

SORTING OUT DEEPENING CONFUSION ON SEGREGATION TRENDS¹

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Is the United States going backwards or forwards in attaining the goal set in the civil rights era of increasingly integrated public schools? The right of black students to desegregated education in school districts with a history of discrimination was established in the South by the *Brown*² decision in 1954. In a series of decisions from 1968 to 1971, the Court ruled that desegregation must be comprehensive and immediate in the South, including its large cities.³ Desegregation was extended to the rest of the country in the 1973 *Keyes*⁴ decision, which also recognized the rights of Latino students to desegregation remedies. The Supreme Court basically limited these rights to single school districts in the 1974 *Milliken*⁵ decision. At that point, desegregation was generally defined as finding remedies within school districts to create more diverse schools for segregated black and Latino students. The Civil Rights Project has been reporting on how this process has been going for many years. With all the statistics that school authorities at multiple levels of government collect, we should have clear answers regarding our progress on school desegregation. Yet the question is still being disputed. Based on evidence from several important measures of segregation, the Civil Rights Project stands by its strong contention that resegregation has occurred,⁶ and that African American, and Latino students, are experiencing more isolation in schools than they were a generation ago--and further, that this segregation is deeply linked to unequal educational opportunities.

In a new paper,⁷ Sean Reardon and Ann Owens make two important claims about school segregation with which we disagree. The first is, "The changes in segregation in the last few

¹ This response is part of a larger, ongoing project examining multiple measures of segregation.

² *Brown v. Board of Education*, 347 U.S. 483 (1954).

³ *Green v. New Kent Co.*, 391 U.S. 430 (1968); *Alexander v. Holmes*, 396 U.S. 19 (1969); *Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg*, 402 U.S. 1 (1971).

⁴ *Keyes v. Denver School District, Number 1*, 413 U.S. 189 (1973).

⁵ *Milliken v. Bradley*, 418 U.S. 717 (1974).

⁶ We have not been alone in reaching these conclusions, as Reardon and Owens do recognize when they qualify the above statement with "though there are important differences across regions, racial groups and institutions levels" (p.1). See, e.g., Clotfelter, C. (2004). *After Brown: The Rise and Retreat of School Desegregation*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. Horn, C. & Kurlaender, M. (2009). The End of *Keyes*: Resegregation Trends and Achievement in Denver Public Schools. In Smrekar, C. & Goldring, E. (Eds). *From the Courtroom to the Classroom: The Shifting Landscape of School Desegregation*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press. Mickelson, R. (forthcoming, 2014). *Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow. The Past, Present, and Future of (De)segregated Education in Charlotte*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press. Reardon, S., Grewal, E., Kalogrides, D., & Greenberg, E. (2012). *Brown Fades: The End of Court Ordered School Desegregation and the Resegregation of American Public Schools*. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*.

⁷ Reardon, S. & Owens, A. (forthcoming). 60 Years after *Brown*: Trends and Consequences of School Segregation. *Annual Review of Sociology*.

decades are not large regardless of what measure is used (p. 1)." The second reads, "The mechanisms that would link segregation to disparate outcomes have not been spelled out clearly or tested explicitly (p. 1)." We believe that Reardon and Owens are engaging in a largely theoretical analysis not related to the historical and legal contexts with which Civil Rights Project reports are typically concerned. The measures of segregation that our Project tends to emphasize illustrate the day-to-day experiences of students in schools, which is what the desegregation struggle was about. In the following response, we engage with the first conclusion drawn from the Reardon and Owens article to argue that they, and others, rely upon measures that have little educational or legal basis and often produce misleading conclusions. With regard to Reardon and Owen's second contention, we assert that they are overly dismissive of a massive body of research literature stretching over a half century that represents the judgment of leading scholars across the country.

The purpose of this response is to explore the educational and legal roots of various segregation calculations, and to explain the benefits and drawbacks of each in determining the degree to which American schools are segregated. We explain both the measures the Civil Rights Project has used to report segregation trends and the basis for our conclusion that resegregation has occurred.⁸ We explore the work of those, including Reardon and Owens, who use different definitions and statistics to argue that there has been no increase in recent decades. Through a presentation of school segregation patterns across cities, suburbs and districts in the Washington, D.C. area, we illustrate how various segregation measures lead to dramatically different conclusions. We argue that different measures add important depth to our understanding of racial change in schools. Some measures are--and others are not--linked to the historic goals of the desegregation movement, recognized as gaining full and equal access to better schools for historically excluded groups of students. We show that the theories and research on desegregation rights and benefits are strongly based on the actual racial composition of schools, not on the randomness of the multiracial distribution of students. Finally, we ask that the various participants in this debate clarify what they are and are not measuring, and the reasons why they believe their measures are valid reflections of the goals of desegregation law and policy.

Civil Rights Project Data and Reports

The Civil Rights Project has been producing desegregation statistics for seventeen years, while the Harvard Project on School Desegregation and the University of Chicago Metropolitan Opportunity Project issued many earlier reports.⁹ These reports focused primarily on African Americans and Latinos, the two groups found by our highest courts to be victims of intentional segregation, with rights to desegregation remedies. Reports from the Civil Rights Project have examined the degree to which these students are attending schools with significant numbers of

⁸ For further discussion of the term resegregation, please see the appendix.

⁹ Many of those reports can be found at civilrightsproject.ucla.edu. For a summary of the earliest reports, see G. Orfield. (1983). *Public School Desegregation in the United States, 1968-1980*, Washington: Joint Center on Political Studies.

whites--or whites and Asians--in their schools. We define schools that increasingly isolate black and Latino students as segregated or resegregating. Our focus very directly connects with the goals of desegregation law and history.

Segregation has important legal and social science dimensions which often get mixed up in discussions about the issue. The basic reason we are interested in the question of whether or not school segregation is increasing arises from a great legal and policy issue. The fundamental pattern of segregation for African Americans and Latinos arose from explicitly discriminatory public policy. Before the Civil War, it was illegal to educate blacks in most of the seventeen slave states. After the war and the adoption of the great post-Civil War amendments to the Constitution guaranteeing the rights of former slaves, including the 14th Amendment's promise of "equal protection of the laws," all of the former Confederate states, and six others, adopted state laws or constitutions requiring the segregation of schools. These laws were implemented in the states where the large majority of African Americans lived then and still live today.¹⁰ Within segregated systems, there were extreme inequalities, including, with Supreme Court approval, the absence of any public high school education for black students well into the 20th century. For Latinos, most of whom were Mexican American, the Southwestern states engaged in school segregation, exclusion, and the concentration of Mexican American students in notorious "Mexican rooms," since they were deemed incapable of succeeding in white classrooms.¹¹ Across the North and West, in the absence of explicit state laws requiring segregation, there were many practices of site selection, attendance boundary drawing, assignment of teachers by race, provision of options for whites to transfer out of integrated schools, and so forth that produced high levels of school segregation, in addition to a variety of public actions that segregated housing and neighborhoods.¹² So, historically, segregation was not something natural that simply happened. It was something that was required or actively fostered by public authorities in many ways. This was, of course, the backdrop for the legal mandates to desegregate the schools that came from the Supreme Court and Congress between 1954 and 1973. Those decisions, laws and regulations requiring desegregation within school district lines, but forbidding metropolitan desegregation in almost all cases, are the context for measuring our national progress in attaining that goal. The basic idea of desegregation orders and plans was to end racial separation, and create equal educational opportunity in schools no longer defined and limited by race.

Desegregation plans designed in the civil rights era and since place central importance on getting black and Latino children into integrated schools and assuring that they are well treated there. The plans have or had goals, specified rights, and measured results. Typically the plans, adopted during the civil rights era in school districts with white majorities, called for trying to get schools

¹⁰ *Statistical Abstract of the United States*, "Resident Population by Region, Race, and Hispanic Origin," Table 19.

¹¹ Herschel T. Manuel, *Spanish-Speaking Children of the Southwest: Their Education and the Public Welfare*, Austin: Univ. of Texas Press, 1965; Thomas P. Carter and Roberto D. Segura, *Mexican Americans in School, A Decade of Change*, New York: College Board, 1979,

¹² G. Orfield. (1978). *Must we bus? Segregated Schools and National Policy*. Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution.

within a plus or minus 10 or 15% range of the two major groups in the district, usually focusing on black students, since the Hispanic numbers were still small in most areas at the time.¹³ These ratios were rarely used in districts that already had a substantial majority of nonwhite students, since there was little likelihood of lasting integration when white students were transferred to schools that were overwhelmingly nonwhite and poor. In those places, beginning in the mid-1970s, the dominant approach relied upon choice plans with desegregation standards and controls. Often they called for 50-50 magnet schools, largely placed in minority neighborhoods or central locations with a variety of policies to foster increased interracial contact. Many plans contained a variety of provisions for retraining teachers, developing supportive curricula and insuring equitable treatment in diverse schools. To the best of our knowledge, there were no desegregation plans that called for a random distribution of three or more racial and ethnic groups across a metro area. For instance, outside of California's San Francisco Bay Area, very few plans targeted the integration of Asians, since many Asian groups were already highly integrated both residentially and in schools, often heavily concentrated in good schools with substantial white populations.¹⁴ As a result, the most appropriate measures for progress on desegregation clearly seemed to be measures dealing with the integration of historically excluded groups with advantaged more groups. For more than two decades, we have also examined segregation by race and poverty, which we call double segregation, since most schools highly segregated on one dimension are also highly segregated on the other. Concentrated poverty creates massive challenges for schools.

We produce reports on school segregation to provide information about whether the promise of civil rights law is being realized or abandoned, something the government has rarely done. Sometimes we had to file freedom of information documents to obtain data that the government had no desire to release. Our reports basically showed little desegregation anywhere in the decade following the *Brown* decision. But the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, its active enforcement by the Johnson Administration, and strong Supreme Court decisions from 1968 to 1973 produced dramatic changes for black students, largely in the South.¹⁵ Our statistics showed a very significant increase in exposure to whites for blacks, again especially in the South, with most of the change in the late 1960s and early 1970s, but with momentum that carried through the 1980s. They also showed that Latinos, a small population in most of the country in the 1960s, were substantially less segregated than blacks. These numbers suggested that there never was significant enforcement of the rights of Latino students. As the population grew, Latino students became more and more segregated, surpassing black levels on some measures by the late 1980s.

¹³ The only portions of the South with large Latino enrollments during the civil rights era were Texas and South Florida. Desegregation in other Southwest states was much more delayed and limited.

¹⁴ Logan, J. & Stults, B. (2010). *Racial and Ethnic Separation in the Neighborhoods: Progress at a Standstill*. Providence, RI: Brown University.

¹⁵ G. Orfield, 1983.

Our state-by-state data shows that only in Colorado and Nevada, where the largest school districts were under court orders for some years, was the pattern different.¹⁶

To a substantial degree, past and present criticism of our reports reflects really an argument about demographic change and the feasibility of remedies. Obviously, as the white enrollment declines and the Latino and Asian enrollments soar, the percentage of white students in the schools of nonwhite students is likely to fall even with no policy changes (such as, the end of many Southern court-ordered and Office for Civil Rights school desegregation plans). Nothing about the numbers reported by the Civil Rights Project denies the impact of population shifts. In fact, almost all Civil Rights Project research reports begin with an analysis of demographic changes over time. These demographic changes have raised questions about the feasibility of desegregation efforts. For the last 40 years, since James Coleman's white flight article, such shifts have been used in court to argue that desegregation is impossible or even counterproductive. The arguments about the causes of the white decline in city neighborhoods and school systems, and the black and Latino middle class flight to the suburbs since the 1970s, are complex but clearly important trends. Yet policy questions that involve separate and complicated issues of feasibility are independent of segregation, and whether or not it is increasing. They should be kept separate. Both we and others could do a much better job on that front. When the argument that segregation is not increasing becomes entangled with complex discussions of other issues, critics sometimes adopt central arguments posed by desegregation opponents in the courts. They often cite studies of desegregation plans and demographic situations that no longer exist, and then the argument takes on a different dimension.

Despite the debate about the role of demographic shifts, it is also true that while the white share of the school enrollment in the South was gradually declining from the 1960s to the late 1980s, exposure of black students to whites actually increased as desegregation plans were implemented and as black suburbanization took hold. After 1990, however, when the Supreme Court began to authorize the termination of desegregation plans,¹⁷ white-black contact in the region began to decline significantly. So there was obviously a policy as well as a demographic impact in places where there were serious desegregation plans.¹⁸ Our data shows significant increases in segregation for blacks and Latinos from whites in the past two decades.

In a society in which the schools are the largest public institutions, and in which an epic Supreme Court decision sixty years ago heralded a fundamental change to government-imposed school segregation, it is essential to understand the differing legal and social science perspectives. It is also essential for researchers to understand that measures of segregation take place and will be

¹⁶ Horn & Kurlaender, 2009; Terriquez, V., Flashman, J. & Schuler-Brown, S. (2009). Expanding Student Opportunities: Prime 6 Program Review, Clark County School District, Las Vegas, Nevada. Los Angeles, CA: Civil Rights Project.

¹⁷ *Board of Education of Oklahoma City Public Schools v. Dowell*, 498 U.S. 237 (1991); *Freeman v. Pitts*, 503 U.S. 467 (1992); *Missouri v. Jenkins*, 515 U.S. 70 (1995).

¹⁸ Reardon et al., 2012.

interpreted in terms of a legal and racial history. For this reason, it is important that the creation and interpretation of statistics in this area be conscious of the legal and historical dimension. If a measure is reported as indicating progress on a legal and policy goal, but is not framed to measure that goal accurately,¹⁹ it can be misleading.

Claims that School Segregation is Not Increasing

Several researchers have published studies claiming that there has been very little change in segregation over the last several decades, sometimes directly challenging our conclusions.²⁰ That would seem to be a direct and serious difference, but it is actually a change of definition. If these studies are read carefully, they do not report any errors in our numbers nor dispute our findings: that black and Latino students have become substantially more isolated in schools and classes with few whites, and with large majorities of fellow students who are poor. What these studies do is assert that they have a better definition of segregation, and report findings that measure change in terms of that definition. The authors claim that segregation should not be defined in terms of the actual exposure of students of one racial or ethnic group to other groups, or the level of concentration of students in intensely segregated or apartheid schools. They assert, instead, that segregation should be defined by the randomness of distribution of two or several groups within a specified geography. They do not actually claim that the increase in the isolation of black and Latino students from whites has not occurred, but they assert that it is more important to focus on their preferred measure of the randomness of distribution of students. Readers need to understand that these are different things. We make no argument that their statistics are not correctly computed and reported, or that they show modest change, *in terms of their definitions*. We ourselves have frequently computed and reported similar statistics related to how evenly students are spread across districts or schools, because they help us understand the demographic component of changes in segregation levels and the feasibility of remedies.

But we do not rely upon those measures in reaching our basic conclusions about resegregation because they say very little about whether schools are actually integrated for black and Latino students and, in some circumstances, are clearly misleading in those terms. We are in favor of using as many measures as possible that actually add to our understanding of a complex process. What we strongly object to, however, are the assumptions embedded in the recent studies. These imply that their measures show progress in achieving integrated education, and affirm that there is something wrong with measuring the actual racial composition of schools as a way to assess progress in fulfilling the goals set out by civil rights law.

¹⁹ For further discussion of what segregation indices can and cannot measure, please see the appendix.

²⁰ Reardon and Owens, forthcoming; Logan, J. (2004). Resegregation in American Public Schools? Not in the 1990s. Albany, NY: Lewis Mumford Center; Stroub, K.J., & Richards, M.P. (2013). From resegregation to reintegration: Trends in the racial/ethnic segregation of metropolitan public schools, 1993-2009, *American Educational Research Journal*, 50(3), 497-531; Fiel, J.E. (2013). Decomposing school regsegregation: School closure, racial imbalance, and racial isolation. *American Sociological Review*, 78(5), 828-848.

The reality is that if you change the definition of a policy goal, either explicitly or implicitly, and develop statistics to measure it, you will get a different result. To give one hypothetical example, if we could change the definition of the yearly national deficit, it could be eliminated. For example, major parts of expenditures could be classified as investments rather than spending, and thus subtracted from the budget. Suddenly, everything would be in balance, or a surplus would be reported. The basis for those shifts would be based on the fact that some economists view expenditures on education, research and infrastructure as investments rather than as current expenditures. Such a change in definition could eliminate the reported deficit, but there would still be more dollars going out than coming in, and most people would understand this to be a deficit. It is very important that readers understand how definitions are changed, because they can and do lead to differing conclusions.

How Different Segregation Measures Work in an Actual Metropolitan Area.

To help illustrate how different conclusions about school desegregation progress can arise from using various segregation measures, we took a close look at the example of metropolitan Washington. We used federal data from the National Center for Education Statistics to examine the entire consolidated metro,²¹ as well as Washington D.C., the Virginia suburbs and the Maryland suburbs. (For simplicity, we left out a tiny part of the metro that is in West Virginia.) Schools across the DC metro are experiencing dramatic demographic change, going from 54.8% white enrollment in 1989 to just 37.0% white in 2010. During the same period, the percentage of blacks fell modestly, the percentage of Asians increased by a third and the percentage of Latino students doubled. About 4% of the students are reported to be multiracial.

When it comes to segregation measures, known as the exposure and isolation indices (that help illustrate contact between different groups of students), black students increasingly attended schools with disproportionately low shares of whites on the metro level and in all three geographic segments. Metro-wide, the percentage of whites in the school of a typical black student fell from 26.1% in 1989 to 17.4% in 2010 (when 37.0% would have represented a proportional level of exposure); from 32.2% in Maryland suburbs to 13.5%; and from 60.0% in Virginia, where more desegregation efforts occurred, to 28.7%. Obviously, from the perspective of black students, there was a sharp decline in exposure to white students, and it remained considerably lower than the overall share of whites during each time period. On the other hand, if you were only looking at black segregation with fellow black students, that figure fell significantly in the metro and in all three regions. Those numbers reflected the significant growth of Latino classmates for black students. In other words, instead of being segregated in

²¹ Core Based Statistical Area (CBSA). A CBSA is a census-bureau collective term for both metropolitan and micropolitan areas. A metropolitan area contains a core urban area of 50,000 or more residents, and a micropolitan area contains an urban core of at least 10,000 (but less than 50,000) residents. Each metropolitan or micropolitan area consists of one or more counties and includes the counties containing the core urban area. It also includes any adjacent counties that have a high degree of social and economic integration (as measured by commuting to work) with the urban core. In addition, CBSAs generally consist of multiple jurisdictions and municipalities including cities and counties.

schools with very high shares of fellow black schoolmates, black students in the DC metro increasingly enrolled in schools with high shares of Latino as well as black peers.

Black and Latino students also experienced much higher levels of exposure to poverty than white students. In 2010, students qualifying for free and reduced priced lunch, a rough measure of poverty, accounted for just over a third of the enrollment in the DC metro. White students, on average, went to schools in which poor students made up less than one-fifth of the enrollment. The typical black or Latino student, however, attended schools in which poor students constituted nearly half of the population.

Evenness measures, by contrast, tell a different story. These are segregation statistics that describe how randomly different groups are spread across a certain level of geography (e.g., districts or metro areas). Zero means that all groups are distributed in a completely random fashion, while 100 means that they are perfectly segregated within separate units, like schools or districts. (More details on all of these measures will follow later). A strength of these segregation indices is that they help control for major demographic shifts.

The multiracial H measure, which was frequently used in the recent studies countering the Civil Rights Project's contention that school segregation is worsening, indicated a decline in segregation in the DC metro and in all three sub-regions. But when we computed another measure of evenness, the dissimilarity index, it showed a slight metro-wide increase in the segregation of blacks from whites in DC, and larger increases in both the Maryland and Virginia suburbs. Latino students experienced small and inconsistent changes in the dissimilarity index.

These different measures give us different basic answers about whether there is progress on school desegregation. In terms of minority student contact with white students or with middle class students, the answer is an unambiguous "no." Much of this relates to the decline of the share of whites, though the dissimilarity index shows that whites and blacks are increasingly segregated even controlling for the large population changes. The multiracial H calculation, on the other hand, would suggest that segregation is declining across the metro area, though a good deal of the increased diversity it identifies is related to increased contact of black students with Latino students.

A reasonable policy conclusion from simply looking at the metropolitan H numbers would be that segregation is not very high and it is declining--not a significant policy problem. However, looking at the actual racial composition of schools between 1999 and 2010, we see a nearly 20% growth in the number of schools with 90-100% nonwhite enrollments and a growing concentration of African American and Latino students in schools highly segregated by race and poverty. As a result, DC area schools are facing the realities that come with double segregation as well as the continuing resegregation of formerly white or integrated schools in large parts of suburbia. From the educational perspective, segregation is clearly worse and expanding.

Policies designed to offset the inequalities and harms usually associated with segregation, and help stabilize racially changing communities and schools, would clearly be in order.

The Civil Rights Project tends to focus primary attention on measures of exposure to other groups and measures of intense and extreme racial isolation. As we discuss below, these measures of contact have their limits. They are affected by major demographic changes in schools, districts and metro areas. They also are not presented as the result of school efforts or feasibility of desegregation plans in various contexts, but as measures of the actual average level of interracial contact. Contact measures also have the advantage of being immediately intelligible and directly relevant to school experiences.

Why Interracial Contact Matters

The legal struggles related to segregation are rooted in the isolation of populations discriminated against and excluded from mainstream opportunities. The legacy of that discrimination is often reflected in contemporary society, because the same groups continue to lack equal access to opportunities routinely available to the white middle class. The major theories about the advantages of desegregation rest on the level and conditions of actual social contact, links to powerful social networks, exposure to high achieving peers, excellent teachers, challenging curricula and new technology. These benefits cannot occur where there is little or no actual lasting contact between students of different races and socioeconomic levels.

A fundamental problem of segregation is that it fosters the development and perpetuation of racial stereotypes, what Martin Luther King called “the false sense of superiority of the segregators and the false sense of inferiority of the segregated.” Unequal results plus segregation in a socially polarized setting fosters the belief that the “failure” of schools serving concentrated black and Latino populations is the result of the defects of those two groups. This is an easy conclusion for an historically dominant population that wants to maintain the status quo. Moreover, the lack of contact across the lines of separation means that there is little information to challenge such interpretations.

A central way of changing stereotypes is to promote positive intergroup contact, according to a theory developed by Harvard social-psychologist Gordon Allport in his classic 1954 book, *The Nature of Prejudice*. Allport suggested that while simply having different groups come in contact with one another was not enough to reduce prejudice, several key conditions could foster positive change. These included ensuring that all groups were treated equally, worked together towards common goals, and were in the presence of strong leadership supportive of intergroup contact.²² Hundreds of national and international studies have borne out Allport’s contact theory,²³ which remains key in understanding the benefits that flow from integrated settings. The

²² Allport, G. (1954). *The nature of prejudice*. Cambridge: Addison-Wesley.

²³ For a review, see Pettigrew, T. & Tropp, L. (2006). A Meta-Analytic Test of Intergroup Contact Theory, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 90(5).

positive academic, social and civic outcomes associated with diverse schools are very unlikely to occur without contact between students of different backgrounds.²⁴

Contact is also related to theories positing that resources will be distributed more equally if students of various races attend the same schools and are assigned to the same classrooms. This was a central element that led the NAACP and its allies to launch a direct assault on segregation, after decades of trying with very limited success to equalize segregated schools.²⁵ The idea that desegregated conditions link together the fates of different students, ensuring that advantaged families will advocate for important resources (like experienced, effective teachers) to be spread across the schools and classrooms to which their students are assigned, continues to underpin school integration efforts.²⁶

Similarly, the peer group theory, which grew out of evidence presented in the 1966 Coleman report, *Equality of Educational Opportunity*,²⁷ argues that students learn from each other, and also that the level and impact of instruction is related to the socioeconomic background of the student body. There is evidence from across the world showing such relationships. The exact mechanisms by which this works are doubtless multidimensional, involving expectations of parents, choices by teachers preferring to work with well-prepared classes, classroom and informal leaning from the understandings and perspectives of other students, parent support for school resources and fund raising, along with many others.

Another major theory about the benefits of desegregation deals with its impact on life chances, which operate through contact with networks of social and economic opportunity and skill in understanding and navigating interracial institutions. Robert Crain, Jomills Braddock, James McPartland, and others developed this line of research, which was later articulated in the “perpetuation effect” work of Crain and Wells. Perpetuation theory posits that early experiences in desegregated schools will produce students who successfully seek out diverse settings—to include colleges, workplaces and neighborhoods—later in life.²⁸ In other words, school integration can have intergenerational effects, as parents who experienced diverse schools commit to diverse neighborhoods and schools for their own children.²⁹ These and other theories rely on actual contact between students from differing backgrounds as a necessary, if not

²⁴Clotfelter, 2004.

²⁵Kluger, R. (1976). *Simple Justice: The History of Brown v. Board of Education and Black America's Struggle for Equality*. New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf.

²⁶Ryan, J. (2010). *Five Miles Away, A World Apart: One City, Two Schools, and the Story of Educational Opportunity in Modern America*, New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

²⁷Coleman, J.S., et al. (1966). *Equality of educational opportunity*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office.

²⁸Wells, A. S., & Crain, R. L. (1994). Perpetuation theory and the long-term effects of school desegregation. *Review of Educational Research*, 64, 531-555; Eaton, S. (2001). *The other Boston busing story: What's won and lost across the boundary line*, Yale: Yale University Press.

²⁹Mickelson, R. (2011). Exploring the school-housing nexus: A synthesis of social science evidence. In P. Tegeler (Ed.). *Finding common ground: Coordinating housing and education policy to promote integration* (pp. 5-8). Washington, DC: Poverty and Race Research Action Council.

sufficient, condition for desegregation impacts, and for understanding the dynamics that typically perpetuate inequality within segregated settings.

Measuring Interracial Contact

Education scholars, people studying the impacts of diverse neighborhoods, and others tend to emphasize measures that show the actual level of diversity within schools or neighborhoods or workplaces. These calculations of segregation, known as the exposure and isolation indices, help illustrate the lived experiences of students, residents or workers. They can be interpreted as the percentage of students (or residents, etc.) from a certain racial/ethnic background attending school with the average white, black, Latino, Asian or other background.³⁰ In other words, the exposure index allows researchers to make statements like, "in 2010, the typical black student in the United States attends a school that is approximately 29% percent white." Meanwhile, the isolation index permits this observation: "the average white student in the DC metro attends a school in which fellow white students make up 56% of the enrollment." When this statistic is compared to the overall percentage of white students in the DC public schools (37%), a portrait of the disproportionate isolation of white students with other whites becomes clear.

Measures of varying degrees of racial concentration help researchers dig more deeply into the averages produced by the exposure and isolation indices. Concentration can be defined in different ways (e.g., by deciles or quartiles of white students in a school), but some common methods focus on the more extreme ends of the spectrum. For instance, the Civil Rights Project often uses two different measures of concentration to define 90-100% minority schools as "intensely segregated," and 99-100% minority schools as "apartheid" settings.³¹ Those measures, which are strongly linked to very high levels of concentrated poverty, define schools where students typically have very little or no contact with whites or the middle class.

An important drawback to both measures of concentration and the exposure and isolation indices, as noted above, is that the averages they produce are influenced by demographic changes in student populations. Over the past several decades, the white student enrollment has declined dramatically and the proportion of Latino and Asian students has risen. As demography changes, the same enrollment policies can very well produce greater racial isolation. These noteworthy shifts make it important not only to value the exposure and isolation indices for the portrait of interracial contact they help to paint, but also to supplement them with other measures showing the degree to which the changes in contact basically reflect changes in the overall racial/ethnic composition of the area studied.

Contrary to widespread impressions, there is no dispute about our conclusion that black and Latino students have become substantially more isolated from white students. There is less

³⁰ Massey, D. & Denton, N. (1988). The Dimensions of Residential Segregation. *Social forces*, 67, 281-315.

³¹ Orfield, G., Kuscera, J., & Siegel-Hawley, G. (2012). *E pluribus ... separation? Deepening double segregation for more students*. Los Angeles, CA: The Civil Rights Project.

contact. That is a fact. Our studies look at many measures, but the critical ones for considering changes in racial integration and educational opportunity are those that focus on the actual racial composition.

Understanding the Evenness or Dispersion of Various Groups

If *contact* is the central interest of civil rights policy and of most research on the impact of segregation and desegregation, critics of this focus on studying the change in the evenness or randomness of the dispersion of the various groups within a particular area. By this measure, if the overall population in a metro changed from 50% white to 15% white, and the average school followed this pattern, there would be no change in segregation, although the white proportion in the school of the typical nonwhite student would have declined by two-thirds, a very substantial decline in contact. Knowing how much the randomness of distribution has changed can obviously be significant for policy, but it is not directly related to educational experience, since the educational and social situation would be quite different and probably a good deal less stable as the change occurred.

The analysis of the randomness of the distribution of different groups dates back at least to the 1950s in demographic studies. We have often reported such numbers. In early studies of housing and school segregation by pioneering demographers, including Karl and Alma Taeuber and Reynolds Farley, these were often central measures. There was widespread use of an index called the dissimilarity, desegregation, or Taeuber index, often simply known as the DI. According to the DI, zero represented a random distribution of two groups among all the components of the city, metropolitan area, school district, region or state being studied; 100 represented absolute racial apartheid with all units serving only one population. This index could be used between any two groups and could be compared with any other two groups, providing some important information in what seemed a very simple way.

In a few early desegregation cases, the dissimilarity index was actually used in the desegregation plan. Essentially such a definition of desegregation would evaluate progress in terms of the degree to which the schools reflected random distribution of two or a number of groups within the schools covered by a desegregation plan. In the Cleveland case, for example, the federal court ordered all students be assigned to schools which were about three-fourths black and in the midst of rapid racial change at the time of the assignments.³² There was a very heavy loss of white students who did not enroll or left the assigned schools. In Detroit, a similar situation occurred when the federal court refused to make such assignments which, as Justice Thurgood Marshall noted in his opinion, would merely speed the loss of the rapidly declining white students. "Even if a [racial balance] plan were adopted," he wrote, "... such a system would, in short order, devolve into an all-Negro system."³³ Eventually, after refusing to integrate Detroit

³²*Reed v. Rhodes*, 422 F. Supp 708, 796-97 (N.D. Ohio 1976), aff'd, 662 F.2d 1219 (6th Cir. 1981).

³³ Dissent read in Court by Justice Marshall, *Milliken v. Bradley*, in Thurgood Marshall papers, Library of Congress, "Nos. 73, 434, 435, 436."

with the suburbs, the Supreme Court instead ordered the state of Michigan to temporarily pay for some educational reforms to help make up for the unconstitutional segregation of the students. In St. Louis, the federal court ordered the creation of 50-50 magnet schools to the extent feasible within the city, and ordered the state to pay for what became a large program of voluntary transfer of black students to suburban schools.³⁴ The most stable desegregation plans were those that encompassed entire metropolitan areas.³⁵ The educational viability of desegregation plans depended upon the kind of racial contact the plan produced, and how it related to the broader metropolitan area and housing market.

The dissimilarity index is useful in thinking about the demographic element in resegregation, and, in some circumstances, it does relate closely to actual changes in desegregation shown in contact measures. However, we do not use the dissimilarity index as a central measure of progress, because it often produces confusing or misleading conclusions indicating that segregation is declining when students are actually more and more isolated. In a 90% black school district, for example, a 90% black school would be perfectly representative of the district's population and ranked as highly integrated in terms of the dissimilarity index, but would not produce access for black students to a significantly integrated experience or, in most cases, to an economically diverse school. In other words, in civil rights terms, it would be a segregated school with high levels of isolation.

In many situations, evenness statistics do not relate to actual social and educational realities. Depending on the population structure and the groups included in the measure, the dissimilarity index can define schools highly segregated by race and poverty as well integrated, and 50-50 schools as seriously segregated if the population of the area studied is heavily nonwhite and poor. The index can also describe all-white schools as highly integrated, though they have very few nonwhite students if the population of the area under study includes few minorities.

Dissimilarity is most informative for civil rights purposes when applied to a large geography, such as an entire metropolitan housing market. In that case it measures the degree of representation of the groups inhabiting the entire urbanized community among the various geographic units (e.g., census tracts, block groups or schools). It gives the most useful results in relatively stable school districts with substantial shares of the total enrollment from two or more groups. But in other circumstances, like when it is applied to individual neighborhoods or school districts, it is much less informative and often seriously misleading in understanding the actual social structure of the schools.

H: A Segregation Measure in Search of a Meaning

Recently, a much more complex version of the dissimilarity approach known as Thiel's *H*, or the information theory index, permitted simultaneous computation on the random distribution of all

³⁴ *Liddell v. The Board Of Education of the City of St. Louis, Missouri et al.*, 491 F.Supp. 351 (1980).

³⁵ Clotfelter, 2004.

groups. This measure is featured in many of the new studies disputing the Civil Rights Project's argument that segregation has been increasing.

The information theory index can be interpreted in different ways. Perhaps the most intuitive one is to think of it as communicating the extent to which an average unit (e.g., schools, neighborhoods, etc.) is diverse compared to the diversity of a larger unit (e.g., districts, metropolitan areas, etc.). Similar to the dissimilarity index, H is presented on a 0 to 1.0 scale. However, unlike the dissimilarity index, Thiel's H allows researchers to explore the segregation of multiple different racial groups simultaneously. It also can be broken out in a variety of different ways. For instance, Thiel's H can provide an understanding of how much segregation is caused by the separation of students between different school districts rather than within a single district. It can also be used to parse out dual group segregation, such as how much segregation can be attributed to separation between white and nonwhite groups. It is often presented, however, as a single measure of multiracial segregation.

As our society became more complex, statistical measures analyzing two groups among much more varied populations became more difficult to use and sometimes clearly confusing. This was clearly the case as many analysts reported declining black segregation when isolation from whites was increasing, often because of a failure to consider the reality that blacks were very often attending schools with a plurality or a majority of Latinos--another isolated, often impoverished, population.³⁶ The idea of a single measure that simultaneously measured segregation of all groups in one global number, among other properties, was naturally alluring and that is what drew attention to H , which we have reported in a number of our studies. We do not feature it, however, because, like the dissimilarity index, it has a number of properties that make it prone to misleading conclusions. In addition to the basic drawback of evenness measures--how segregated or diverse a metro area or district is at the start dictates the level of segregation-- H is further complicated by its multiracial emphasis.

As a measure of multiracial diversity, the H calculation sets an ideal of random distribution of all groups, and measures contact between any of the groups included in the overall computations. This blanket emphasis on multiracial diversity, however, overlooks key aspects of our history and desegregation law. There has been no great concern with Asian segregation, for example, because since the 1960s the soaring Asian population largely has been a well-educated immigrant group that is, in fact, the nation's most integrated and educationally successful population.³⁷ When Asians are added to H , they make the level of multiracial integration appear higher.

The multiracial H statistic assumes the equivalency of contact between one group and another. This means that an increase in contact between blacks and Latinos is counted as desegregation,

³⁶ Orfield G., Siegel-Hawley G., Kucsera J. (2011). *Divided We Fail: Segregated and Unequal Schools in the Southland* Los Angeles, CA: Civil Rights Project.

³⁷ There are, of course, small portions of the Asian groups, particularly refugees from Indochina, who arrived with far less education and resources and are experiencing much greater economic and social problems.

though it merely brings together two disadvantaged groups in the same schools--often under the difficult conditions of neighborhood racial transition. This is not a remedy for a history of exclusion from white schools. In fact, historically, a number of districts in Florida and Texas tried to argue that desegregating black students with Latinos was a remedy. Yet the Supreme Court recognized the distinctive history of segregation and the rights of Latino students to desegregation with whites in its 1973 *Keyes* decision. The *H* multiracial calculations would in part define what the courts found to be unacceptable--isolation of two disadvantaged racial/ethnic minorities--as progress. We avoid labeling schools that many would view as highly segregated as making progress toward integration, which seems like a kind of Orwellian proposition.

We have no objection to the measures of randomness—all statistical measures can tell us something of potential interest—but we strongly object to an ahistorical and often educationally meaningless definition of segregation trends, and the resulting claim that there has been little or no increase in segregation over the past two decades. Other researchers have every right to propose alternative measures of segregation, but it is important to closely examine whether or not those measures support their conclusions about resegregation in the nation's schools. Occasionally, they simply assume that something else should be measured to judge progress or regression in desegregation, even though what they measure has not been the goal of desegregation policy nor linked to major theories and research about segregation costs and desegregation benefits. Perhaps there will be future research which shows that multiracial *H* links with educational opportunity along some dimensions, or some constitutional theory will one day be developed about a remedy of multiracial distribution of students--but neither exist today. Again, we do not criticize using such measures, which have interesting demographic features, only the way the results are being described.

We recognized a long time ago that the country has become multiracial. We reported patterns of contact of different groups with others, and trends in the development of multiracial schools with significant presence of three or more groups. We used the *H* statistic in a number of our studies³⁸ as one way to think about the impact of multiracial demographic patterns, and have been following the growth of schools with three or more racial groups present. We have not, however, emphasized these measures because they do not have any clear meaning that relates back to the basic educational and civil rights concerns. Multiracial communities represent many different possible combinations of social and economic groups, and there is no reason to think that they are all alike at the same level of random distribution. We think that there should be much more study of the many variations of complex relationships within multiracial schools and how to optimize their potential benefits.

³⁸Yun, J. & Reardon, S. (2002). *Trends in Public School Segregation in the South, 1987-2000*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Civil Rights Project. Orfield, Kucsera, & Siegel-Hawley, 2012.

There has been a great body of research in the last half century on the impact of segregation, desegregation and interracial contact. That research has been almost all about the contact between whites and historically excluded black and Hispanic groups. Since much of those studies were conducted during the civil rights era when there was much better funding for such efforts, it disproportionately focuses on African Americans. There is no significant research base on the possible educational value of the many possible forms of multiracial diversity on a metropolitan scale. Researchers were well aware forty years ago that it was very important to find out what was happening with the explosive growth of Latino enrollments and multiracial schools, and these were priorities in the National Institute of Education in the Carter Administration. That research was, however, cancelled by the Reagan Administration and never resumed as a federal priority. It is still badly needed.

Beyond the Measurement Debate: Why Segregation Still Matters

Recall that, in addition to contending that there has been little to no increase in school segregation levels over the past decade, Reardon and Owens also suggested that there is no clear theoretical basis for thinking about the impact of desegregated or integrated learning environments. We find this claim puzzling because, as outlined here, more than a half century of research has been conducted on the relationships between desegregation and educational outcomes, taking the racial composition of the school as a fundamental factor. The various forms of unequal opportunity in segregated schools have been massively documented. Although there is a great deal of debate about the degree to which the potential benefits of desegregated schools are realized, and the factors inside the school that influence the outcomes, there is no doubt that white and Asian schools offer, on average, different sets of opportunities. There are a variety of important theoretical arguments about these issues, some of which were covered in a previous section, and a great deal of empirical research discussed below, though it is certainly true that this research has been poorly funded by the federal government. The Reagan administration cut off a vigorous body of research, and funding for projects and training on race relations three decades ago, supporting only a handful of studies on white flight by expert witnesses for school districts fighting desegregation. Still, in the 2007 Supreme Court's *Parents Involved* case, 553 scholars from universities and research centers across the U.S. submitted a brief on these issues to the Supreme Court, as did the American Educational Research Association and other national scholarly research associations.³⁹ The evidence in these briefs was then independently evaluated in a National Academy of Education study and the basic claims were supported. While it is certainly possible to challenge various parts of this research, it stains credibility to claim that this area has not been seriously studied, and that a number of strong theories about how the impacts develop and work do not exist.

³⁹ See, e.g., Brief amicus curiae of 553 Social Scientists. *Parents Involved in Community Schools v. Seattle School District No. 1*, 551 U.S. 701 (2007); Linn, R.L., & Welner, K.G. (2007). Race-conscious policies for assigning students to schools: Social science research and the Supreme Court Cases. Washington, D.C.: National Academy of Education.

Educational harms relate to the systematically unequal distribution of resources, both material and human, across different kinds of school contexts. Students in racially and economically isolated schools often go to class in deteriorating rooms and buildings, use outdated or inadequate instructional materials, as shown in the California *Williams* case,⁴⁰ and experience unchallenging, disconnected curricula.⁴¹ When it comes to human capital, racially and socioeconomically isolated schools are linked to fewer highly qualified, effective or experienced teachers than other types of settings.⁴² Teacher pay and professional training levels tend to be lower in high poverty schools, just as turnover rates among teachers, staff and principals are much higher in segregated minority schools.⁴³ These conditions create a churn that contributes to a profound destabilization of the learning environment amid research evidence suggesting that teachers are one of the most important in-school factors on student achievement.⁴⁴ Given such evidence, unequal access to highly effective teachers is a fundamental mechanism perpetuating inferior educational opportunity.

Peer groups represent another critical influence on student outcomes. Going to school with engaged and motivated peers continues to be positively related to academic achievement for low income students—exerting an influence beyond that of the student’s own socioeconomic background.⁴⁵ Peer groups that normalize regular class attendance, completion of homework, and college-going aspirations help instill similar attitudes in individual students.⁴⁶ On the other hand, research shows that having a peer who drops out of high school can increase the odds of dropping out.⁴⁷ Attitudinal and behavioral differences towards schooling are related to many different issues, but witnessing the constant turnover of teachers and leaders discussed above, in addition to the state of facilities and classroom materials, among other tangible markers of inequality, sends clear societal messages to students attending these segregated, high poverty settings.

⁴⁰ *Eliezer Williams, et al., vs. State of California, et al.* Williams filed in 2000 in San Francisco County Superior Court. The basis of the lawsuit was that the state failed to provide public school students with equal access to minimally adequate books, decent school facilities, and qualified teachers. It was settled in 2004.

⁴¹ Knaus, C. (2007). Still segregated, still unequal: Analyzing the impact of No Child Left Behind on African-American students. In The National Urban League (Ed.), *The state of Black America: Portrait of the Black male* (pp. 105-121). Silver Spring, MD: Beckham Publications Group.

⁴² Clotfelter, C., Ladd, H., & Vigdor, J. (2005). Who teaches whom? Race and the distribution of novice teachers, *Economics of Education Review*, 24(4), 377-392.

⁴³ Clotfelter, C., Ladd, H., & Vigdor, J. (2010). Teacher mobility, school segregation, and pay-based policies to level the playing field. *Education, Finance, and Policy*, 6(3), 399-438; Jackson, K. (2009). Student demographics, teacher sorting, and teacher quality: Evidence from the end of school desegregation, *Journal of Labor Economics*. 27(2), 213-256.

⁴⁴ Coleman, 1966; Rivkin, S. G., Hanushek, E. A., & Kain, J. F. (2005). Teachers, schools, and academic achievement, *Econometrica*, 73(2), 417-58.

⁴⁵ Borman, G., & Dowling, M. (2010). Schools and inequality: A multilevel analysis of Coleman’s equality of educational opportunity data. *Teachers College Record*, 112(5), 1201-1246; Coleman, 1966.

⁴⁶ Kahlenberg, R. (2001). *All together now: Creating middle class schools through public school choice*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press.

⁴⁷ Palardy, G. (2013). High School Socioeconomic Segregation and Student Attainment. *American Educational Research Journal*, 50(4), 714-754.

For all of these reasons and others, racially and socioeconomically segregated schools tend to be linked to low educational achievement and attainment. Nearly all of the nation's 2,000 "drop out factories" (schools in which the graduation rate is less than 50%) are doubly segregated by race and poverty.⁴⁸ Students who do graduate from such settings are less likely to attend four-year colleges, experience success in college,⁴⁹ and obtain a well-paying job⁵⁰ than students who attended more integrated schools. The different postsecondary trajectories confronting graduates of segregated schools are in part related to their lack of access to advantaged social networks, which pass along important, though often informal, information about college and job prospects.⁵¹

Benefits of Integrated Schools

Well-designed, diverse schools offer important benefits to all students. Indeed, social science evidence points to heightened educational, social, civic, communal and life outcomes for students attending integrated school settings. Educational gains related to integration largely flow from contact with better prepared students and teachers, and the variety of cultures, experiences and worldviews present in diverse classrooms. Different perspectives contribute to enhanced classroom discussion, flexible and creative thinking, and the ability to solve complex problems.⁵² All are obviously critical skills in our rapidly changing and interconnected society. Numerous reviews of recent literature also document the positive effects of integrated schools and classrooms on the achievement of students of all races (though most studies focus on black and white students).⁵³ Students of all races are also more likely to report higher aspirations and

⁴⁸ Balfanz, R., & Legters, N. E. (2004). Locating the dropout crisis: Which high schools produce the nation's dropouts? In G. Orfield (Ed.), *Dropouts in America: Confronting the graduation rate crisis* (pp. 57–84.). Cambridge: Harvard Education Press, 2004.

⁴⁹ Camburn, E. (1990). College completion among students from high schools located in large metropolitan areas. *American Journal of Education*, 98(4), 551-569.;

⁵⁰ Johnson, R. C., & Schoeni, R. (2011). The influence of early-life events on human capital, health status, and labor market outcomes over the life course. *The B.E. Journal of Economic Analysis & Policy Advances*, 11(3), 1-55.

⁵¹ Anderson, E. (2011). *The Imperative of Integration*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

⁵² Gurin, Patricia. "The Compelling Need for Diversity in Education," January 1999. Expert report prepared for the lawsuits Gratz and Hamacher v Bollinger, Duderstadt, the University of Michigan, and the University of Michigan College of LS&A, U.S. District Court, Eastern District of Michigan, Civil Action No. 97-75231; and Grutter v Bollinger, Lehman, Shields, the University of Michigan and the University of Michigan Law School, U.S. District Court, Eastern District of Michigan, Civil Action No. 97-75928. [On-line]. Available: <http://www.umich.edu/~urel/admissions/legal/expert/gurintoc.html>

Reprinted in: *Michigan Journal of Race & Law*, 5(1), 1999, 363-425; Orfield, G. & Kurlaender, M. (Eds.). (2001). *Diversity Challenged: Evidence on the Impact of Affirmative Action*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.

⁵³ See Braddock, J. (2009). Looking back: The effects of court-ordered desegregation. In C. Smrekar & E. Goldring (Eds.), *From the courtroom to the classroom: The shifting landscape of school desegregation* (pp. 3-18). Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press; Linn & Welner, 2007; Mickelson, R. A., Bottia, M., & Lambert, R. (2013). A Meta-Regression Analysis of the Effects of School and Classroom Composition on Mathematics Outcomes. *Review of Educational Research* 83, 121 – 158; Schofield, J. (1995). Review of research on school desegregation's impact on elementary and secondary school students. In J. A. Banks and C. A. M. Banks (Eds.), *Handbook of multicultural education* (pp. 597–616). New York: Macmillan Publishing.

greater educational and occupational attainment in diverse settings, compared to students in segregated settings.⁵⁴

While desegregated schools rarely eliminated racial achievement gaps--which are usually large, long-standing, and related to many factors besides schools⁵⁵--they usually narrow such gaps significantly and increase the probability of graduating. Thus school integration, properly implemented, should be understood as an important part--but only one part--of a broader agenda of equalizing conditions within families and communities.

The social benefits of integrated schools are profound. Students in racially diverse educational settings have more friends across racial and ethnic lines and are less likely to stereotype.⁵⁶ Both characteristics are linked to a reduction in fears of and prejudice against other groups, as well as an enhanced ability to navigate across lines of difference.⁵⁷ These early social attributes and skills translate into preparation for robust participation in democratic processes and help form the basis for more socially cohesive societies.⁵⁸ Students in integrated schools are also better prepared to live and work in diverse communities and institutions.

Another important benefit relates to the integration of communities. Significant research shows that substantial and lasting metropolitan school desegregation is linked to higher levels of residential integration and stability.⁵⁹ This is because desegregation over a broad metropolitan area helps combat the isolation of children in high poverty segregated schools as well as any incentive to move to an area with whiter schools.

While there are many debates about the scale of the advantages of desegregated education and the conditions under which they occur, there are few areas of social science which have so long and rich a body of research.

Conclusion

Despite the evidence of harms of segregation and the advantages of integrated schooling, we have not seriously confronted the issues surrounding school segregation for many decades, choosing instead to focus on a series of education reforms that have attempted to make separate

⁵⁴ Mickelson, R.A., & Nkomo, M. (2012). Integrated Schooling, Life-course Outcomes, and Social Cohesion in Multiethnic Democratic Societies. *Review of Research in Education*, 36, 197-238.

⁵⁵ Rothstein, R. (2004). *Class and Schools*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press/EPI.

⁵⁶ Killen, M., Crystal, D., & Ruck, M (2007). The social developmental benefits of intergroup contact among children and adolescents. In E. Frankenberg & G. Orfield (Eds.), *Lessons in integration: Realizing the promise of racial diversity in American schools* (pp. 31-56). Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006.

⁵⁷ Mickelson & Nkomo, 2012.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ Brief amicus curiae of Housing Scholars and Research & Advocacy Organizations (2006). *Parents Involved in Community Schools, Petitioner v. Seattle School District No. 1, et al.; Meredith v. Jefferson County Board of Education*, 551 U.S.

schools more equal, often ending up sanctioning and punishing schools segregated by race, poverty and teacher experience for their problems. We hope that this report both adds to the dialogue surrounding the study of segregation among scholars, and reaches a broad audience interested in refocusing on policies explicitly designed to confront segregation and inequality in schools.

While exploring the utility of varying measures of segregation is, of course, a completely legitimate academic enterprise, it would be good to have some serious research investment in questions about race relations in schools, which receive far too little attention. Such questions include: How do schools serving three and four race/ethnic groups actually operate? How much damage is done by the continued failure to train/recruit significant number of African American and Latino teachers? How do current accountability systems reinforce racial stereotypes and undermine schools with heavily nonwhite populations? What are the patterns of relationships between Asian, Latino, and black students? What kinds of teacher training programs produce the most equitable treatment of students of all groups? What happens to black students in schools with large Latino majorities, and how could the relationships and outcomes be improved? To what extent do current decisions about school attendance zones, transfer and choice programs, and transportation policy reinforce systems of racial and ethnic stratification?

We live in a society with a very weak record of producing separate and equal schools. Its destiny will be heavily influenced by whether it can both provide more success for historically unequal communities, and better educate people to work and govern together effectively across historic lines of social cleavage. The research community has contributed too little to these issues. Much of what it produces has explored either current governmental priorities, or subjects popular in leading journals or qualitative studies, sometimes offering important insights largely ignored in the world of public policy. There are many areas of basic research and policy and legal analysis that are urgently needed to help our educational institutions adapt successfully to a dramatically changing society, and to bring the still unfulfilled dream of the *Brown* decision effectively into this century. We are now as far from *Brown* as *Brown* was from the 1896 “separate but equal” decision in *Plessy v. Ferguson*. Since the truly fundamental changes that took place in the South during the civil rights revolution, we have been sliding backward and implicitly accepting a new version of “separate but equal,” which has not worked much better than it did the last time. Researchers can play a critical role in helping the country understand the changes we are undergoing and the policies that can help build a successful, profoundly multiracial, and increasingly integrated society, where schools offer more equal opportunity and much better preparation for all groups to successfully live, work and govern together.

Appendix: Clarifications

What Measures of Segregation Trends Cannot Measure

Those advocating for the use of different measures of segregation are often concerned about possible causes and remedies for desegregation. Articles discussing segregation trends often include commentary on policy. Information on trends is a necessary element in thinking about policy but, by itself, cannot resolve issues of cause or remedy and it is very important to not confuse the issues. To say that schools are segregated and minority children are highly isolated from whites is not to say how the segregation was caused, or to evaluate the degree to which it can be cured under existing policy. The issue of causation is important and is an excellent, different, and very complex interdisciplinary research topic.⁶⁰ One can say that it is caused by demographic change, but understanding what causes demographic change and whether it is likely to continue overall, and in specific settings, requires a deep understanding of housing, immigration, labor markets, etc. Segregation statistics only describe patterns of racial contact or isolation, not causes, and they do not, by themselves, justify any legal claim about causation or liability. These issues are often mixed up by readers of reports on segregation trends, and sometimes, explicitly or implicitly, by researchers in their writing or their advocacy in the public sphere. For example, a central legal strategy in resisting or limiting desegregation plans has been the use of testimony claiming that the segregation should not be resolved because it is the product of “natural” demographic change in housing markets. Mere statistics on racial change cannot answer these questions.

We welcome and encourage discussion of policy issues and how they may relate to or be limited by demographic changes. It is easy for people to read into statistics and construct ideas about causation and solutions that the mere statistics about segregation trends do not support. For example, recent changes in segregation levels for Latino students in California are linked to the vast changes in the state’s population in the last four decades, to resegregation of housing in large swaths of suburbia, to the dissolution of desegregation efforts, to charter schools and choice plans without civil rights provisions, to family income differences, and to other causes. Whatever the cause of resegregation--which, again, basic reports on segregation levels cannot determine--the realities facing black and Latino resegregated schools are very different from those facing most white and Asian or stably integrated schools.

⁶⁰ In U.S. law segregation caused by demographic change, housing segregation not related to official action, poverty, etc. do not trigger any mandate for desegregation while segregation caused by intentional racially discriminatory action of school officials or, in some cases, by public actions fostering segregated housing that produces segregated schools, can support remedies. There is very little social science research of any kind on critical legal issues of contemporary school discrimination through mechanisms such as gerrymandering of attendance boundaries, operation of choice plans in ways that increase stratification, discriminatory assignment of teachers, and other factors. Documenting these practices could be a very important step toward understanding and remedying contemporary forms of discrimination and their influence on inequality in schooling.

Clarifying the Term Resegregation

In our studies we have often used the term resegregation to describe increasing racial isolation of black and Latino students over time. Many schools began as overwhelmingly or completely white schools; others were created largely, or exclusively, for minority communities.

Desegregation could come either from a desegregation order or plan or from a process of racial transition in housing patterns. The resegregation or increase in the isolation of black and Latino students could similarly come either from policy or from housing changes, whether caused by public or private actions. The term is, of course, also attached to changes that directly follow the dropping of desegregation plans, especially in the South, as discussed in *Dismantling Desegregation* (Orfield and Eaton, 1996) and our book on southern issues, *School Resegregation: Must the South Turn Back?* (Boger and Orfield, 2005). But it can also happen from a process most directly influenced by resegregation of the housing in communities, with major consequences for the schools. This is discussed in our book *Resegregation of Suburban Schools* (Frankenberg and Orfield, 2012). However resegregation happens, it creates a variety of educational and social challenges.

The term “resegregation” has been powerful because it focuses attention on the rising isolation of students and the dynamic process of change. It has obviously been misunderstood by some readers and critics as claiming that increases in segregation are intentionally created. In statistical terms, it merely means a process of increasing racial isolation, which is sometimes linked to legal and policy decisions. As the courts authorized termination of desegregation plans, scholars began documenting a retrenchment on school desegregation, particularly in the South, where the most rapid progress had occurred. That resegregation was often linked significantly to a policy change. In general, resegregation is a statistical not a legal concept, though legal and policy changes have been linked in some cases,⁶¹ and, in at least one instance, shown to be causally related to it by a leading researcher.⁶² It would be useful for researchers, including our project, to carefully specify how this term is being used in research reports.

⁶¹ Clotfelter, 2004; Reardon & Yun, 2005.

⁶² Reardon et al., 2012.