Educational Policies and Brown v Board*

Forest Jones

This work is produced by The Connexions Project and licensed under the
Creative Commons Attribution License †

Abstract

Today's Educational policies and fulfilling the promise of the Brown v. Board decision

Today's educational policies and fulfilling the promise of *Brown v. Board of Education*

Forest I. Jones
Virginia Tech University

Introduction

Are public schools across the country beginning to resegregate? In order to determine the elements of resegregation the educational policies of several regions in the country are investigated to learn why this is occurring. Policies that reversed segregated schools did so to ensure that every child would have access to educational equality throughout the country. Today we are seeing that the spirit of the *Brown* decision may be losing its momentum for a number of reasons.

There are key factors for the school leaders in America to determine whether we are any closer to the equality of educational opportunity exists. The equality of educational opportunity should be given to all children and youth. Thus, the definition to equality of educational opportunity would include four things: access and availability to education, educational resources, integration, and achievement (Johanningmeier, 2008). To be sure, one looks at all four of those components to see if equality of educational opportunity has truly been reached. To truly understand educational equality we need to go back to the *Brown v. Board Decision*.

There have been cases over the years that have addressed segregation within school districts. With the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision in 1957, it initiated educational reform throughout the United States which dismantled the legal reasoning for racial segregation in schools (347 U.S. 483, 1954). Many African Americans had fought for many years to rid the country of segregated schools, arguing that education was not separate, but unequal. Yet the landmark case remains a gripping one, with citizens forged with a sense for justice in the sense of educational equality.

This mandate of *Brown v. Board* was not the first time that racial segregation had been fought in the courts of the United States. As early as 1849, a number of African Americans filed suit against an educational system that mandated racial segregation, in the case of *Roberts v. City of Boston* (59 Mass, 198, 5 Cush. 198, 1850). The lawsuit was on behalf of a Black five year old girl who was barred from attending school. This lawsuit became a galvanizing force by the African American community to end racially segregated schools at that time. That there are school districts around the country that are starting to reverse the trend of integration is difficult to accept, but evidence is not occurring to suggest that it is true.

*Version 1.1: Apr 27, 2009 6:24 pm GMT-5

†http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/

With the *Brown v. Board* verdict coming down, the nation began to deal with the theory that the country's framers did not intend for public schools to be segregated. This in turn created a time in the next forty years where the country saw mandatory busing and other measures to make sure that integration was taking place. With all of the strides and steps forward that the nation has taken with the integration of public schools, there were some places that continued to do everything to keep society stuck in the past. Unfortunately, today we are seeing our country reverse the trend of integration because many people believe we have gotten past the time where quotas need to be used to diversify our public schools. The spirit of the *Brown* decision is losing its momentum in this new era and the racial makeup of our public schools are at stake.

Purpose of the Review

I selected the four articles in the literature review because of their investigation of resegregation in our public schools. They all tie into each other because one article discusses the role of private schools in resegregation across the South. One analyzes a small town in Kansas and discusses how they are having the same problems with their minority presence and segregated neighborhoods. Another article discusses Miami-Dade County and how segregated neighborhoods are having an impact on their schools as well. The last article discusses the success of Charlotte, North Carolina and how recent policy changes are causing schools there to resegregate. Are districts beginning to resegregate again? The articles use different ways of measurement in addition to quantitative and qualitative methods to make their point.

The primary purpose of this paper is to examine the selected literature regarding the policy of school segregation. The research question for this review is: Is there evidence that public schools are becoming resegregated? To answer this question and to give adequate history on the problem, the following considerations are made: (a) the approaches over the years with desegregation and their definitions, (b) current information on what happening currently in terms of resegregation, (c) historical aspects. Finally, a synthesis of the literature that investigates the success or failures over the years with integrating schools. Five studies looked at examples of school desegregation. These studies are provided in a table in Appendix A. The concluding part is a summary of the research and future recommendations that are derived from the research synthesis.

Search for Relevant Literature

To put together this literature review, I conducted computer searches of electronic databases such as JSTOR, ERIC, and other electronic journals. My searches pinpointed peer reviewed journals, since there are many materials discussing school desegregation. There were no time specific searches set on my searches in order to acquire some history on the background of school desegregation and cases that were important to it. I wanted to gain an understanding on the history of school desegregation and some true case studies on examples of what regions in our country have done with school desegregation and the influence on what is happening today, because of that I used search terms such as *segregation*,*school segregation*, *theory*, *desegregation*, *minorities*, *comprehensive school*, *student achievement*, and *Brown v. Board of Education, separate*. It was important to add the terms *desegregation theories*, because results using *theory* were not what I was looking for. The terms *minorities* and *comprehensive school* did not produce an abundance of relevant studies. However, the use of the terms *school segregation*, *Brown V. Board* and *student achievement* provided several studies that addressed my research question.

A time limit of 2003-2008 was set in order to consider the most recent studies in research within the context of school desegregation and minorities. Studies were included in this review that looked at factors specific to K-12 schools, integration of students, and the effects of the Brown v. Board court case. An addition to the search terms was the phrase segregation theory. This term was added in order to identify studies that utilized theory as an analytical framework and that focused on the legal and overall aspects of segregation in schools.

Contemporary Definitions

Recent literature has built on the findings of earlier studies and many studies have talked concentrated on two theoretical concepts in particular: cultural capital and social capital (Bordieu 1973, Coleman, 1988). These two terms will be discussed at much more length later in this review. Coleman's definition of cultural capital in terms of what we are discussing is the following: the specific cultural knowledge, languages and

discourses, and accumulated information existing in students' neighborhoods and individual homes.

Social capital is the influence that is built as a result of relationships and individuals use these social relationships to accomplish their interests. Students use their social capital to carefully negotiate their way through everyday life, and to many minorities White middle class cultural capital is viewed as superior (Lareau and Horvat 1999). Historically because of discrimination and segregation the Black community over the years has developed its own cultural and social capital that has helped them survive in a White dominated world.

The forced racial separation, or *de jure* segregation, was one of the most devastating institutional practices of white supremacy in the United States. According to (Frederickson 1981), segregation was the notorious Jim Crow laws of southern states that regulated inter-racial contacts in public places which was hidden behind the legal covering of 'separate but equal' which was inferior in terms of voting and in schools. The term 'segregation' became a common term in the American South in the early years of the twentieth century. Southern segregation was an effort to establish and maintain a strict division between racial groups that extended into the classroom as well.

Within the setting of education, segregated schools had a different meaning compared to most often used term during that time, 'segregation'. Segregated schools often had inferior teachers, a very high number of unlicensed teachers, a curriculum that was borderline efficient at best, a void of classes for students who had above normal intelligence, a large part of the day devoted to non-academic subjects, and inadequate facilities (DeForest, 2008). Within schools that were separated, the community felt that they were not receiving an equal education for their young people. These expectations and sense of entitlement created the springboard for the Black population to mobilize throughout the twentieth century for a true equitable educational opportunity under the law.

Historical Context, Framework, and Significance

Historically, one of the most devastating forms of segregation were the blanket laws put into effect of separate and inferior education that disenfranchised African Americans. Segregation had been entrenched in the public education in the South even before the 20th Century, but it was not thought of as such an unequal situation as it would later become in the Brown v. Board era. Interestingly enough, during these early years public schools in the South were low in quality for both blacks and economically disadvantaged whites; both races lacked access to consistent schooling (Fredrickson, 1981). Data show that educational segregation became a more serious problem in the time between the years 1900 and 1915 when public schools upgraded white schools and increased per pupil expenditures while either giving nothing to black education or reducing it (Fredrickson, 1981). One good example of this occurred in the black belt county of Wilcox, Alabama, where total expenditures for teachers' salaries in 1890-91 were $4, 397 for 2, 482 whites per pupil and $6, 545 for 9,931 blacks per pupil; by 1907-08, they had risen to $28,108 for 2, 285 whites per pupil and actually declined to $3, 940 for the 10,745 blacks per pupil then attending school (Bond, 1969). These lopsided economic stances created the movement for the changes seen in the struggle for integrated schools in the 1950s and 60s, and also led to a concentration of the most spatially concentrated and disadvantaged populations in education-most often poor or minority, and a sense of isolationism from mainstream society in terms of education and possibilities.

Schools were separated just like neighborhoods were in the early twentieth century as the urban residential type of segregation was actually implemented in several southern cities between 1910 and 1915 (Frederickson, 1981). Due to the depth this was done, some of these same southern cities are divided today as they were those many years ago. The majority of the residential segregation laws passed during this period of time banned whites and blacks from living on the same block. Ordinances like these were seen as a way to make sure clear boundaries were set in neighborhoods. The state of Virginia took this action as far they could by passing a state ordinance which created the division of entire cities or towns into 'segregation districts' where only one race could live under the law (Fredrickson, 1981). There were two cities, Roanoke and Portsmouth, who tried to test this law and the effects of Roanoke's attempt is still seen in the present day, which in turn has affected their school system.

Black education all over the nation suffered from the financial implications of the Jim Crow laws, and a gap started to develop between the amounts that were appropriated per pupil for the two races, something

that has had a strong effect on what see today in our nation's schools. This financial disparity began to grow more and more in the early part of the twentieth century (Fredrickson, 1981). Interestingly, Southern blacks had gotten used to the separate but equal institutions before the years of Jim Crow, and they may have even welcomed separate schools if they were truly equal to the ones that the whites had and if they had complete control over them. However, after Jim Crow was fully entrenched in the lifestyles of people, many separate institutions took on the insidious reputation of racial inferiority. As the years went on the most embarrassing symbols of Jim Crow segregation were the inferior educational facilities and this in turn limited the ability of Blacks to be on equal footing with whites when it came down to economics.

The high concentration of segregation in schools created an environment in which the *Roberts v. City of Boston* case was widely regarded as significant even if it was 105 years before the landmark *Brown v. Board* case. Little Sarah Roberts passed by five white schools until she got to her black school and her father sued the city and used Robert Morris, a great abolitionist to help him. In April 1850, the Supreme Judicial Court issued its ruling in *Roberts v. Boston*. Chief Justice Shaw, unimpressed by impassioned oratory about freedom and equality, decided the case on narrow legal groups, ruling in favor of the right of the school committee to set education policy as they saw best. Shaw could find not constitutional reason for ending Black schools (*Roberts v. City of Boston*, 1850). Boston's schools would remain segregated and it would be years until the African Americans fought for the *Brown v. Board* case. The 1954 landmark case is among the most significant turning points in the history of America's educational system. It started out led by Charles Houston and later Thurgood Marshall and went on to dismantle the legal basis for racial segregation in schools (*Brown v. Board*, 1954). The two cases mentioned in this section highlights the theory of educational equality in terms of race.

Critique of Studies

Private Schools, Segregation, and the Southern States

The Clotfelter study examines the role of private schools in Southern states in an investigation of current segregation in K-12 schools. First, the researcher investigates the recent trend of private school enrollment in the South. Second, the researcher examined the years since school desegregation and the role that private schools have had on it. In the United States, segregation increased between 1995/96 and 1999/2000, and the research demonstrates that a rise of enrollment in private schools was a leading cause in this trend (Clotfelter, 2002).

In order to determine why segregation has over time become to appear more and more in the South the researcher investigated private schools and the role they are playing in school segregation along with the rising income in the South, and overall affluence in the area as a whole. The researcher looked at previous research on schools in the South, looking closely at patterns of private school enrollment in the state of Mississippi. He looks at private schools in the South and compares it to other regions in the nation. Lastly, the researcher demonstrates the importance of non-metropolitan areas and its impact on private school enrollment.

Private schools, having been around for many years in the United States, have historically had bigger enrollments in the North than in the South or the West (Clofelter, 2002). This trend, however, was turned on its head after the Brown decision, and more people turned to private schools in the South than ever before. From 1960 to 1999, the share of all students attending private schools dropped three percentage points, at the same time it increased in the South by three percentage points (Clotfelter, 2002). The research shows that the private school enrollment in the South has steadily risen until 1999 when it was only two percentage points behind the national average.

In the midst of all of these enrollment numbers, it is important to note that the private enrollment numbers spiked significantly in the state of Mississippi between 1967 and 1972 with numbers tripling in those years (Clotfelter, 2002). Data from the state suggest that this was not just a blip on the radar, but a trend that would grow dramatically and by 1980 there was a higher number of students in private schools. Other examinations of the figures regarding Mississippi schools reveal a mass exodus of white students out of public schools in the years 1968 and 1969. Moreover, the rate of white students leaving public schools was not limited to Mississippi in the South with North Carolina seeing large increases in the early seventies and the city of Memphis private school enrollment increasing by 20,000 in the period between 1970 and 1973

(Clofelter, 2002). Currently, researchers seem interested in trying to see if these early increases in enrollment have been continued and their effect on the return of school segregation.

Data on private schools are taken from the National Center for Education Statistics Private School Universe Study, a periodic survey most recently used for 1999/2000 and the Common Core Data for public schools (Clotfelter, 2002). There are severe restrictions on the ability of any survey to make sure there is a consistent procedure used in administering and scoring the instrument. This is something to keep in mind when the researcher says that 'comparable data' from both sources were collected for the 1995/96 school year as well. The second major obstacle to identifying students in this study would be the sample size. For individual public and private schools, the researcher used 335 metropolitan areas (Clotfelter, 2002). One thing is clear about this article is that they used good examples such as the city of Atlanta which has a large urban base and many white suburban areas. The researcher also looked at counties, which predictably, appear to best for assessing racial segregation outside of large metropolitan areas such as Atlanta. Furthermore, one of the most segregated metropolitan areas shown in the data was Detroit, which has historically had one of the most segregated public school systems in the country. Among the eight metropolitan areas in the data table, private schools contributed to most segregation in the city of Baltimore, which also had the highest rate of private school enrollment among whites (Clotfelter, 2002). Overall the realities show that private schools did play a factor in contributing to segregation in the South, in non-Metropolitan areas it accounted for 42% of total segregation and in metropolitan areas private schools were steady with private schools in the rest of the United States (Clotfelter, 2002).

Because private schools tend to take the blame for a lot of the segregation problems we have seen in the past and present, the researcher wants it to be understood that in most communities they contribute to it less than public schools do (Clotfelter, 2002). Where private schools have helped with the white exodus of students, the researcher points to Mississippi again as a culprit and examines it to see if the trend has continued today. However, as mentioned in the study there has not been any research since the early 1970s to prove this in Mississippi or anywhere else. This is something that will be touched on again in the conclusion.

The stereotype of private schools being a vehicle for white flight has been seen quite frequently in largely black non-metropolitan areas in the South. This was seen in places such as Mississippi, Alabama, and Georgia (Clotfelter, 2002). Interestingly enough, as mentioned in the historical section, there were the counties where social divisions in the Jim Crow era were enforced brutally. A good example of this is in Sunflower County, Mississippi where during the 1999/2000 school year nearly 73% of all white students attended private schools (Clotfelter, 2002). In these Southern counties with a high number of blacks and the races have historically been separated, private schools have continued to be the driving force in continuing segregation in K-12.

This study attempted to look at recent trends in private school enrollment and segregation by using data from 1995/96 and comparing it to 1999/00. The researcher focused on private enrollments and segregation in regions of the country where schools were segregated by law before 1954, most of them being in the South. The study used the exposure rate to measure segregation in this article, which measures the racial composition of the school attended by the average student of a given group (Clotfelter, 2002). The researcher looked at cities and counties in this study which gave him a good view at how white flight to the suburbs of big cities contrasted with neighborhoods that were segregated in small county towns. Interestingly, there was no mention in the article about how many schools were used in the study.

The numbers showed that there was an increase across the country and especially large in the South, for the nation the average index rose from 0.288 to 0.301 (Clotfelter, 2002). Charlotte, North Carolina's segregation increased by almost 23% largely because of private school enrollments, especially in its city center. Atlanta has the biggest decline because of its increased racial balance in school districts. Again, non-metropolitan areas such as Jackson, Mississippi and Brownsville, Texas saw segregation rising because of the number in private school enrollment and these were also areas with a high number of Blacks living.

Currently, our knowledge about the influence of private schools on segregation is largely confined to studies that were done in the early 2000s. The studies were also done in one region of the country and there are many other regions and cities in the country to look at as well. The aim of this research was therefore to conduct a study towards trends in the early days of private schooling and compare them to the most recent data. This makes one wonder if this trend of private schooling has continued in recent years. An additional

aim was to look at not only metropolitan areas, but also counties where Jim Crow had left scars that are still seen today.

The Consequences of School Desegregation in a Kansas town 50 years after *Brown*

There has always been a question in public education about the impact of the *Brown v. Board* decision fifty years later, especially in the place where this landmark case started, the state of Kansas. Researchers believe that the goal of school desegregation did not have the desired effect of providing education equality for African American students (Patterson, Nikes, Carlson, and Kelley, 2007). That is, the leaders years ago thought desegregation was their plan to increase student achievement and that years later they would have the statistics to prove their desire was well founded. After the 50th year anniversary had passed, researchers began to take a look at individual cities and how they had dealt with desegregation and the effects of it.

The goal of the *Brown v. Board* case was to establish educational equity for all students regardless of race. This goal is constantly undergoing changes due, in part, to changes in school zoning plans, private schools, and district plans. The authors of this case study wanted to take a look at one city in particular in Kansas and what the impact of the case has been on the city fifty years since the court decision. Parsons, Kansas is the city that the researchers studied and consideration was given to the teachers and young people and the question of an improvement in the racial achievement gap.

Patterson provided a broad perspective of the impact of desegregation as it implied to the city of Parsons. The researchers reported that they did experience difficulties with this study in terms of trust when it came to the school board and both the white and black populations in this qualitative study (Patterson, 2007). This is the case as well with the data that was collected as the researchers admit early on that because of their own White middle class background, the data could be affected. The data collection consisted of personal interviews, focus groups, and the review of documents.

Given the researcher's own admission and trepidation with this study, there are important questions for readers is whether the data could be corrupted, if there is fidelity in the numbers and if personal views could skew the data. There were a total of 76 adults and children participated in the focus groups or interviews (Patterson, 2007). This is a number that is not very high and it would have helped to have more people participate. About one-third of the participants were Black and the other two-thirds were White. One wonders why they couldn't have gotten more Black people to participate in this study. Researchers have to be careful when using interviews and focus groups since depending on where people are seated, you could get some members doing all the talking. On the other hand, if the focus group and interviews were well designed you could get some very good responses from the questions.

For the study, each participant was asked to nominate other individuals who they believed had knowledge of this issues pertaining to the study. The focus groups were made up of principals, teachers, paraprofessionals, parents, and students. The researchers collected and analyzed the data and each interview was recorded and transcribed verbatim. They then looked at each transcript and analyzed it for patterns in the data and developed a coding scheme to label each piece of data which works out well. Problems with some of the study would be that they did not have anyone come in and look over the analysis for them nor did they let the interviewees check their own interviews. Nominating individuals rather than randomly picking participants could also cause some issues, with people knowing the questions before they are asked.

Patterson addressed the issues of today in Parson by revealing that the city has been devastated by the decline of the railroad, oil, and strip mining industries which has caused the racially diverse city to become economically depressed (Patterson, 2007). This study reported that the school district had a population of 73% white,18% black, 5% Hispanic, and 4% other, this is in a district with over 1600 students (Patterson, 2007). The study reported that the closing of the all-black Douglass School in 1958 still created a lot of tension in the community between white school leaders and the black population who felt that white schools had not lived up to their promise of bridging the achievement gap between black and white students (Patterson, 2007).

The Douglass School served the black community in Parsons for fifty years before closing its doors in 1958 because of the 1954 *Brown* decision. The study stated that many black participants felt that the community lost a considerable amount of cultural value when the school was closed, especially since none of the records or trophies were saved (Patterson, 2007). With the loss of social and cultural capital with the closure of the

school, the black community claims today in the study that the white schools are not meeting the needs of black students and that there have been no inroads made with the achievement gap between the races.

The study suggests that the closing of the Douglass school had a connection to the lingering effects of student achievement in the case of African American students. The researchers offered up evidence by the people they interviewed that the Douglass School offered better academics even though they had inferior materials and that there was no such thing as social promotion, either you learned to read or you were not promoted on (Patterson, 2007). However, there was no mention if this scenario is still being seen today in the Parsons school system.

The data that the researchers collected suggest that the closing of the Douglass School had a profound impact on the African American students and community as a whole. However, the study did not produce any significant data to show a true difference in the achievement gap today between black and white students in the school system that no doubt still occurs around the country today. There were interviews with focus groups, Data from the present study also indicate a number of black teachers lost their jobs with the closing of the Douglass School which gave African American students no one to model which in turn affected their achievement. Consideration must also be given to other concerns when desegregation is mentioned such as, resources, the school, teachers, and the community.

50 Years after *Brown*: Segregation in the Miami-Dade County Schools

Segregation, having been dubbed a crisis that is returning, permeates the nation in both metropolitan areas and rural areas. This concern, however, has gone beyond just random neighborhood talk. It is seen through data and reiterated by the court systems throughout the nation releasing large school districts such as the one in Miami-Dade Country from court mandated desegregation plans (Orfield, Bachmeier, James, and Eitle, 1997). Currently, these court decisions, along with the growing trend of residential segregation, continue to inhibit the school district's ability to combat the new segregation that is being seen throughout the country.

Miami-Dade County has the fourth largest public school system in the nation and one of the most ethnically diverse metropolitan areas in the country (Moore, 2004). Moreover, this study mentions that this is a great place to investigate segregation because of the dynamics of the district. Presently, the state of Florida is one of the fastest growing demographic areas in the country and the trends of segregation that were studied by the researcher could be looked at by other large metropolitan areas as well. This was a very good system for the study to investigate because of its history with segregation and the dynamics in terms of their racial composition.

An attractive strategy for analyzing data in terms of segregation is the use of the Dissimilarity Index (Moore, 2004). This method was originally created for measuring residential segregation, but is now used to measure progress in school desegregation in the country (Farley, Richards, and Wurdock, 1980). The most common numbers to check for with this index are 0 to 30 which indicates low levels of segregation; 31 to 59 indicates a moderate level of segregation, and a number higher than 60 indicates a high level of segregation. The researcher used 'D' to represent the percentage of black, white, or Hispanic students that would have to change schools to achieve the perfect racial balance (Moore, 2004). Miami-Dade County Public Schools annually publishes the District and School Profiles and the 2000 published document is the primary source of data for the study along with historical and sociological literature which describes residential and social segregation. The researcher did a good job by using a measurement tool which is used in many studies and is known across the country as a good tool.

The study's data show that Miami-Dade County is the most segregated metropolitan region in the South and the 16th most segregated area in the country (Regional Research, 2001). It should be made clear the daunting nature of desegregating any school system that has such a long and continuing history of residential segregation. In Miami-Dade County, blacks, regardless of whether they live in the middle of the city or in the suburbs, are isolated from Whites and Hispanics (Moore, 2004). Currently, this large degree of residential segregation is still the most difficult situation to fix in the country's fourth largest school system.

In the midst of what is occurring today in Miami, it is important to emphasize that it took a number of lawsuits and the 1964 Civil Rights Act to finally force Miami-Dade County to integrate its school system. Other data show that the segregation numbers for 30 large cities in 1960 showed that Miami, with a residential

segregation level of 98, was the most segregated city in the nation (Massey & Denton, 1993). Even after the Civil Rights Act and numerous actions by outside influences to desegregate, it took a 1970 court order to implement busing when it was found that 42 of the 217 schools in the system were all black, mostly because the system had refused to transfer white students to black schools.

Perhaps the first step to see what is happening currently is to look at the breakdown in terms of numbers for white, black, and Hispanic students in Miami-Dade. Although it is possible to do a better job in desegregating the County, the task of doing it is made more difficult with the data that show that whites only make up 12% of the student population in Miami-Dade (Moore, 2004). This identification shows that the so called 'white exodus' is still a continuing phenomena in the County. To complicate the problem even more, data show a high degree of segregation between Blacks and Hispanics. Interestingly, the County does not collect data regarding the race of Hispanics and the researcher admits that analysis of this factor must be used with caution (Moore, 2004). It is interesting that the researcher did decide to look at this country in particular, with the knowledge that data for Hispanic students may be skewed.

Ironically, the same courts that helped push desegregation plans through are the ones that are reversing that trend today and Miami-Dade is no exception. In 2001, a judge in the County's system released the school system from federal court supervision and said the schools were officially desegregated (Moore, 2004). This in turn affected policies such as redrawing attendance boundaries and other items that were implemented to help with the rising trend of segregation. The researcher believes that because of this decision and many that have come after that the Miami-Dade County system will experience a rise in segregation, a rise that is being seen currently in many places throughout the country.

Sinking *Swann*: Public School Choice and the Resegregation of Charlotte's Public Schools

This article was chosen because of how it is connected with the other four articles in its investigation of a school district that successfully integrated, but now is seeing policy changing which is creating resegregation in their district. Public school choice, a policy that allows individual families to have a choice in which school their children will attend, is a program that is being used throughout the country today. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, a large urban district in North Carolina, has moved from an assignment policy built around magnet schools and mandatory busing to a mandatory choice system (Godwin, Leland, Baxter, and Southworth, 2006). The mandatory choice policy is one where the district purposefully avoids using ethnicity in school assignment and allows parents to choose the school for their children. The goals of the school system in terms of the students were to improve test scores of all students, reduce the test score gap between Whites and Blacks and to continue a steady level of desegregation in the schools (Godwin, 2006). Unfortunately, with the school system attempting to avoid using race or ethnic consideration in assigning students, they have negatively impacted their test scores in some cases and reversed some of desegregation that took them years to achieve.

According to the study Charlotte-Mecklenburg enrolls more than 125,000 students in almost 150 schools (Godwin, 2006). The numbers break down to 38% White, 43% Black, 12% Hispanic, 4% Asian, and 3% American Indian (Godwin, 2006). The landmark 1971 case, *Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education* ordered that every school's makeup should look similar to the proportions of Black and non-Black students in the district and that mandatory busing would be used to achieve the goal (*Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg*, 1971). Specifically, this case was the driving force behind the desegregation and caused Charlotte to eventually become one of the nation's most integrated school systems with a relatively peaceful acceptance by the community.

Charlotte-Mecklenburg changed its assignment policy in 1992 and the district reduced the number of students that would be bused by creating the choice program. This policy lasted for a few years and then in 2002 the district was court ordered to allow students to attend their neighborhood schools which evolved into the mandatory choice program (Godwin, 2006). The new policy divided the district into four large attendance zones, each having large Black and White neighborhoods. The students would choose their home school or neighborhood school and everyone was guaranteed that if their first choice was their home school, this is what they would receive (Godwin, 2006). However, the student could pick up to three schools in their preferred order and be placed in a lottery that would put them in spaces in available schools. The problem with this would be in large Black neighborhoods where the schools would not be the best and the first choice

would be one in a White neighborhood which filled up quickly with the White students.

Data made available by the school district showed numbers on individual students and the schools to which they were assigned in 2000, 2001, and 2002. The data included end of grade test scores for each student and basic information such as the student's school, grade, ethnicity, free and reduced lunch status, and residence (Godwin, 2006). The researcher believed that this data would give them insight on the importance of peer effects on student outcomes. This included students in fifth through eighth grade and compared test scores from 2002, the last year of busing and test scores from 2003, the first year of mandatory choice (Godwin, 2006).

Godwin used standardized scores (Z scores) were employed for reading and math as the dependent variables with the scores having a mean of zero and standard deviation of one for each grade in the school. This procedure was done for theoretical question of seeing if the policy change did affect the tests among different sets of students (Godwin, 2006). The independent variables included the student's ethnicity, gender, free and reduced lunch status, and 2001-02 test scores. In using these methods, the researcher was prepared for selection bias which was a concern with the school choice question.

Thus, there are good theoretical grounds for predicting what would happen after this change in policy. The most obvious result was the increase in the number of segregated schools in Charlotte-Mecklenburg. In the 2001-02 school year, there were 47 schools in which the percentage of Whites of Blacks was more than 15% different from their percentages of the school age population and by the next year this had jumped to 81 (Godwin, 2006). The Dissimilarity Index rose from 0.382 to 0.481 with an increase of almost 26%. So it is plausible to say that these results point to the policy that encouraged desegregation was actually doing the opposite.

In terms of achievement the new assignment policy had some negative impacts as well. For reading, the scores actually improved in the categories for minorities and low income, but math dropped dramatically. For Blacks there was a standard deviation change in math from a statistic of -0.33 to -0.47 and for low income students it went from -0.38 to -0.54 (Godwin, 2006). This was a very good measurement tool to use and is widely used and reported because of the use of variability and it can be affected by extreme values. Because of the chance of extreme scores in terms of the sorting of students, the researcher ran a regression for the groups such as Black and free and reduced lunch along with using a correlation. Using regression was a good idea by the researcher since it would help to reduce the error in his statistics. Overall, the numbers show in the study that the resegregation is creating negative impacts for Black students and affecting the achievement gap that Charlotte-Mecklenburg had worked hard to fix.

Synthesis

The papers critiqued in this literature review were selected for the purpose of seeing if there was evidence that schools are being resegregated. Clotfelter (2004) presented the theory that private school enrollment was having a direct influence on segregation in the schools throughout the South in both metropolitan areas and smaller non-metropolitan areas. Patterson (2007) presented the idea of social and cultural capital and how they tied into the argument that in the city of Parsons, Kansas, the African American community still has not realized equal educational opportunity despite the promise of it, this tied into Clotfelter's theory that small communities with a racial minority are grappling with the same concerns as large metropolitan areas. Moore (2004) ties into Clotfelter's idea of a large metropolitan area that has produced a segregated school system despite numerous attempts to integrate it. Godwin (2006) showed how another large metropolitan area is actually going backwards and reversing many of great strides they had made in integrating the public schools in Charlotte. In contrast to Clotfelter's study, Godwin used Charlotte as a symbol of city that had succeeded peacefully with integration only to reverse them recently. Godwin's findings added support to Clotfelter's conclusions of the return of segregation in many public school systems throughout the South.

Many of the theories that were found in each of the articles reviewed and support each other. Many conclusions can be ascertained from the four studies that have been presented. The research studies show a disturbing upward trend in the rate of segregation returning back to public schools throughout the country. The trend indicates that more school systems are abandoning the traditional integration patterns, particularly those districts in the Southern states. The research does not indicate that this is a phenomenon only occurring in the South. It is seen through all four studies that the entire nation needs to construct a social

and cultural agenda that is receptive to producing an integrated society both in neighborhoods and in the public schools. Finally, research indicates that neighborhood segregation is a problem that is making the diversity issue in the schools even more difficult. Analyzed together, the studies present a basis of many factors that ask if we as a nation have achieved equality of educational opportunity for every child.

Conclusion

The literature reviews have given evidence that school districts are resegregating and that the trend is being seen throughout the nation. As a result of recent judicial rulings across the country the end of integration plans in public schools is likely to increase over the next few years. Fifty years after the landmark *Brown* decision outlawed *de jure segregation* in public schools, the country still struggles to implement integrated schools in both large cities and country towns. Despite the benefits that children have seen because of the *Brown* decision, policy changes around the country are starting to have the reverse impact in our school districts. There is concern about rise of segregation in school districts and children will be the ones to suffer if the trend continues over the next few years.

The analysis from these four papers provides us with several important conclusions. First, there is evidence from the studies that the rise in segregated schools is impacting the achievement gap between blacks and whites in a negative fashion. Furthermore, according to the studies, white flight is still occurring in large metropolitan areas where private schools are being seen as a more viable option each year. In addition, even where school choice is giving with the possibility of a home school, districts realize that this will mean segregated schools because of the populations in the neighborhoods. Research findings indicated that even in a small town like Parsons, there was still an achievement gap between races despite the attempt to integrate because of the negativity that still surround the city years after the *Brown* decision. Conclusive evidence shows in all four studies the rise of school segregation.

Finally, it can be concluded that segregation has harmed children, especially in the South where Jim Crow laws had a direct impact no school policy. Court decisions have allowed for parents to not have to think about race or ethnicity when it comes to public schools. The trend seems to be swinging more towards resegregation than integration. An important aspect of this issue is the equality of educational opportunity. Therefore, it is important for researchers to continue to monitor the extent of school segregation throughout the nation and the impact on children.

References

Bond, Horace. (1969). *Negro Education in Alabama: A Study in Cotton & Steel*. New York.

Bordieu, P. (1973). Cultural Reproduction and social reproduction. *R.K. Brown (Ed), Knowledge, education, and cultural change*, 71-112.

Brown v. Board of Education. 347, US 483, (1954).

Clotfelter, Charles. (2004). Private Schools, Segregation, and the Southern States. Peabody Journal of Education, 79 (2), 74-97.

Coleman, J.S. (1988). Social capital in the creation of human capital. *American Journal of Sociology*, 94 (Supplement), S95-S120.

Deforest, Jennifer (2008). The 1958 Harlem School Boycott: Parental Activism and the Struggle for Educational Equity in New York City. *Urban Review: Issues & Ideasin Public Education*, V40 n1, 22-41.

Farley, R., Richards, T. & Wurdock, C. (1980). School desegregation and white flight: An investigation of competing models and their discrepant findings. *Sociology ofEducation*, 53 (3), 123-139.

Fredrickson, George. (1981). *White Supremacy: A Comparative Study in America &South African History*. Oxford University Press.

Godwin, Kenneth. , Leland, Suzanne. , Baxter, Andrew. , Southworth, Stephanie. Sinking *Swann*: Public School Choice and the Resegregation of Charlotte's Public Schools. *Review of Policy Research*, Vol. 23, N #5.

Johanningmeier, EV. (2008). Equality of Educational Opportunity: Its Relation to Human Capital and its Measures. *American Educational History Journal*.

Lareau, A. & Horvat, E. M. (1999). Moments of social inclusion and exclusion: Race, class and cultural capital in family-school relationships. *Sociology of Education*, 72 (1), 37-53.

Lewis Mumford Center for Comparative Urban and Regional Research. (2001). *Census 2000 segregation data*, Returned February 25, 2004 from http:www.albany.edu/mumford/census/index.asp.

Massey, D. & Denton, N. (1993). *American Apartheid: Segregation and the making of the underclass.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Moore, James. (2004). 50 years after Brown: Segregation in the Miami-Dade County Public Schools. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 37: 289-301, 304.

Orfield, G. , Bachmier, M.D. , James, D. R. & Eitle, T. (1997). Deepening Segregation in American schools: A special report from Harvard project on school segregation. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 30 (2), 5-24.

Patterson, Jean. , Nikes, Rae. , Carlson, Cameron. , Kelley, William. (2007). The Consequences of School Desegregation in a Kansas Town 50 years after Brown. *Urban Revolution*, 40: 76-95.

Roberts v. City of Boston, 59 Mass, 198, 5 Cush. 198, (1850).

Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education, 402 U.S. 1, 91 S. Ct. 1267, 28 L. ed. 2d 554 (1971).