

# Segregation: Still a Current Issue for Urban Education Researchers and Students

## A Commentary

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The monumental ruling against state mandated segregation in the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* case supported the notion that segregated institutions denied Black students equal academic opportunities. Despite the ruling of this case as a step forward in the fight for equal rights of all people, educational gaps between Black and Latino students and White students in the U.S. still remain today. Even worse, research indicates that many schools districts have begun to re-segregate based on the residential location of minority families (Frankenberg, 2009).

Many low-income Black and Latino students attend urban schools with little funding, inexperienced teachers, and high poverty levels (Orfield, 2009). In addition these students face family disruptions, joblessness within their families, and high crime rates in their communities (Wilson, 1987). How is it that with so many years of civil rights activists fighting for equal opportunities, that there still exists such disparity between students and families from different ethnic and socio-economic

backgrounds? This second issue of the Urban Education Research and Policy Annuals highlights articles whose underlying theme is that of segregation and its consequences which affect many low-income Black and Latino students still today.

In the first article, "The Voluntary Interdistrict Desegregation Program in St. Louis and the Geography of Opportunity," Ain Grooms discusses the feasibility of this voluntary transfer program for families in urban communities who are unable to relocate to the suburbs in hopes of securing a better education for their children. Under the conceptual framework of the geography of opportunity, this study descriptively analyzes the fiscal resources in St. Louis in comparison to and also within the surrounding suburban districts. As indicated by this article, there is a continued need for research which addresses the gap between race and location and also cities and suburbs (Grooms, 2014).



In the second manuscript, “The Epic Battle to Fund St. Louis School Desegregation,” Hope Rias examines the St. Louis Voluntary Transfer Program and the conflicts that arose when lawyers and politicians fought to stop state funding of the program. This article offers a historical view of desegregation in St. Louis and the St. Louis Voluntary Transfer Program through its qualitative analysis of archived civil court documents and local news papers. Findings suggest that most court cases regarded funding of the desegregation program rather than the program itself (Rias, 2014).

In the third article, “Cultivating Diversity and Inclusion in Higher Education: The Role of Graduate School Preparation Programs,” Sosanya Jones investigates the contributions of graduate school preparation programs to the campus communities at large. This study focuses on the connection between the goals and contributions of graduate school preparation programs and those of the institution in which they belong. Through a qualitative analysis based on the interviews of graduate preparation program directors and staff, evidence was found which suggests that these programs are valued by faculty, staff, and non-program participants as well (Jones, 2014). Furthermore these programs aim to increase diversity and inclusion for the greater campus and have a great impact on the perceptions of diversity and inclusion among the institution’s faculty and staff (Jones, 2014).

Brian McGowan discusses the influence of race on perceptions of masculinity of Black males at a predominantly White institution in the fourth article, “Does Race Matter?: Perceptions of Masculinity among Black Males at a Predominantly White Institution.” This qualitative study analyzes interviews conducted with seventeen Black undergraduate males at a predominantly white institution. Emergent themes included definitions of masculinity, influence of race on conceptualization of masculinity, and evolving definitions of masculinity (McGowan, 2014). Findings indicated a need for higher learning institutions to provide means of support for Black males as they develop their identity during their college years.

In the last article “Forging Bonds and Crossing Borders with Youth Participatory Action Research,” Cherese Childers-McKee examines youth participatory action research as a means of building intercultural relations in urban schools. In regards to the tension between Latinos and Blacks in urban settings, can youth participatory action research empower students to build positive relations? Through an analysis of youth participatory action research studies, this article indicates that youth participatory action research may promote intercultural relations, help to address deficit ideology, and empower students (Childers-McKee, 2014).



This collection of articles highlights the importance and need for continued urban education research which addresses the issues of segregation and desegregation and their subsequent issues and consequences such as opportunity gaps based on race and location, issues of diversity and inclusion in higher education, and the identity development of minority students in predominantly white institutions. While these issues are just a few among a vast amount of topics in urban education research, it is evidenced in these articles and their implications that these are very current and relevant issues which are deserving of additional research.

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