

Segregation of public schools



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Introduction

School systems across the U. S. are voluntarily segregating their schools and schools may be more segregated today than they were at the height of the Civil Rights Movement. There is overwhelming evidence that segregation is a toxic social issue that serves to fortify discriminatory viewpoints and attitudes that negatively affect particular populations of people and innately puts Black and Latino students at a disadvantage, weakening facets of social capital in these students' neighborhoods and further widening the life-long achievement gap between these students and their White counterparts. Black students continue to score lower than White students on standardized tests are underrepresented in institutions of higher learning and achieve overwhelmingly lower rates of wealth.

This research will evaluate the affect of racial segregation on student academic achievement, which for purpose of this research will include standardized testing performance as well as attributes of social mobility, in order to identify the best model for U. S. school systems that fosters equity in access to resources and high student achievement. In the present paper, several case studies that investigate the learning outcomes and academic achievement in segregated schools are evaluated. From review of these case studies a hypothesis can be formed that states that racial segregation is detrimental to non-white students, particularly Blacks and Latinos. The following literature reviews demonstrate and support this hypothesis. The studies conclude that students who attend primarily minority schools are not as well prepared for post-secondary education and that this achievement gap is directly related to the degree to which they experienced segregation.

The research also shows that all student benefit from diversity in their school setting; White students are also disadvantaged by re-segregation of schools.

Review of Literature

In a research article by Jones-Sanpei (2009), the research first identifies specific overarching goals of public education. The goals of education that this study evaluated are individual outcomes (academic achievement and job readiness) community outcomes (parental empowerment and social capital networks) and, individual social outcomes, such as future political engagement, social skills, and civic skills. Secondly the Jones-Sanpei research discussed the theory and research surrounding social capital and used data from five southern school districts and matching data from the 2000 Social Capital Community Benchmark Survey (SCCBS), (7) to examine the relationship between community social capital and segregated public schools. The study concluded by speculating about the potential effect of re-segregating public schools on both community and individual social capital.

The Jones-Sanpei study stated that several factors promote student individual academic outcomes, which are usually measured by standardized exam scores. According to Jones-Sanpei (2009), student individual academic outcomes rely heavily on teacher attributes, pedagogical philosophy (teaching styles), and school structure. The study also takes into consideration school-mixed factors (community measures) such as parental involvement, curriculum funding, equity issues and community involvement, deemphasizing the practice of using solely standardized testing models to quantify student's learning outcomes and student potential future competitiveness. The literature further legitimizes the importance of

community measures as important outcomes of public education. Specific forms of social capital that may be fostered by public education “ include obligations and expectations among a network of individuals, information channels, and social norms. Social capital enables community members to trust one another, establish business and political organizations, and to be involved in public education. Interactions through the public school medium have the potential to increase the general social capital of a community.” (Jones-Sanpei, 2009).

The Jones-Sanpei study looked at two large southern school districts from 1992/1998 through 2005. The six school districts included in this analysis all had between 50, 000 and 125, 000 students in the 2005-2006 school-year. Additional community measures included the percent of each racial group in the community; mean community education, mean community income, and population density based on 1990 Census data. Community social capital measures tested by the study were interracial friendships, informal socializing and social trust. To test the hypothesis that communities with segregated public schools have lower community social capital, the study used t-tests, then used logistic regression to examine which social capital measures contributed to the interracial friendship measure.

The findings of the study were that residents of communities with higher levels of school district segregation reported significantly lower levels of general social trust while communities with less segregated school districts reported significantly more social trust. Furthermore, respondents with higher general social trust were twenty-nine percent more likely to report having interracial friendships than respondents who reported lower general

social trust. The findings support the hypothesis that segregated schools put children at a disadvantage for competing with their peers who will later have to work in a diverse society. “ It may be that community social capital influences local school district policymaking with respect to racial integration or that district segregation influences community social capital. In conclusion, there seems to be a relationship between district segregation and community indicators of social capital.” (Jones-Sanpei, 2009)

The (Goldsmith, 2009) study of the affect of re-segregation of public schools focused on the long-term effects of this segregated schooling on achievement levels of Black and Latino students. The study used longitudinal data from the National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988 which surveyed a sample of eight graders from across the U. S. in the spring of 1988. Students were resurveyed in 1990, 1992, 1994 and 2000. The NELS: 88 data is relevant research about educational processes and outcome which include student learning, predictors of dropping out and effects on students’ access to equal education. Studying the minority-concentration and educational-attainment relationship is important because “ racia segregation results in blacks and Latinos attending schools and living in neighborhoods with higher proportions of minorities than whites.” (Goldsmith, 2009, 4) This study hypothesized that segregation perpetuates racial inequality and that the percentage of black or Latino in a neighborhood negatively affects individuals’ educational achievement.

The focus of (Goldsmith, 2009) was the circumstances surrounding segregated schools, and possible causes of the segregation. This research summarized findings of previous studies and found that “ The racial

segregation of neighborhoods is principally responsible for the racial segregation of schools” (Goldsmith, 2009, p10). that show that schools that attempted to change from white, segregated schools to integrated schools had high rates of teachers and staff who reported that they did not receive adequate training to teach in integrated settings. Goldsmith also concluded that schools of segregated populations of Black and Latino students were less likely to graduate from high school and attain a bachelor’s degree than students in predominantly white schools. Empirical data from previous studies was analyzed the correlation between segregated neighborhoods, segregated schools and educational outcomes. This research supports earlier discussed hypotheses of segregation’s affect on individual achievement and community social capital by analyzing the validity of the “perpetuation theory”. This theory maintains that Blacks and Latinos who experience segregation in schools and their communities continue to be segregated in other social institutions over the course of their lives fail to develop networks with whites or the knowledge for developing these networks.

These networks are important because they carry high-status knowledge, for example, about college admission procedures. “An inability to form social ties with whites and to access information in white networks reduces the life chances of blacks and Latinos well after adolescence”. (Goldsmith, 2009, p10). Goldsmith, 2009 also presents reason for future research to study schools in predominantly minority neighborhoods as it would provide valuable data on effects of segregation on student achievement. The method for this research included NELS data as stated before as well as an analysis

of students' residential zip code areas retrieved from eth 1990 and 1992 census reports.

The research conducted by (Austin, A M, 2008) clearly lays out data for the correlation between segregated schools and achievement on non-white students. The weight of the findings in this study further legitimize the importance of the two previous studies discussion of the long-term, quality of life disparities caused by the lack-luster community social capital of students in segregated schools and segregated neighborhoods. The main focus of this research was to compare the grade point averages of white male and female students to the grade point averages of male and female minority students. The student's high school GPAs are then used a measure to project future college achievement by race. This research also supports the research presented by the NELS, clearly stating that racial segregation in schools across the U. S. directly affects minority students' ability to compete in institutions of higher learning and eventually in the job market.

(Austin, A M, 2008) found that the gap between white and minority students is about 11. 2% of the average GPA. This study also looked at the effect of different environmental factors faced by minority students, specifically their segregation in early years of schooling, to explain the academic performance gap that existed once they reached the post-secondary level. Like previously reviewed studies, this study sound that minority students tend to live in segregated neighborhoods and attend segregated schools. This fact put minority students at a grave disadvantage at the post-secondary education level. For the research, student performance was tracked over a period of 6 years of 1331 public school students from the State of Georgia who enter the <https://assignbuster.com/segregation-of-public-schools/>

University of West Georgia in the Fall semester of 2001. Of the 1331 students in the study, 60% are female, 75.1% are white, 20.4% are black and the remaining students are Asian (1.1%), Hispanic (1.4%), Native American (0.4%) and multi-racial (1.7%). The average high school GPA is 3.01, and the average SAT scores are 502 for the verbal test, and 497 for the math.

The study by (Massey, 2006) reported that 2/3 of African American lived under conditions of high racial segregation, and that 2/3 of all African Americans attended minority dominant schools. Massey's study focused on the academic achievement of 3924 students entering 28 selective universities in the Fall semester of 1999. He surveys these freshmen and assembles a data set on social conditions in neighborhoods and high schools and finds that " minority students from segregated backgrounds attended substandard schools, received lower quality instruction, were exposed to higher levels of disorder and violence, and were less prepared socially for campus life." (Massey, 2006, 6) By looking at the reported performance of these students over their first three semesters in college, Massey concluded that segregation has a significant impact on student achievement. He estimated that going from total integration to total segregation would lower GPAs by about 0.13, and that taking segregated backgrounds into account reduces the performance gap, but doesn't completely eliminate it. He also predicts that, because his data is from highly selective schools, in general the effect will be worse.

The study by (Condron, 2009) found that the number one cause of the achievement gap between minority students and white students is racial

segregation in the schools. This study cited the social and economic stratification (social capital) between black and white Americans as a barrier to student achievement in schools and later as adults. This research used 1st grade data from a longitudinal study of a pre-kindergarten cohort and found that segregated schools cause an elevated role in the academic achievement gap as well as in social class disparities. This study's approach to the research differed from most by looking at social class as it directly correlates with race as opposed to looking at race as a sole determining factor of socio-economic status.

This approach allowed the researcher to take into account that “ children growing up in different positions in the stratification hierarchy have categorically unequal and qualitatively different (rather than continuously graded) life and educational experiences [and that] poverty involves distinct material hardships and environmental disadvantages that may stunt poor children's cognitive development” (Condrón, 2009, p9). This research also went deeper into the school-level practices that attribute to student achievement gap more so than the other literature reviewed here. In addition to looking at social capital, which other studies also did, this study analyzed organizational processes, teacher attributes and resources at the schools, in relation to student body composition. This study found that racially segregated schools had poor administrative cohesion, poorly developed staff, and substandard resources for students.

In conclusion, the research is clear that despite historic Supreme Court victories to desegregate U. S. public schools, the workforce may be integrated but our neighborhoods and schools are not. There needs to be

more research done in the way of showing more qualitative data of the future overall individual achievement of minority students who attend predominantly minority schools, segregated from white students. This should be done so that that one of two things can take place. Either a de-segregation movement in education reform policy needs to be pushed through or schools that remain segregated need to be brought up to the same standards of predominantly white, high performing school. It has already been proven that this has a significant impact on students in two ways. The first solution may prove more favorable as research also provides evidence that a diverse school environment benefits both minority and white students alike.

The study will seek to provide to answer these specific questions:

- What is the perspective of individual teachers of the effects of their students' culture, class, and gender on their academic performance?
- How do students view their race and the race of their classmates as factors that affect their academic achievement and overall academic experience?
- How do students and teacher talk about racial inequality in their school?
- How does school segregation affect both white and non-white students?

The proposed study will help bring awareness to these critical points.

Methodology

For my study I will use two New York City schools, both on the Lower East Side of Manhattan. One school is a charter school where of the 380 students, 43% are black, 29% are Hispanic, 1% are White and 1% are Asian (information for the ethnicities of the other 25% was not provided at time of this proposal). 100% of the students who attend this k-5 school qualify for free lunch based on government poverty guidelines. The math and reading scores are high, among the best in the city (<http://insideschools.org/?fs=1280>). The other school's, a public school under the department of education, demographics is such: of 336 students, 13% black, 36% Hispanic, 34%White, 13% Asian (<http://insideschools.org/index12.php?fs=20>). The math and reading scores at this school are less than stellar. I will select 15 respondents from each school for the interview; three students from each grade, grade 3 through 5, one Black, one White and one Asian. I will select two teachers from each grade level. Teachers in both upper and lower elementary school will be chosen and their ethnicities will be mixed to mirror those of the students being interviewed. This will be done to ascertain whether there are common themes in regards to perspective of race and students achievement amongst the teachers in terms of their ethnic background. The teachers will be selected based on the test score of their students from previous years; teachers with high results for student achievement will be selected.

Data will be collected through interviews and observations. The interviews will be open-ended. They will focus on biographical information, what populations they have the most experience teaching, what they felt contributed to their success and trends in academic achievement they notice

among the students they have worked with. They will also be asked general questions about how they prepare themselves to be culturally aware, how they address diversity or multiculturalism in the classroom and how they communicate expectations to their students.

A sample of interview questions for the teachers that will be used:

1. Tell me about yourself? (Where are you from, upbringing, culture, why you chose to be a teacher...)
2. Have you been to any professional development workshop about diversity in the classroom?
3. How do you think your background and/or teacher training influence how you interact with students? (Your rapport with the students, communication style, your ethnic background in comparison to your students...)
4. Do you set high expectations in your classroom? Why? Why not?
5. Do your expectations change depending on the demographics of your class?

A sample of interview questions for the students that will be used:

1. Do you spend time with kids who are different from you in school? How are they different?
2. What is it like to go to school with these kids?
3. Do you have friends that attend another school? What is it like for them?
4. Does your teacher set high expectations for you?
5. Is school difficult for you? Why or why not?

6. Do you ever feel that you are different from your classmates or teachers? How?

The teachers will be observed and video taped for ten hours in the span of three months. During the observations the researchers will take specific notes in regards to the teachers' behavior and interaction with students.

Potential codes that may arise include: expectations, communication, empathy and rapport.

The researchers will look at the data identify overarching themes that speak to the effects of the shift to re-segregation of public schools. The data will be studied to see how the experiences of students in racially diverse school settings differ from those in segregated school settings and how this experience may translate to differences in academic achievement and components of the social capital theory, specifically, obligations and expectations among a network of individuals, information channels, and social norms. The committee will also seek to see if there are common themes in regards to the teacher's ethnicity and professional development in regard to their cultural sensitivity. They will look at how the perspectives and identity of the teachers reflects how they approach diversity in the classroom and how they transmit information about a variety of topics, and how they set expectations for their students depending on students' race.

Discussion

This research will clearly show that re-segregation is a problem that needs to be taken under control. This research is not only concerned with academic achievement affected by segregation, but is also concerned with students' and teachers' experience and perspective of race in the school. The data

collected will tell the story of what effect race has on a school community and the whole educational experience of students. I expect to find that in the charter school where students are segregated in that there is a very small percentage of white students and there is less of a mixed demographics, that teachers are under-prepared to teach in classrooms where their students' race is different from their own. I also expect to find that these teachers have had little or no professional development for fostering cultural sensitivity in their classrooms.

Most importantly, I expect to find that teachers' expectations and perception of student achievement in the charter school will be inconsistent, and differ from those of teachers in the public school where there is a more diverse student population and that their attitudes will decrease the effectiveness of their classroom instruction, thereby hindering the academic achievement of their students. Another expected result of this research is that students of different races will have significantly different responses to the question of what their teacher's expectations. I expect that while teachers may report that they have the same expectations for all of their students, interview responses from students may very well reveal that students are intuitive and sensitive to the differences in teacher expectation that may be communicated through subtle teacher behavior like how much they are encouraged to participate in class discussions compared to other students.

Possible shortcomings of the methods in this proposed study are that this data collected in the manner previously stated does not provide true longitudinal data to track specific students' experiences of racial integration

or segregation and their resulting academic achievement beyond elementary school. A longitudinal study may follow this study in the future.

Further considerations for methodology that may affect the outcomes of this study are the affect of overall student interracial experiences. Limitations to the proposed research methods are that no data will be collected that gives researchers information for what the out-of-school experiences for the students are; do they live in diverse neighborhoods or segregated communities? What are their parent interracial relationships and/or experiences that may inform them? In future research data may be collected on the degree to which students are segregated outside of school. To collect this data, student enrollment records would have to be collected, tracking the students by race and places of residence, which can be generally identified by area zip codes. The possible problem with collecting this data may be that some students actually live outside the neighborhood listed on records. This could affect the findings of this research by misrepresenting the correlation between in-school segregation and neighborhood segregation that affect overall student segregation and academic performance. Another limitation of the interview method to collect data in this study is that students and teachers may answer as they feel they are expected to. This would make the data collected by interview about teacher rapport with students and expectations of students' achievement inconsistent with data that may be collected through formal observations by researcher. As we see more school reforms that resemble business models and more charters, we also see more segregation. One possible implication of this research is that charter, which appear to contribute heavily to the re-segregation, will come

under more stringent scrutiny and closer regulation. As for public schools that are a part of the board of education.

Other possible implications of this research are that administrations will consider more professional development training for their teachers in eth way of preparing them to teach their diverse or non-diverse populations. As stated in the introduction of this proposal, one of the goals of public schooling is to produce critical thinkers who can function in what is becoming a more diverse global job market. Having said this, it is foreseeable that this research will be used to inform schools and educators to the extent to which they are meeting this requirement of public schooling or missing the mark. There sill also be a shift in the conversations that surround race in the school. Through the information gathered from the interview responses, teachers and administration will become aware of the disconnect between students' experiences and teachers' perception of students experiences.