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Race in American Public Schools: Rapidly Resegregating School Districts

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RACE IN AMERICAN PUBLIC SCHOOLS: RAPIDLY RESEGREGATING SCHOOL DISTRICTS

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INTRODUCTION

In 1954, the U.S. Supreme Court handed down the historic *Brown v. Board of Education* decision outlawing state-mandated separate schools for black and white students.[1] Since that decision, hundreds of American school districts, if not more, have attempted to implement desegregation plans. In the early years of desegregation most of these plans focused on the South and resulted in the most integrated schools being located in the South by the early 1970s.[2] From the late 1960s on, some districts in all parts of the country began implementing such plans although the courts made it much more difficult to win desegregation orders outside the South and the 1974 Supreme Court decision against city-suburban desegregation made real desegregation impossible in a growing number of overwhelming minority central cities.[3] We are now almost 50 years from the initial Supreme Court ruling banning segregation and more than a decade into a period in which the U.S. Supreme Court has authorized termination of desegregation orders. These plans are being dissolved by court orders even in some communities that want to maintain them;[4] in addition, some federal courts are forbidding even voluntary desegregation plans.[5] Given this context, it is crucial to continue to mark the progress of these policies and examine how their presence or absence affects the schooling experience for all students.

Nationally, segregation for blacks has declined substantially since the pre-*Brown* era and reached its lowest point in the late 1980s. For Latinos, the story has been one of steadily rising segregation since the 1960s and no significant desegregation efforts outside of a handful of large districts. These changes in segregation patterns are happening in the context of an increasingly diverse public school enrollment. In particular, the 2000 Census shows an extraordinary growth of Latino population in the past decade.[6] This change in overall population is reflected in the school population as well. High birth rates, low levels of private school enrollment and increased immigration of Latinos have resulted in a rise of Latino public school enrollment, which is now more than 7 million. Nationwide, the Latino share of public school enrollment has almost tripled since 1968, compared to an increase of just 30% in black enrollment and a decrease of 17% in white enrollment during the same time period. A smaller percent of students attend private schools than a half-century ago and white private school enrollment is lowest in the South and West where whites are in school with higher proportions of minority students.[7] Yet, little attention has been

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1 *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*, 347 U.S. 483 (1954). In this decision, the Court declared that separate but equal in public education was "inherently" unequal, and that segregated schools for black and white student must be eliminated.

2 Gary Orfield, *Schools More Separate: Consequences of a Decade of Resegregation,* (Cambridge, MA: The Civil Rights Project, Harvard University, July 2001).

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

4 For example, see *Belk v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education*, 269 F.3d 305 (4th Cir. 2001), *cert. denied*, 122 S.Ct. 1538 (2002), *People Who Care v. Rockford Board of Education School District No. 205,* 246 F.3d 1073 (7th Cir. 2001); *Berry v. School District of the City of Benton Harbor,* 195 F.Supp.2d 971 (W.D. Mich. 2002).

5 *Tuttle v. Arlington County School Board*, 195 F.3d 698 (4th Cir. 1999), *cert. dismissed*, 529 U.S. 1050 (2000), *Eisenberg v. Montgomery County Public Schools*, 197 F.3d 123 (4th Cir. 1999), *cert. denied*, 529 U.S. 1019 (1999), *Wessman v. Gittens*, 160 F.3d 790 (1st Cir. 1998).

6 Elizabeth M. Grieco and Rachel C. Cassidy, "Overview of Race and Hispanic Origin," Census 2000 Brief, U.S. Bureau of the Census, March 2001.

7 Sean F. Reardon and John T. Yun, *Private School Racial Enrollments and Segregation,* (Cambridge, MA: The Civil Rights Project, Harvard University, June 2002).

paid to the results of these two trends – rising segregation and increasing diversity – on the racial composition of our public schools.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This brief report, which disaggregates school racial composition at the district level in order to more deeply explore the patterns of segregation as they affect our nation's youth, is the first of several reports. Specifically, this study examines segregation trends in large school districts across the country and addresses the following key questions:

- Are metropolitan countywide districts, which had shown considerable integration through the mid-1980s,[8] still integrated?
- To what extent are children in central city school districts segregated from children of other races?
- Are there effects of the dramatic increase in minority enrollment in large suburban systems?

This report is the first of several reports, which will also include an examination of charter and magnet schools and a new national study of segregation trends.

Patterns of segregation by race are strongly linked to segregation by poverty,[9] and poverty concentrations are strongly linked to unequal opportunities and outcomes.[10] Since public schools are the institution intended to create a common preparation for citizens in an increasingly multiracial society, this inequality can have serious consequences. Given that the largest school districts in this country (enrollment greater than 25,000) service one-third of all school-aged children, it is important to understand at a district level the ways in which school segregation, race, and poverty are intersecting and how they impact these students' lives. In our analysis we focus on two important components, race and segregation.

DATA AND METHODS

We analyze enrollment data collected by the U.S. Department of Education in the NCES Common Core of Data from the school year 2000-01, examining the 239 school districts with total enrollment greater than 25,000.[11]

Using exposure indices, we calculate the racial isolation of both black and Latino students from white students; that is, we calculate the percent of white students in school of typical black and Latino students.[12] We also investigate the racial isolation of white students to determine whether

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8 Gary Orfield and Frank Monfort, *Racial Change and Desegregation in Large School Districts: Trends through the 1986-87 School Year*, (Alexandria: National School Boards Association, 1988).

9 Orfield, *Schools More Separate*

10 For example, dropout rates have been shown to be highest in segregated high-poverty high schools. See Robert Balfanz and Nettie Legters, "How Many Central City High Schools Have a Severe Dropout Problem, Where Are They Located, and Who Attends Them?" paper presented at Dropouts in America conference, Harvard University, January 13, 2001.

11 Due to the fact that enrollment data disaggregated by race was not available for the Tennessee districts on CCD, we used the data as reported by the Tennessee Department of Education.

12 Exposure index is a measure of the proportion of a particular racial group in the school of the average student of another group (Massey and Denton 1988; Orfield, Bachmeier, James, and Eitle 1997; Orfield, Glass, Reardon, and

their schooling experience is becoming more integrated as the minority share of the public school enrollment continues to increase. To do so, we calculate the percentage of black students and the percentage of Latino students in school of the average white student. We use this measure because it reports the actual racial composition of the school, and desegregated schools have been shown to have educational and diversity benefits for their students.[13] This measure is not a measure of discrimination or of the feasibility of desegregation in a given district—just of the actual level of interracial exposure that existed in 2000-2001.

Additionally, this study looks specifically at districts that have, at various times, been under court-mandated desegregation plans. We examine districts in each of several categories pertaining to designs of desegregation plans: busing within city, magnet plans, city-suburban desegregation, no plan, court rejected city-suburban, and partial or complete unitary status declared by mid-1980s. We compare exposure of black students to white students, since most desegregation plans were primarily concerned with the segregation of blacks from whites. We compute the 2000 exposure indices for these districts to identify any trends among districts, based on the type of desegregation the district did (or did not) have, as well as to compare the 1988 and 2000 exposure indices.

FINDINGS

The racial trend in the school districts studied is substantial and clear: *virtually all* school districts analyzed are showing lower levels of inter-racial exposure since 1986, suggesting a trend towards resegregation, and in some districts, these declines are sharp. As courts across the country end long-running desegregation plans and, in some states, have forbidden the use of any racially-conscious student assignment plans, the last 10-15 years have seen a steady unraveling of almost 25 years worth of increased integration. From the early 1970s to the late 1980s, districts in the South had the highest levels of black-white desegregation in the nation; from 1986-2000, however, some of the most rapidly resegregating districts for black students' exposure to whites are in the South. Some of these districts maintained a very high level of integration for a quarter century or more until the desegregation policies were reversed.

Other findings include:

- Many of the districts experiencing the largest changes in black-white exposure are also having similar changes in Latino exposure to whites.
- Districts that show the least resegregation in black-white exposure are mostly in the South, likely due to lingering effects of desegregation plans in districts where the plans have been dissolved and the continuing impacts of plans still in place.
- The lowest levels of black-white exposure are in districts with either no desegregation plan or where the courts rejected a city-suburban plan. The highest exposure rates are in districts with city-suburban plans, even though all of these districts have since been declared unitary and show a trend toward resegregating.
- Despite an increasingly racially diverse public school enrollment, white students in over one-third of the districts analyzed became more segregated from black and/or Latino students.

Schley 1993; Reardon and Yun 2002). For example, a black-white exposure index of 23% indicates that there are 23% white students in the school of the average black student. If a district is perfectly integrated, the exposure index is a summary measure: it describes the average exposure of one group to another among all schools in a given district.

13 Robert L. Crain and Rita E. Mahard, "The Effect of Research Methodology on Desegregation-Achievement Studies: A Meta-Analysis," *American Journal of Sociology* 88, No. 5. (March 1983): 839-854.

As attention to civil rights issues is waning, it is even more important to document the segregation in our public schools in order to inform educational policy discussions on racial segregation and its related effects on public school children, particularly when these students attending racially isolated and unequal schools will be punished for not achieving at high levels.

We find that since 1986, in almost every district examined, black and Latino students have become more racially segregated from whites in their schools. The literature suggests that minority schools are highly correlated with high-poverty schools and these schools are also associated with low parental involvement, lack of resources, less experienced and credentialed teachers, and higher teacher turnover—all of which combine to exacerbate educational inequality for minority students.[14] Desegregation puts minority students in schools with better opportunities and higher achieving peer groups.[15]

14 Orfield, *Schools More Separate;* Janet Ward Schofield. "Review of Research on School Desegregation's Impact on Elementary and Secondary School Students," in *Handbook of Research on Multicultural Education,* ed. James Banks and Cherry McGee Banks (New York: Simon & Schuster MacMillan, 1995), pp. 597-617; Gary Orfield, Susan Eaton, and the Harvard Project on School Desegregation, eds., *Dismantling Desegregation: The Quiet Reversal of Brown v. Board of Education* (New York: New Press, 1996).

15 Amy Stuart Wells and Robert L. Crain, "Perpetuation Theory and the Long-Term Effects of School Desegregation," *Review of Educational Research, 64* (1994), 531-555; Orfield et al., *Dismantling Desegregation.*

PART ONE
DISTRICT RESEGREGATION

The most clear and consistent trend in these data is a resegregation for blacks and Latinos in almost every school district with enrollment larger than 25,000. Out of 185 districts in our sample of public school districts from 1986-2000, in only four districts black exposure to whites increased, and in only three districts Latino exposure to whites increased. In some districts over the fourteen year period, the decline in exposure to whites for the typical black and Latino student was very large; in particular, Clayton County, Georgia had the highest change in exposure rates for both black and Latino students, a decline of 45% and 58% white students in schools of the typical black and Latino students, respectively, in this district. White students also show more isolation from black and Latino students, despite the growth of black and Latino public school enrollments since 1986. Both black and Latino exposure to whites increased in only one district, Glendale, California. Most of the districts that show the most stable trends in black-white exposure are primarily in the South, likely due to lingering effects of desegregation plans in these districts.

Rapidly Resegregating Districts

Many of the same districts with the highest rates of black-white resegregation are the districts in which Latinos are also experiencing the highest declines in exposure to white students. A decline in the exposure of blacks and Latinos to whites is indicative of schools that are becoming more racially isolated as seen in Tables 1 and 2. Tables 1 and 2 show the twenty districts in which the white percentage of students in schools of the typical black and Latino students has declined the most from 1986-2000. For example, in Clayton County, Georgia, the average Latino in 1986 attended a school that was over 80% white. Today, the typical Latino student in this district attends a school that is only 22% white, or a decline of over 58% white in the school in only fourteen years. The percent of white students in schools of the average black student have declined by over 25 percentage points in the most rapidly resegregating districts.

The most rapid resegregation in terms of black exposure to whites is occurring in some Southern districts. Some Southern suburban districts also are declining sharply in the exposure of black and Latinos to whites; for example, three of the districts with the most change since 1986 are suburban Atlanta districts. (One of the Supreme Court decisions, *Freeman v. Pitts (1992)*[16] concerned DeKalb County, an Atlanta district, where in the last thirty years the black-white exposure rate has declined substantially.) Many of the same districts are also resegregating with respect to Latino exposure to whites, although more are found in the West. Minneapolis is a notable exception in that it is the only non-Southern or Western district that is rapidly resegregating, and both black and Latino exposure to whites have declined sharply since 1986. The Minneapolis Public Schools ended their desegregation plan during the mid-1990s and returned to community schools which may be partially responsible for the trend toward resegregation in Minneapolis since community schools tend to reflect the segregation that exists in housing throughout metropolitan areas.

16 *Freeman v. Pitts* 503 U.S. 467 (1992). In this case, one of three school desegregation cases in the 1990s, the Supreme Court granted partial unitary status to school districts even if they had not met all the *Green* factors.

Table 1—Most Rapidly Resegregating Districts, Black Exposure to Whites, 1986-2000

Districts	Change
Clayton Co., GA	-45.0
Alief, TX	-42.4
Gwinnett Co., GA	-41.7
Cobb Co., GA	-40.5
Irving, TX	-39.0
Arlington, TX	-34.3
Minneapolis, MN	-33.2
Aldine, TX	-33.2
Klein, TX	-31.8
Fremont, CA	-31.0
Anaheim, CA	-30.9
Richardson, TX	-30.8
Mesquite, TX	-29.4
Adams-Arapahoe, CO	-28.7
Prince William Co., VA	-28.6
Mt. Diablo, CA	-27.9
Baltimore Co., MD	-26.8
Garden Grove, CA	-26.2
Pasadena, TX	-26.1
Clark Co., NV	-24.7

Table 2—Most Rapidly Segregating Districts, Latino Exposure to Whites, 1986-2000[17]

Districts	Change
Clayton Co., GA	-58.7
Gwinnett Co., GA	-48.3
Cobb Co., GA	-45.7
Alief, TX	-43.6
Adams-Arapahoe, CO	-40.9
Arlington, TX	-40.2
DeKalb Co., GA	-39.9
Irving, TX	-39.9
Birmingham, AL	-39.5
Anaheim, CA	-33.1
Richardson, TX	-33.0
Minneapolis, MN	-32.2
Prince William Co., VA	-31.4
Mesquite, TX	-31.0
Orange, CA	-30.8
Mt. Diablo, CA	-30.7
Fremont, CA	-30.7
Pasadena, TX	-30.5
Klein, TX	-29.3
Aldine, TX	-29.2

17 Table 2 shows segregation—as opposed to the resegregation in table 1—because Latino students have never experienced significant integration with white students, and have instead become steadily more segregated since the late 1960s.

Despite the growing proportion of minorities in total public school enrollment from 1986-2000, in 53 of the 185 districts whites are actually becoming more isolated from blacks. Table 3 lists the twenty districts in which white exposure to black students has declined the most. Many of the districts in Table 3 are central city districts, indicating that though there may be a small percentage of white students in the district, they are concentrated in a few schools. However, the changes in white students' exposure to blacks and Latinos in Tables 3 and 4 are much smaller than black and Latino students' exposure to whites in Tables 1 and 2.

In contrast to Table 3, white students became more segregated from Latinos in only two districts listed in Table 4. However, in another 22 districts there was relatively no change in exposure of whites to Latinos since 1986. Given the rapidly growing Latino student population, one would expect white exposure to Latinos to increase; these trends are another indication of the isolation of white students.

Table 3— Districts with Largest Declines in White Exposure to Blacks, 1986-2000

Districts	Change
Cleveland, OH	-29.2
Compton, CA	-24.3
Atlanta, GA	-14.7
Detroit, MI	-12.0
Pomona, CA	-9.2
Forsyth Co., NC	-7.9
Chicago, IL	-7.7
San Francisco, CA	-7.5
Seattle, WA	-7.0
Austin, TX	-6.3
Houston, TX	-5.8
Little Rock, AR	-4.9
Dallas, TX	-4.7
Richmond, VA	-4.7
Oklahoma City, OK	-4.5
Denver, CO	-4.0
Boston, MA	-3.5
San Diego, CA	-3.4
Milwaukee, WI	-3.3
Sarasota Co., FL	-3.2

Table 4—Districts with Largest Declines in White Exposure to Latinos, 1986-2000

Districts	Change
Orleans Parish, LA (New Orleans)	-3.0
United, TX (Laredo)	-2.8
Fort Bend, TX	0
Kanawha Co., WV	0.1
Jackson, MS	0.2
Utica, MI	0.3
Calcasieu Parish, LA	0.4
Cincinnati, OH	0.4
Carroll Co., MD	0.5
East Baton Rouge Parish, LA	0.5
Mobile Co., AL	0.5
Anoka-Hennepin, MN	0.6
Bay Co., FL	0.6
Caddo Parish, LA	0.6
Lafayette Parish, LA	0.6
Saint Tammany Parish, LA	0.6
Jefferson Co., AL	0.7
Richmond Co., GA	0.7
Montgomery Co., AL	0.8
Birmingham, AL	0.8

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Districts with Stable Racial Exposure (Least Rapid Resegregation)[18]
Despite the overwhelming trend toward district resegregation, there are some districts in which the exposure of blacks and Latinos to whites has remained relatively stable since 1986. Glendale, California, for example, had a black-white exposure rate of 52.9 in 1986 and 54.4 in 2000. Thus, the average black student attends school in Glendale with a higher percentage of white students in 2000 than the typical black student in 1986. Tables 5 and 6 show the twenty districts in which black and Latino exposure to whites has fallen the least (and in some districts, exposure to whites has actually increased).

As seen in Tables 5 and 6, in only four out of 185 districts, black exposure to whites increased since 1986. Latino exposure to whites has increased in three districts. Sixteen districts have less than a two-percentage point decline in black-white exposure as compared to only four districts for Latino students. This indicates that Latino students, on average, are facing more rapid resegregation even in the districts with the smallest changes in racial exposure.

Districts that show the least black-white resegregation are primarily in the South. The South is also segregating less rapidly for Latino students: half of the districts with the smallest declines in exposure for Latinos to whites are also located in the South. This might be because there are fewer Latino students in the South, and therefore, they are more easily integrated with white students. It is interesting to note that none of the districts with the least resegregation for both blacks and Latinos are in the North.[19]

18 Districts with the least segregation have an exposure index of at least 20% in 2000 to eliminate districts that might show little resegregation because they were already highly segregated by 1986.

19 This could be because districts in the Northern metro areas tend to contain a much smaller share of the entire metropolitan area population. In addition, the cities in the Northeast and Midwest tend to have the highest residential segregation. This resulted in very little school desegregation in the North.

Table 5—Districts with the Least Resegregation, Black Exposure to Whites, 1986-2000

Districts	Change
Berkeley Co., SC	6.0
Fort Wayne, IN	4.0
Horry Co., SC	2.0
Glendale, CA	1.5
Corpus Christi, TX	-0.5
Little Rock, AR	-1.2
Saint Tammany Parish, LA	-1.5
Davis Co., UT	-1.5
Pasco Co., FL	-1.6
Utica, MI	-1.8
Polk Co., FL	-1.9
Carroll Co., MD	-1.9
Spokane, WA	-2.4
Jefferson Co., AL	-2.4
Calcasieu Parish, LA	-2.9
Lafayette Parish, LA	-3.8
Fort Bend, TX	-4.3
Marion Co., FL	-4.5
Brevard Co., FL	-4.8
Fayette Co., KY	-5.0

Table 6—Districts with the Least Resegregation, Latino Exposure to Whites, 1986-2000

Districts	Change
Cleveland, OH	9.1
Glendale, CA	6.5
Alachua Co., FL	0.7
Bay Co., FL	-1.6
Carroll Co., MD	-2.6
Saint Tammany Parish, LA	-3.2
Spokane, WA	-3.9
Kanawha Co., WV	-4.8
Pasco Co., FL	-4.8
Utica, MI	-5.1
Davis Co., UT	-5.1
Lafayette Parish, LA	-5.7
Harford Co., MD	-5.8
Anoka-Hennepin, MN	-6.1
Boise, ID	-6.6
Muscogee Co., GA	-6.7
Pinellas Co., FL	-6.7
Shelby Co., TN	-6.9
Little Rock, AR	-7.4
Northside ISD, TX	-7.7

The South led the nation in court-ordered desegregation plans through the mid-1980s and, as a result, has been the region of the country with the most integrated schools since the 1970s. Although some of the districts where black-white exposure is decreasing most rapidly are in the South, most of the districts that have seen greater black exposure to white students from 1986-2000 are also in the South. In addition, fifteen of the twenty districts with the largest increases of white exposure to blacks are in the South or Border regions (Table 7). One possible explanation is that although some districts are resegregating due to the dismissal of desegregation orders, the increasing migration of blacks to the South is contributing to the increased exposure of white students to blacks.

Although there are a few districts in Table 7 indicating large increases in the percent of black students in the school of the average white by 2000, more districts had significant increases in white exposure to Latinos. In seventeen districts, the exposure of whites to blacks increased by over ten percentage points; by contrast, forty-eight districts had similar gains in the exposure of whites to Latino students (the largest 20 are in Table 8). The percent of Latino students in the school of the average white increased most in districts that were primarily in the West and in Texas, the areas of the country where Latino enrollment is greatest. White exposure to both black and Latino students grew substantially in only two districts, Alief and Aldine, both of which are Houston suburban districts. Otherwise, there is little overlap between districts in tables 7 and 8, districts in which whites became increasingly integrated with either blacks or Latinos.

Table 7—Districts with Largest Increases of White Exposure to Blacks, 1986-2000

Districts	Change
Clayton Co., GA	45.6
Jackson, MS	37.2
Birmingham, AL	24.0
Alief, TX	20.8
DeKalb Co., GA	20.0
Prince George's Co., MD	13.5
Rockford, IL	12.9
Prince William Co., VA	11.6
St. Louis, MO	11.4
Killeen, TX	11.3
Newport News, VA	11.0
Berkeley Co., SC	10.8
Virginia Beach, VA	10.3
Richmond Co., GA	10.2
Montgomery Co., AL	9.9
Aldine, TX	9.9
Rochester, NY	9.5
Minneapolis, MN	8.6
Tulsa, OK	8.3
Nashville, TN	7.8

Table 8— Districts with Largest Increases of White Exposure to Latinos, 1986-2000

Districts	Change
Irving, TX	29.6
Compton, CA	25.2
Pasadena, TX	25.2
Aldine, TX	24.9
Ysleta, TX	22.8
Bakersfield, CA	21.5
Dallas, TX	21.2
Miami-Dade, FL	20.6
Alief, TX	20.5
San Bernardino, CA	20.2
Anaheim, CA	19.9
Springfield, MA	19.0
Garland, TX	18.7
Adams-Arapahoe, CO	18.0
Salt Lake City, UT	17.1
Detroit, MI	16.3
Riverside, CA	16.2
Ector Co., TX	16.1
Oklahoma City, OK	15.7
Orange Co., FL	15.6

Districts with Various Types of Desegregation Plans
Since the Supreme Court issued *Brown II* in 1955 giving district courts discretion to craft desegregation plans unique to each school system, school districts have used a variety of plans to desegregate schools. Some districts tried to encourage voluntary desegregation by creating magnet schools in inner-city areas, while many others, including the vast majority of southern districts, had mandatory desegregation that included busing in urban districts. Some mandatory desegregation plans applied only to the city, and other plans included city-suburban remedies where the city and the suburbs were in a single district. The lowest exposure rates of blacks to whites are in districts with either no plan or where the courts rejected a city-suburban plan. With falling white enrollment in most central city districts, plans that are limited to only desegregating within the city will never have the opportunity to produce any significant desegregation because of the small percentage of white students in these districts.

Although desegregation plans were often faulted for creating white flight, the results in Table 9 show that this was not true of all types of desegregation plans. In fact, the districts in Table 9 with *any* form of desegregation at one point have higher exposure rates than those with no plan or where city-suburban plans were rejected. Black students in districts with no plan or where city-suburban desegregation was rejected are highly segregated from white students. Thus, the effects of having no desegregation plan resulted in lower exposure for blacks to whites than any white flight that might have resulted from desegregation plans. Certain forms of desegregation efforts such as magnet schools[20] and busing (within a city) have had a somewhat muted positive impact on desegregation levels. The highest exposure of blacks to whites—both in 1988 and 2000—are in districts with city-suburban plans. Black students in these districts attend schools that are at least one-quarter white (and over 40% white in two of the districts).

The Supreme Court desegregation decisions of the 1990s lessened the burden that school systems were required to meet to prove that they had fully desegregated. As a result, the districts in Table 9 have all been released from desegregation requirements, and not surprisingly, all show decreasing levels of black-white exposure. Even though all of the districts in this table have since been declared unitary,[21] the integration levels for districts that had city-suburban plans still remain at least three times greater than those districts that had no desegregation plan, or where the court rejected city-suburban plans. Of all districts in Table 9 that were once under a city-suburban desegregation plan, Broward County has the lowest black-white exposure index (23.7). This is more than three times greater than DeKalb County's black-white exposure rate (7.4), which is the highest black-white exposure index for districts with no plan or where city-suburban plans were rejected. This trend is at odds with court rulings which have not only consistently limited desegregation requirements, but also with the Court's 1974 decision that effectively ended plans which sought to incorporate white suburban districts into desegregation remedies for largely minority central city districts.[22] As we think about possible solutions to reverse the resegregation

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20 Magnet schools are a form of public school choice which has gained increasing popularity as a desegregation remedy but has recently been struck down by the courts for using race-conscious admissions in order to meet their goals.
21 According to Orfield and Eaton (1996), "Unitary might best be understood as the opposite of a 'dual' system, in which a school district, in essence, operates two separate systems, one black and one white. A unitary district is assumed to be one that has repaired the damage caused by generations of segregation and overt discrimination." (p.3)
22 *Milliken v. Bradley,* 418 U.S. 717 (1974)

of the last fifteen years, particularly with predominantly minority central city school districts, the obvious and long-lasting impact of city-suburban plans might be worth replicating.

Table 9--Exposure of Blacks to Whites in Districts with Various Desegregation Plans[23]

District	1988	2000
	Busing within city	
Columbus, OH	47.9	26
Cleveland, OH	21.7	9.7
Minneapolis, MN	51.8	20.9
Denver, CO	34.9	19.4
Boston, MA	20.4	11.2
	All/Part Plan Dismissed	
Los Angeles, CA	11	8
Dallas, TX	11.3	5.1
Norfolk, VA	31.6	24
Oklahoma City, OK	33.7	20.6
Austin, TX	32.3	19.3
Washington, D.C.	1.5	2.1
	Magnet Plans	
Kansas City, KS	19.6	10.4
Milwaukee, WI	29.9	13.1
Cincinnati, OH	29.1	16.7
Philadelphia, PA	11.6	8.7
Chicago, IL	4.8	3
	Busing, Magnet, Voluntary Suburban	
St. Louis, MO	14.8	13.2
	No Plan	
New York, NY	9.8	6.6
Atlanta, GA	3.9	3
Baltimore, MD	9.4	5.9
DeKalb County, GA	23.4	7.4
	City-Suburban	
Indianapolis, IN	46.7	27.2
Broward County, FL	36.1	23.7
Hillsborough County, FL	58.5	39.5
Clark County, FL	64.4	40.2
Nashville, TN	52.3	41.1
Duval County, FL	44.1	36
	Court Rejected City-Suburban	
Detroit, MI	6.0	2.1
Houston, TX	10.1	6.3
Richmond, VA	9.5	5.5

23 All classification of desegregation plans are by what type of plan they had in 1988. Many of these districts are no longer operating under any desegregation plan.

PART TWO
SCHOOL DISTRICT SEGREGATION INDICES BY RACE, 2000-01

White Isolation[24]

The South has the distinction of having both districts in which white students are both the most isolated from black students as well as districts where white students are the most integrated with blacks. Tables 10 and 11 show the districts in which white students are the most segregated from black and Latino students. For example, the typical white student in Fairfax County, Virginia, the nation's richest county and one of the largest suburban school districts, attended a school with 8.9% black students and 9.9% Latino students in 2000.

In the twenty most segregated large districts, the average white exposure to blacks is about 12%. This means that the average white student in these districts attends schools with less than 12% blacks, indicating highly segregated schools for white students. Five of these districts are among the 40 largest school districts. Exactly half of these districts are found in the South and except for two districts, all of them are located in either Texas or Florida. Eight of the ten districts in which whites are most isolated from blacks are in the South. In these ten districts, white students attend school with less than 10% blacks, a level that is generally considered to be extremely segregated.[25]

The exposure rates for whites to Latinos in the twenty most segregated large districts are comparable to those of blacks. Half of the ten most segregated districts for whites from Latinos are in the West, the area of the country with the most Latino students. In the South, whites are rather highly segregated from Latinos as well as from blacks. In eleven school districts, the typical white student attends school with less than 10% Latinos.

Although the districts in Tables 10 and 11 have low rates of white exposure to blacks and Latinos, this is due in part to the low percentages of blacks and Latinos of the total school enrollment, respectively, in these districts. There is less than 17% of the focus population (that is, blacks in Table 10 and Latinos in Table 11) enrolled in every district. For example, in Table 10 the black share in the district is very similar in most districts to the exposure rate of white students to blacks, indicating that the black students are fairly well distributed throughout the schools. Whites have low exposure to blacks in these districts (and to Latinos in the districts in Table 11) because there are low percentages of blacks (and Latinos) in the entire district.

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[24] In this section of the report, all districts listed in tables (and unless otherwise stated discussed in the text) have at least 10% of the focus population to be included. For example, in Table 10, all districts have at least 10% black.

[25] Orfield, *Schools More Separate*

Table 10— Districts with Lowest White Exposure to Blacks in 2000
(Lowest % black in school of avg. white)

District	% Black	Expo W/B
Klein, TX	12.7	7.7
Collier Co., FL	11.6	7.8
Amarillo, TX	10.7	8.3
Lubbock, TX	14.9	8.6
Kanawha Co., WV	10.8	8.6
Fairfax Co., VA	10.7	8.9
Austin, TX	15.7	9.0
Cypress-Fairbanks, TX	10.0	9.2
Knox Co., TN	13.3	9.2
Riverside, CA	10.2	9.8
Los Angeles, CA	12.8	10.4
San Antonio, TX	10.0	10.4
Fresno, CA	11.6	10.7
Worcester, MA	10.8	10.8
Portland, OR	16.8	11.1
Clark Co., NV	13.9	11.2
Harford Co., MD	14.0	11.2
San Francisco, CA	15.7	11.4
San Diego, CA	16.2	11.5
Okaloosa Co., FL	12.6	11.7

Table 11— Districts with Lowest White Exposure to Latinos in 2000
(Lowest % Latino in school of avg. white)

District	% Latino	Expo W/L
Gwinnett Co., GA	10.4	7.0
Plano ISD, TX	10.0	8.4
Boulder Valley, CO	11.4	8.8
Prince William Co., VA	10.4	9.0
Seattle, WA	10.4	9.3
San Juan, CA	10.3	9.4
Beaverton, OR	10.2	9.4
Deer Valley, AZ	10.1	9.7
Buffalo, NY	11.3	9.7
St. Lucie Co., FL	10.5	9.8
Fairfax Co., VA	12.9	9.9
Lewisville, TX	12.3	10.0
Jefferson Co., CO	12.1	10.5
Paradise Valley, AZ	13.1	10.5
Polk Co., FL	11.9	10.5
Gilbert, AZ	11.8	11.5
Omaha, NE	12.8	11.7
Manatee Co., FL	14.6	11.8
Philadelphia, PA	13.1	12.0
Montgomery Co., MD	16.2	12.1

In only eleven districts listed in Table 12 did the average white student attend a predominantly black school. (To illustrate how isolated white students are, by contrast there were more than sixty districts in which blacks attended predominantly white schools.) Many of these districts tend to have small white enrollments. Ten of these districts are either in the South or Border regions. Most of the districts where whites had the highest exposure to Latinos were in California and Texas, although there were also a few northern districts with high exposure of whites to Latinos. In ten districts, the average white student attended schools that were predominantly Latino. In two California districts, the average white student attended schools that were almost three-quarters Latino.

The districts in which whites have the lowest exposure to either black or Latino students are often districts that have a small white share of the total enrollment, and, therefore, are too small to be segregated from other racial groups. Six of the districts in Table 12 and nine in Table 13 have less than ten percent white in the school systems; most of these were central city districts like Jackson, Mississippi or Brownsville, Texas. Thus, while white students in these districts have high exposure to blacks and Latinos this is due to the low percentage of white students in the district, and as a result, these districts remain highly segregated for blacks and Latinos. However, white isolation is high in these districts[26] causing blacks and Latinos to attend schools that are disproportionately nonwhite.

An example of this is Birmingham, Alabama. Although white students in Birmingham have one of the highest levels of exposure to blacks as seen in Table 12, this is primarily due to the small white proportion of total enrollment. While less than 3% of the entire system enrollment is white, the typical white student attends a school that is almost one-quarter white. By contrast, these schools are heavily segregated for blacks; there are only 2.1% whites in the school of the average black student in Birmingham.

26 White isolation can be measured by the white-white exposure. Many of the districts in Tables 12 and 13 have white-white exposure rates that are much higher than the district white percentage, indicating that white students in these districts are concentrated in a few schools.

Table 12—Districts with Highest White Exposure to Blacks in 2000
(Highest % black in school of avg. white)

District	% White	Expo W/B	Expo W/W
Jackson, MS	5.6	81.3	17.6
Birmingham, AL	2.8	72.1	24.6
Richmond, VA	7.1	70.1	27.0
St. Louis, MO	16.8	63.1	32.8
Prince George's Co., MD	11.4	61.7	28.0
Little Rock, AR	27.3	58.8	36.9
Clayton Co., GA	23.1	58.6	31.5
Norfolk, VA	28.4	56.6	38.0
Orleans Parish, LA	3.9	55.8	35.3
Rochester, NY	16.1	54.3	24.8
Chatham Co., GA	31.4	52.6	43.1
Detroit, MI	3.7	52.6	23.4
Montgomery Co., AL	24.8	52.2	44.7
Richland, SC	19.6	52.2	44.6
Memphis, TN	12.3	51.5	42.6
Richmond Co., GA	27.9	50.4	46.4
Durham, NC	32.7	49.3	42.8
Newport News, VA	37.8	48.7	43.6
Buffalo City, NY	28.5	48.6	38.6
Baltimore City, MD	10.8	48.1	47.4

Table 13—Districts with Highest White Exposure to Latinos in 2000
(Highest % Latino in school of avg. white)

District	% White	Expo W/L	Expo W/W
Brownsville, TX	2.2	95.1	4.1
United ISD, TX (Laredo)	3.0	93.2	5.4
Montebello, CA	3.1	88.0	4.6
Socorro, TX	6.9	87.9	9.7
San Antonio, TX	4.2	81.5	7.8
Ysleta, TX	8.6	80.1	14.8
Ontario-Montclair, CA	12.1	73.4	16.0
Fontana, CA	13.9	71.9	15.5
Santa Ana, CA	3.6	67.8	21.1
El Paso, TX	15.2	64.6	26.4
Compton, CA	0.2	62.6	0.4
Sweetwater, CA	16.0	58.1	23.3
Corpus Christi, TX	22.1	58.0	34.5
Bakersfield, CA	19.8	56.3	26.7
Rialto, CA	12.7	55.4	14.7
Miami-Dade Co., FL	11.3	53.9	25.3
Pasadena, TX	26.8	52.8	36.7
Pomona, TX	8.6	51.5	20.7
Ector Co., TX	38.7	50.6	42.8
San Bernadino, CA	20.3	49.8	24.9

Black Isolation

Black isolation is highest in central city school districts due to the low proportion of white students in these districts' total enrollment. In these districts, often found in some of the nation's leading economic and political centers, black exposure to whites is severely low—with the average black student only attending schools with a tiny percentage of white students. Of all 239 districts, in the fifteen districts with the lowest black-white exposure, the average black student attends schools that are less than 5 percent white.

In districts with at least 10 percent white students, black isolation is still high. The twenty districts with the lowest black exposure to white students are equally spread throughout every region of the country. All of the districts in Table 14 have low percentages of white students (under 20%) so it is not entirely surprising that black students in these districts would have few white students in their schools. However, in these same districts white students are concentrated in a few schools as evidenced by white-white exposure indices in these districts that are much higher than the overall white percent in the districts, indicating a clustering of whites in a few schools. For example, in Baltimore City, the average white attends a school that is almost half white, yet white students comprise just over 10 percent of the entire student enrollment. Blacks in districts similar to Baltimore have low exposure to whites because whites are isolated despite making up only a tiny percentage of the total enrollment.

Blacks have the highest exposure to whites in western districts that are predominantly white and suburban. This is likely due to the rather small proportion of black students in these districts (and conversely, a large percentage of white students). The black-white exposure in most districts in Table 15 is close to the white-white exposure rates for these same districts, indicating that black students are evenly distributed across these districts.

Again this is an argument for city-suburban desegregation plans, since exposure between the races cannot happen in districts lacking those racial groups. Suburban districts that are predominantly white need exposure to black and Latino students, and conversely, central city districts that are predominantly minority need exposure to white students. Further, it is obvious from examining the districts in Table 14 that white students, even when they are a small segment of the overall population, tend to be concentrated in a few schools, thus lowering the exposure of blacks to white students even further.

Table 14—Districts with Lowest Black Exposure to Whites in 2000
(Lowest % white in school of avg. black)

District	% White	Expo B/W	Expo W/W
Baltimore City, MD	10.8	5.9	47.4
New York City, NY	15.3	6.6	44.6
Miami-Dade, FL	11.3	6.8	25.3
DeKalb Co., GA	12.7	7.4	40.1
Memphis, TN	12.3	7.4	42.6
San Francisco, CA	11.1	8	19.2
Philadelphia, PA	16.7	8.7	46.5
Prince George's Co., MD	11.4	9.1	28
Alief, TX	10	9.5	14.5
Cleveland, OH	19.3	9.7	47.1
Kansas City, MO	15.8	10.4	35.3
Aldine, TX	10.2	10.4	14.4
Boston, MA	14.7	11.2	26.7
Rialto, CA	12.7	12.8	14.7
Stockton, CA	14.1	12.9	18.5
Ontario-Montclair, CA	12.1	13	16
Richland, SC	19.6	13.1	44.6
Milwaukee, WI	18.7	13.1	35.3
St. Louis, MO	16.8	13.2	32.8
Rochester, NY	16.1	13.9	24.8

Table 15—Districts with Highest Black Exposure to Whites in 2000
(Highest % white in school of avg. black)

District	% Black	Expo B/W	Expo W/W
Carroll Co., MD	2.3	94.3	95.7
Utica, MI	1.2	94.1	95.7
Alpine, UT	0.4	89.8	92.5
Douglas, CO	1.4	88.9	90.3
Boise, ID	1.6	88.9	90.2
Jordan Co., UT	0.5	88.3	93.1
Weber, UT	1.2	86.4	90.8
Anoka-Hennepin, MN	3.2	85.9	91.4
Davis Co., UT	1.1	85.8	92.3
Rosemont-Apple Valley-Eagen, MN	4.3	85.1	88.6
Spokane, WA	4.4	83.9	87.0
Cherokee County, GA	3.3	83.8	91.4
Shawnee Mission, KS	4.6	83.5	87.8
Deer Valley, CO	2.7	82.0	84.1
Gilbert, AZ	2.8	80.3	82.0
Scottsdale, AZ	2.1	78.6	86.0
Paradise Valley, AZ	2.4	78.1	83.8
Clay Co., FL	9.6	77.8	85.8
Boulder Valley, CO	1.7	77.4	83.6
Jefferson Co., CO	1.4	76.0	84.3

Latino Isolation

Latinos have the lowest exposure to whites in school districts in the West and in Texas, which is not surprising given the large percentage of Latino students in these areas. There are also several northern districts in which Latinos are isolated from whites. Notably, some of the largest school districts like New York, Prince George's County and Miami-Dade have the highest levels of Latino segregation in 2000. Similar to black exposure indices, many of the districts in Table 16 where Latino isolation is highest are central city districts with a small proportion of white students.

As is the case for black students, the districts in which Latinos have the lowest exposure to whites are districts with low proportions of white students in the entire district. In many districts in Table 16, the Latino exposure rate to white students is close to the overall white share of the school district population. In Rialto, California, the overall white proportion is 12.7% and the typical Latino student in that district attends school with 12.1% whites. This indicates a fairly even distribution of white students in this district. A comparison of Latino-white exposure with white-white exposure in Table 16 indicates that despite the small proportion of white students in these districts, they are clustered in schools that are disproportionately white. In New York City, our largest public school district, white students are 15% of total student enrollment. Yet, white students attend schools that are 44.6% white. Latino students, however, attend schools that are highly segregated with only 9.3% white students. Once again, this shows that even small percentages of white students are concentrated in a few schools, which results in extremely low proportions of white students in schools attended by most Latino students.

Many of the same districts in which Latinos are exposed to the highest percentage of white students are also districts where blacks experienced high levels of integration with whites. Table 17 shows that there are more Southern districts with higher levels of Latino integration. By contrast, more western districts had higher exposure of blacks to white students. This could be explained due to the fact that blacks are a much larger fraction of enrollment in the South and both Latinos and Asians have larger proportions of enrollment in the West than blacks. In addition, these districts have very small Latino populations and large white populations: in eighteen districts Latinos comprise six percent or less of total enrollment. Similar to districts with high black-white exposure in Table 15, the Latino-white exposure index for most districts in Table 17 is similar to the district's white-white exposure index indicating that the Latino students are fairly evenly dispersed throughout these districts.

Table 16—Districts with Lowest Latino Exposure to Whites in 2000
(Lowest % white in school of avg. Latino)

Districts	% White	Expo L/W	Expo W/W
San Francisco, CA	11.1	8.1	19.2
Prince George's Co., MD	11.4	8.4	28.0
Alief, TX	10.0	8.9	14.5
Aldine, TX	10.2	9.2	14.4
New York City, NY	15.3	9.3	44.6
Miami-Dade, FL	11.3	10.9	25.3
West Contra Costa, CA	16.9	11.1	28.7
Ontario-Montclair, CA	12.1	11.4	16.0
Rialto, CA	12.7	12.1	14.7
El Paso, TX	15.2	12.5	26.4
Boston, MA	14.7	12.8	26.7
Stockton City, CA	14.1	13.1	18.5
Fontana, CA	13.9	13.5	15.5
Long Beach, CA	17.8	13.6	32.9
Garden Grove, CA	19.7	13.9	36.8
Sweetwater, CA	16.0	14.0	23.3
Denver, CO	22.0	14.6	41.2
Fort Worth, TX	21.4	14.7	43.4
Providence, RI	17.6	14.8	26.0
Philadelphia, PA	16.7	15.3	46.5

Table 17—Districts with Highest Latino Exposure to Whites in 2000
(Highest % white in school of avg. Latino)

District	% Latino	Expo L/W	Expo W/W
Carroll Co., MD	0.8	94.6	95.7
Utica, MI	0.7	92.4	95.7
Anoka-Hennepin, MN	1.4	89.9	91.4
Douglas, CO	4.7	89.4	90.3
Boise, ID	5.1	87.5	90.2
Weber, UT	6.0	87.4	90.8
Rosemont-Apple Valley-Eagen, MN	1.9	86.8	88.6
Alpine, UT	5.3	86.5	92.5
Davis Co., UT	4.6	86.2	92.3
Kanawha Co., WV	0.3	85.8	90.0
Spokane, WA	2.6	85.0	87.0
Shawnee Mission, KS	4.6	84.2	87.8
Knox Co., TN	1.1	83.6	87.9
Cherokee Co., GA	4.8	82.9	91.4
Jordan Co., UT	4.8	81.3	93.1
Saint Tammany Parish, LA	1.2	81.2	84.4
Deer Valley, AZ	10.1	80.9	84.1
Gilbert, AZ	11.8	79.5	82.0
Okaloosa Co., FL	3.4	78.9	82.0
Clay Co., FL	3.6	78.0	85.8

CONCLUSION

While the public school enrollment reflects the country's growing diversity, our analysis of the nation's large school districts indicates a disturbing pattern of growing isolation. We find decreasing black and Latino exposure to white students is occurring in almost every large district as well as declining white exposure to blacks and Latinos in almost one-third of large districts. Black and Latino students display high levels of segregation from white students in many districts. This is due in part to small white percentages in these districts. However, even when white students are only a small percentage of total enrollment they tend to be concentrated in a few schools, which results in lower exposure of black and Latino students to white students even further.

The isolation of blacks and Latinos has serious ramifications: this isolation is highly correlated with poverty, which is often strongly related to striking inequalities in test scores, graduation rates, courses offered and college-going rates. Virtually no attention is being paid to this troubling pattern in the current discussion of educational reform even though it is very strongly related to many outcomes the reformers wish to change.

Recent Civil Rights Project studies of a number of cities have found important educational and civic benefits for students who attend diverse schools.[27] However, the Supreme Court desegregation decisions of the 1990s relaxed the judicial standards school districts had to meet to be released from court oversight, and many school districts are no longer under desegregation plans. Further, school systems that wish to pursue voluntary desegregation measures by reducing racial isolation and/or to promote diversity in their schools must prove that this is both a "compelling governmental interest" and that the plan is narrowly tailored; lower court decisions have split as to whether these are compelling interests.

Many Americans believe that there is nothing that can be done about these problems and that desegregation efforts have failed. This report suggests that a great deal was done, particularly in the South, and that, after a series of court decisions sharply limiting desegregation rights, it is being undone, even in large districts where the desegregation was substantial and long lasting. Interracial exposure can simply not occur in districts that do not have different racial groups present. Perhaps it is time for communities, educational leaders and our courts to consider whether or not there is a better alternative to the system of increasingly separate and unequal schools we are creating in our large districts.

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27 E.g. Michal Kurlaender and John T. Yun, "Is Diversity a Compelling Educational Interest? Evidence from Metropolitan Louisville," in *Diversity Challenged*, ed. Gary Orfield with Michal Kurlaender (Cambridge, MA: The Civil Rights Project, 2001), chapter 5.

APPENDIX: DEFINITION OF REGIONS

South: Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia.

Border: Delaware, Kentucky, Maryland, Missouri, Oklahoma, and West Virginia.

Northeast: Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and Vermont.

Midwest: Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, and Wisconsin.

West: Arizona, California, Colorado, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming.