

particular features of neoliberal reforms impact graduation rates, a key indicator of a high school's quality. This research is descriptive, not causal, because there is no pre-reform period.

This research finds that segregation of students in the worst performing schools declines, and it increases in the best performing schools. The black and Hispanic population in the worst performing category declined during this reform era, and it increased in the best performance category. It seems that the segregation has shifted with this change. In the earlier years of this reform era, one in four black or Hispanic students was segregated in low-performing schools. Black and Hispanic students are now attending better performing schools but one in four is now segregated in the highest performance category. Whatever category black and Hispanic students may be in, they are likely to be segregated there. There is a systemic effort to avoid diverse schools, regardless of quality. A system of school choice makes this effort more feasible, as families can view racial composition as a deterrent when choosing schools.

Segregation has a negative impact on the educational experience of all students, especially black and Hispanic students. Despite receiving a better education, these students continue to lack the advantages afforded by diversity, such as exposure to different people and ways of life, and exposure to whites and Asians who they are likely to encounter and be unfamiliar with in their postsecondary life. Students of all races perform better when they attend diverse schools (Siegel-Hawley, 2014). As Lisa Delpit (1996) argues, this trend will not change until the broader societal inequalities are diminished and black and Hispanic spaces are no longer viewed as low quality or threatening.

Although black and Hispanic graduation rates have improved on average, and they are attending better schools, there is still a negative impact of having a high percentage of black and Hispanic students. There is also a negative impact of poverty. These facts point to the larger societal inequalities that exist, such as lower teacher quality, fewer resources, and lower expectations that exist in schools that serve primarily black, Hispanic or poor students. Neoliberal policies, excluding the creation of small schools, seem to exacerbate this negative impact by further decreasing graduation rates.

Anyon (2006) argues that policies to eliminate poverty and other societal issues are necessary if there is to be a true meritocracy with true equality of opportunity. Until this is the case, race and class will continue to disadvantage particular groups and result in achievement gaps. Lynch and Moran (2006) argue for a more substantive focus on how class operates within schools and neighborhoods and intersects with economic and social policies to reproduce inequalities.

Together these analyses show that despite a host of positive outcomes for black and Hispanic students, race still matters very much for the outcomes of students. While the magnitude of these differences is moderate, the persistence of historical racial and socioeconomic educational inequalities cannot be understated. Neoliberal reforms argue that choice and accountability will give families of all races equal access to a high-quality education, but this is not the case. Black and Hispanic students are still attending segregated schools, majority black and Hispanic schools still have the lowest outcomes, and minorities still attend schools that are different from their white and Asian peers. While neoliberal policies did allow some minority students to choose better schools, it did not impact the patterns on inequality that public schools have historically suffered from.

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Notes

1. In many districts, Asian students have outcomes similar to whites and the highest performing Asian students are likely to attend schools with mostly white students. For this reason, this analysis does not include Asians as racially disadvantaged along with blacks and Hispanics.

2. This analysis uses the New York State method to calculate graduation. This calculation includes all students who entered a school in the 9th grade cohort, not excluding self-contained classrooms and special district schools. Graduates are defined as those earning a Local or Regents diploma, excluding those who earn a special education diploma (IEP) or GED. This graduation rate is most often separated into June and August graduates and into four and six-year graduation rates, and I use the four-year rate.
3. To insure that I have a consistent sample, I ran my very last model with all variables in it and created a sample including only those cases and used that sample for all of my models. This sample includes 281 schools, 1634 observations with an average of 5.8 of 11 years of data.

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