported by a grant from the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development.

Provided by University of Illinois at Chicago ([news](#) : [web](#))

Citation: Study Examines Racial 'Blind Spots' in Chicago Area Communities (2009, November 30) retrieved 26 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2009-11-racial-chicago-area.html>

<p>This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.</p>
--