Denver Public Schools: Resegregation, Latino Style

By

Chungmei Lee

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DENVER PUBLIC SCHOOLS: RESEGREGATION, LATINO STYLE

The Denver Public Schools (DPS) provide a unique opportunity to study the dynamics of school segregation within the context of rapid demographic changes and key policy changes. In 1973, Denver became the first northern school district ordered to desegregate by the U.S. Supreme Court.[1] Lawyers representing a group of Black, Latino and White families filed a lawsuit in U.S. District Court charging that schools in the Park Hill neighborhoods were intentionally segregated to keep White students separate from minority students. Although efforts at ending official segregation of Latinos were made at the state and local levels through the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s, *Keyes* was the first Supreme Court ruling that recognized the rights of Latinos to desegregation. Under *Keyes*, Denver created a plan that desegregated both Black and Latino students within the city in such a way that it became one of the few large metropolitan areas during the 1970s where both Black and Latino students became much less segregated from Whites.[2]

Since the time of *Keyes*, one of the most dramatic demographic changes in Denver Public Schools (DPS) has been the surge of Latino enrollment. In 1980, DPS was already majority minority with 41 percent White, 23 percent Black, 32 percent Latino, and 3 percent Asian student enrollment. A little over two decades later, DPS became majority Latino, with White students comprising only one-fifth of the entire student body by 2003. Denver school growth was cut off by a state constitutional amendment that prohibited incorporating surrounding suburban communities into the Denver school district.[3] Approved by voters in 1974, the Poundstone Amendment prohibited annexation except by the consent of the majority of the voters in each county that was giving up the land. Specifically, the legislation stated, "except as otherwise provided by statute, no part of the territory of any county shall be stricken off and added to an adjoining county, without first submitting the question to the registered electors of the county from which the territory is proposed to be stricken off; nor unless a majority of all the registered electors of said county voting on the question shall vote therefore."[4]

At the time the amendment was passed, Denver was annexing lands to the south and east following the suburbanization of White families. Once these lands were annexed, the schools became part of Denver Public Schools. While the announced goal of the amendment was to prevent Denver's growth from overwhelming the suburbs, the effect was to limit the reach of the desegregation order into the suburbs. Because Keyes only covered the schools within the 1974 boundaries of Denver and none of the other school districts in the metropolitan area, the Poundstone Amendment effectively sealed off Denver from the surrounding suburbs and severely curtailed its ability to have any lasting and stable desegregation of its public school students. As a result, Denver Public Schools now captures a shrinking share of the total Denver metropolitan student population (from 21% in 1990 to 19% in 2003).[5]

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[1] *Keyes v. Denver School District No.* I, 413 U.S. 189 (1973).

[2] Orfield, G. (1983). Public School Desegregation in the United States, 1968-1980. Washington, D.C.: Joint Center for Political Studies. Black exposure to Whites increased from 40% to 50% from 1970 to 1980 and Latino exposure to Whites experienced a much smaller increase (55.6 to 55.8 in 1980).

[3] The 1974 Poundstone Amendment prevented Denver from annexing surrounding land.

[4] C.R.S.A. Const. Art. 14, § 3.

[5] Logan, J. (2001). "Ethnic Diversity Grows, Neighborhood Integration Lags." Presented at National Press Club, April 3, 2001.

Amidst the context of major demographic transformation, in 1995 the court ended nearly two decades of court ordered school desegregation in Denver schools (*Keyes v. Denver School District No. I,* 902 F. Supp. 1274 (1995)). As one of the few major school districts with a history of desegregation of both Blacks and Latinos, the implications of this reversal of *Keyes* are important to understand. Policymakers and educators will be uniquely challenged to provide education in a context that is both majority Latino and, as this paper documents, increasingly segregated and unequal for its growing diverse student body.

This paper, the first of two reports, focuses on the dynamics of segregation, demographic changes, and implications for graduation rates in the Denver Public Schools. I utilize the Common Core of Data collected by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) to place the Denver Public Schools in both a national and regional context. I begin with a demographic overview of the Denver-Aurora Metropolitan Statistical Area[6] (hereafter referred to as the Denver Metropolitan Area) before focusing on the composition of Denver Public Schools from 1990 to 2003. The relationship of the dramatic demographic changes to segregation trends is examined by measuring the average exposure of students to all racial groups, as well as to each other and the concentration of students in racially isolated schools during the five years preceding the 1995 *Keyes* decision and in the eight subsequent years following.[7] I use the Cumulative Promotion Index to calculate graduation rates, a measure of student promotion through successive school years designed to offset some of the limitations of official dropout data.[8]

We recognize that there were some schools in the western part of the Denver school district which were not included in the Keyes case. It is still important, however, to examine the demographic trends and segregation patterns at the district level for several reasons. Although certain schools were excluded from the case and therefore cannot be described to be resegregating, it does not change the fact that for those schools in the district that fell under the desegregation order, Latino students attending these schools experienced resegregation after a period of desegregation. Moreover, the goal of this report is to examine the broader demographic and segregation patters of the district within the context of the 1973 *Keyes* case. We provide general trends that tell an important story in their own right and build a foundation for school-level analyses that will be presented in the a subsequent report for the Piton Foundation.

DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGES

Demographics of the Student Age Population in the Denver Metropolitan Area

[6] The Denver-Aurora Metropolitan Statistical Area consists of Adams, Arapahoe, Broomfield, Clear Creek, Denver, Douglas, Elbert, Gilpin, Jefferson, and Park Counties, boundaries defined by the Office of Management and Budget as of November, 2004. Broomfield city was treated as a county at the time of the 2000 Census and was organized as a county in November 2001.

[7] For an explanation of the exposure index, see Massy, D.S. and Denton, N.A. (1988). The dimensions of racial segregation. *Social Forces*, 67:281-315; Orfield, G., Bachmeier, M., James, D., and Eitle, T. (1997). *Deepening segregation in American public schools*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Project on School Desegregation.

[8] Developed by Christopher Swanson at The Urban Institute, the CPI tracks three grade-to-grade promotion transitions and the ultimate graduation event over two successive years instead of following particular students over time. For a more detailed explanation of the CPI index, see Appendix A.

The Denver metropolitan area is extremely diverse. In 2003-04, among the students attending public schools in the Denver metropolitan area, approximately 59 percent were White (Table 1). Across the entire metropolitan area, Latino students are the largest minority group at 28 percent, followed by Blacks at 8 percent and Asians at 4 percent. Denver County enrolls 19 percent of the students in the metropolitan area. It is the third largest county after Arapahoe and Jefferson, which enroll 25 percent and 23 percent of the metro area's students respectively.[9] Denver is overwhelmingly minority—only 20 percent of its students are White—with Latino students comprising more than half of the students (57%) and Black students another 19 percent. In fact, it enrolls only six percent of the metropolitan area's White students. Only one other county, Adams County, is majority minority. In contrast, Jefferson is more than three-quarters White and Arapahoe is more than three-fifths White. White students are also heavily represented in the surrounding smaller counties such as Clear Creek, Elbert, Park, and Gilpin where, in each, more than 90 percent of the students are White.

Table 1
Racial Composition of the Denver Metropolitan Area by County, 2003-04*

District	%White	%Black	%Latino	%Asian	Total	Percent of Total Enrollment By County
Adams County	49	4	42	4	99	18
Arapahoe	62	13	19	5	99	25
Clear Creek	92	1	4	1	98	0.3
Denver	20	19	57	3	99	19
Douglas	88	2	6	4	100	11
Elbert	90	1	6	1	98	1
Park County	91	1	5	1	98	0.5
Gilpin County	90	0	10	0	100	0.1
Jefferson County	78	2	15	4	99	23
Broomfield County	80	1	12	6	99	2
Total Enrollment	**59**	**8**	**28**	**4**	**99**	**100**

Source: National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data, 2003-04
*Numbers may not add up to 100 due to rounding

Demographic Trends Over Time in the Denver Metropolitan Area

The Denver metropolitan area experienced two major demographic shifts since 1990: the migration of the urban student population from Denver to the surrounding counties and an increasing share of the non-White population in the greater metropolitan area. Despite the increase in total enrollment in the metropolitan area, Denver County is capturing a slowly decreasing share of the overall metropolitan area enrollment, from 21 percent in 1990 to 19 percent in 2003 (Table 2). Jefferson County has witnessed a similar trend, which currently enrolls about 23 percent of the metropolitan student population, a decrease from 27 percent in 1990. Conversely, there has been an increase in both numbers and shares of the total enrollment

[9]School district and county boundaries are not necessarily coterminous. For example, Adams County includes Adams 12, Adams 14, Adams-Arapahoe, Bennett, Brighton, Mapleton, Strasburg, and Westminster school districts.

in surrounding counties such as Douglas. The movement of families (mostly Whites) to the suburbs and away from urban Denver further exacerbates the racial isolation of students in Denver County.[10]

[10] Hauser, R., Simmons, S. and Pager, D. (2004). High school dropout, race/ethnicity, and social background from the 1970s to the 1990s. In G. Orfield, (Ed.). *Dropouts in America: Confronting the graduation rate crisis*. Cambridge: Harvard Education Press.

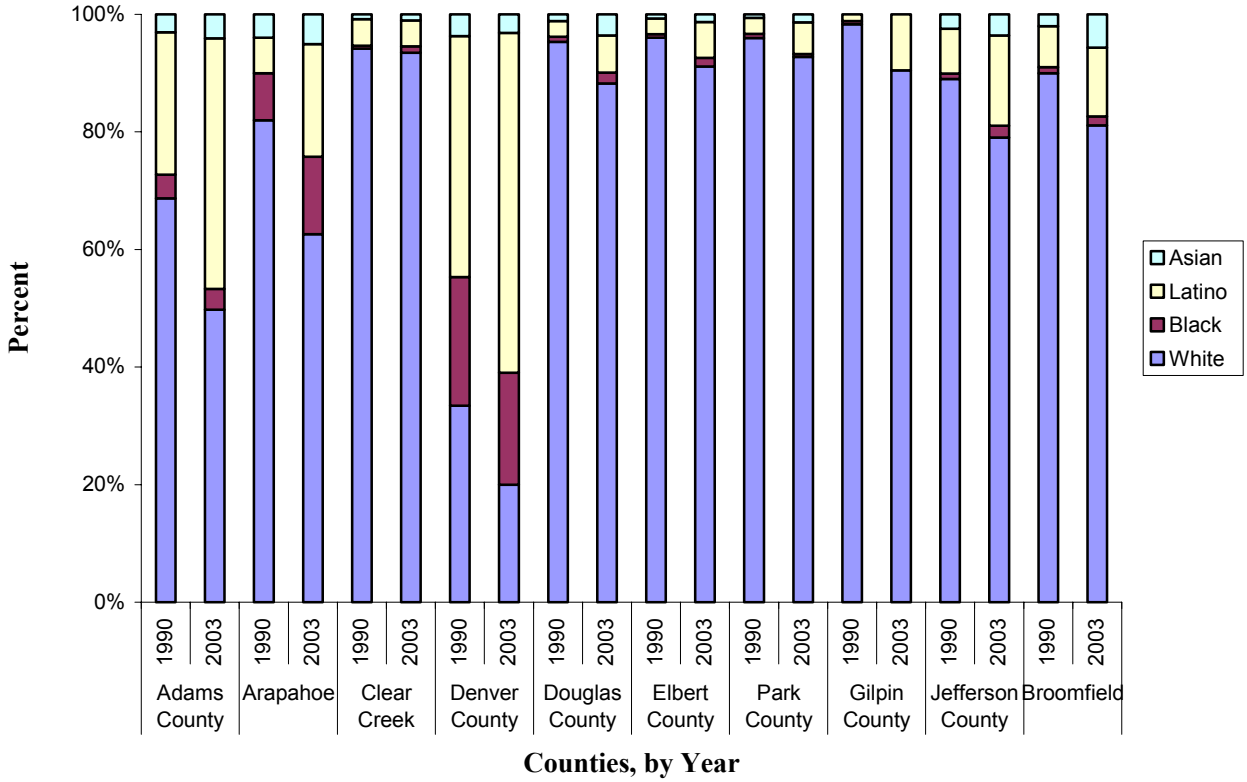
Table 2
Growth of Enrollment Across Denver Metropolitan Area by County, 1990 and 2003

	1990		2003		Change	Percent Change
School District	**Enrollment**	**% of Total**	**Enrollment**	**% of Total**	**1990-2003**	**1990-2003**
Adams County	50,215	17	69,418	18	19,203	28
Arapahoe	75,941	26	97,099	25	21,158	22
Clear Creek	1,443	0.5	1,216	0.3	-227	-19
Denver	60,552	21	71,885	19	11,333	16
Douglas	14,720	5	40,912	11	26,192	64
Elbert	2,192	1	4,444	1	2,252	51
Park County	1,633	0.6	2,047	0.5	414	20
Gilpin County	351	0.1	421	0.1	70	17
Jefferson County	79,244	27	87,172	23	7,928	9
Broomfield	5,792	2	8,699	2	2,907	33
Total	**292,083**	**100**	**383,313**	**100**		

Source: National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data, 1990-91 and 2003-04

The second major trend is the surge in Latino enrollment across the metropolitan area, especially in Denver, Adams, and Arapahoe counties. More than half of the students in Denver are Latino, compared to 40 percent in 1990 (Figure 1). Whereas White students comprised the majority of the school population in 1990 in Adams, the county is now majority minority. Over this period, the Latino proportion increased three-fold, from six percent to 19 percent in Arapahoe and almost doubled from 24 to 42 percent in Adams. The Black enrollment share increased more modestly from 8 percent to 13 percent in Arapahoe and actually dropped from 22 to 19 percent in Denver. Overall, while there were some increases in the Black enrollment shares in the Denver Metropolitan Area, most of the demographic changes were driven by Latino growth.

Figure 1: Change in Racial Composition Across the Denver Metropolitan Area, by County 1990-2003



The uneven distribution of students by race is even more startling at the district level. Forty-four percent of Black students and 39 percent of Latino students in the greater Denver metropolitan area attend schools in Denver (Table 3). Along with Aurora (Adams-Arapahoe), these two districts account for more than two thirds of the Black population and more than half of the Latino population in the metropolitan area but less than one-ninth of the area's White students. White enrollment is concentrated in suburban districts such as Jefferson, Douglas, and Cherry Creek. Although some of the concentration of minority students in Denver and Aurora (Adams-Arapahoe) may be due to the size of these districts relative to the smaller suburban districts, the same does not hold for White students, who are relatively more spread out in the suburbs surrounding the two major cities. For example, despite its size, Denver has about the same number of White students attending its schools as some of the smaller suburban districts, such as Littleton school district.

Table 3
Distribution of Public School Students Across the Denver Metropolitan Area, by District 2003-04 (in Percent)[11]

District	Metro Region[12]	White	Black	Latino	Asian
Adams 12	Suburb	10	3	9	11
Adams County 14	Suburb	1	1	4	0
Adams-Arapahoe 28	Central City	5	23	13	8
Brighton 27	Suburb	2	0	3	1
Cherry Creek 5	Suburb	15	18	4	21
Denver County 1	Central City	6	44	39	15
Douglas County Re 1	Rural	16	2	2	10
Jefferson County R-1	Suburb	30	5	13	20
Littleton 6	Suburb	6	1	1	3
Mapleton 1	Suburb	1	0	3	1
Westminster 50	Suburb	2	1	5	6
Total		**93**	**99**	**97**	**97**

Source: National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data, 2003-04

Demographic Changes Over Time in the Denver Public Schools

Like many other large urban centers, the decrease in White enrollment and increase in the share of the Latino population, coupled with the fixed boundaries, were largely responsible for the demographic transformation of Denver Public Schools. Even before the *Keyes* ruling in 1973, the White share of the District's student enrollment was already dropping (Table 4). As Whites continued moving to the suburbs, represented by a declining White enrollment that plummeted from 66 percent in 1967 to 20 percent by 2003, attempts to desegregate within an urban center became increasingly difficult. The drop was largely replaced by Latino enrollment, which rose from 20 percent to 57 percent during this same time period. Black and Asian shares of school enrollment also increased during this time, albeit at a slower rate than the Latino enrollment. Denver Public Schools experienced the increasing Latino enrollment and declining White enrollments that many other large urban centers also faced at this time period and continue to face today.

[11] Numbers may not add up to 100 because only districts with public school enrollment larger than 5,000 are shown here.

[12] Based on the definitions provided by Common Core of Data, central cities are principal cities of a Metropolitan Core Based Statistical Area (CBSA), with a population greater than or equal to 250,000; suburbs are any incorporated places within a metropolitan CBSA of a central city; rural areas are those areas that are defined as rural by the Census Bureau. Where a city has more than one designation, it is assigned the more dominant metro region. For example, the city of Denver is a central city because 95% of its schools are located in central city while only 5% are located in the suburban and rural fringes.

Table 4
Change in Racial Composition in the Denver Public Schools, 1967-2003

Year	%White	%Black	%Latino	%Asian
1967	66	14	20*	--
1972	58	17	23	1
1976	48	21	29	1
1980	41	23	32	--
1986	37	22	36	4
1990	34	22	39	4
1994	29	21	45	4
1996	26	21	47	4
2000	22	20	53	3
2003	20	19	57	3

** Latino included Asian and Native American in 1967*
**Source: DBS Corp., 1982, 1987; OCR data tapes from 1968-84;Gary Orfield, Rosemary George, and Amy Orfield, "Racial Change in U.S. School Enrollments, 1968-84," paper presented at National Conference on School Desegregation, University of Chicago, 1986. 1990-2003, NCES Common Core of Data*

SEGREGATION TRENDS

Segregation by Race

During the period from 1990 to 2003, Black, Latino, and Asian students all experienced a drop in exposure to White students (Table 5).[13] In particular, Latino students are especially isolated in DPS; the average Latino student attends a school that is 71 percent Latino, despite comprising 57 percent of student enrollment. Furthermore, the percentage of White students in the DPS attended by the average Latino student dropped from 29 percent in 1990 to its present rate of 12 percent. Black exposure to White students also fell from 33 percent to 18 percent in a little over a decade, while the share of Latino students in the school of the average Black student doubled from 18 percent to 39 percent.

[13] The exposure index shows the share of a particular group present in the school of the average student in another group. Isolation is the exposure of one racial group to other members of the same group.

Table 5
Exposure to White and Latino Students in Denver Public Schools, 1990-2003

	Exposure to Latino Students				Exposure to White Students			
	White	Black	Latino	Asian	White	Black	Latino	Asian
1990	34	18	56	38	40	33	29	34
1991	35	19	56	38	39	32	28	34
1992	35	20	57	39	38	32	27	33
1993	35	20	59	40	37	31	26	32
1994	37	22	61	41	35	29	24	31
1995	38	23	62	41	35	27	22	30
1996	37	25	64	43	38	24	20	29
1997	35	27	65	42	41	22	18	31
1998	35	30	66	43	41	21	17	31
1999	35	32	67	43	41	20	16	30
2000	35	34	68	44	41	19	15	30
2001	36	36	70	46	41	19	14	29
2002	35	38	71	46	42	19	13	29
2003	34	39	71	47	42	18	12	28

Source: National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data, 2003-04

A breakdown of the distribution of students in DPS strongly indicates a heavy concentration of students in racially isolated schools (Table 6). Eighty-four percent of Latino, 74 percent of Black and 52 percent of Asian students attend schools with more than 70 percent minority students. While minority students are heavily clustered in segregated minority schools, only 27 percent of White students attend these schools. At the other end of the spectrum, seven percent of White students and three percent of Asian students attend schools that are overwhelmingly White, in which at least 80 percent of the student body is White. The presence of these racially isolated schools in an urban area where only a fifth of the student body is White is indicative of the level of segregation within the district.

Table 6
Distribution of Students in Denver Public Schools, 2003-04

	%White	%Latino	%Black	%Asian
0-10% White	12	70	55	33
10-20% White	7	10	9	10
20-30% White	8	4	10	9
30-40% White	24	11	10	26
40-50% White	14	2	10	6
50-60% White	13	2	5	7
60-70% White	7	1	1	3
70-80% White	7	0	1	3
80-90% White	7	0	0	3
90-100% White	0	0	0	0

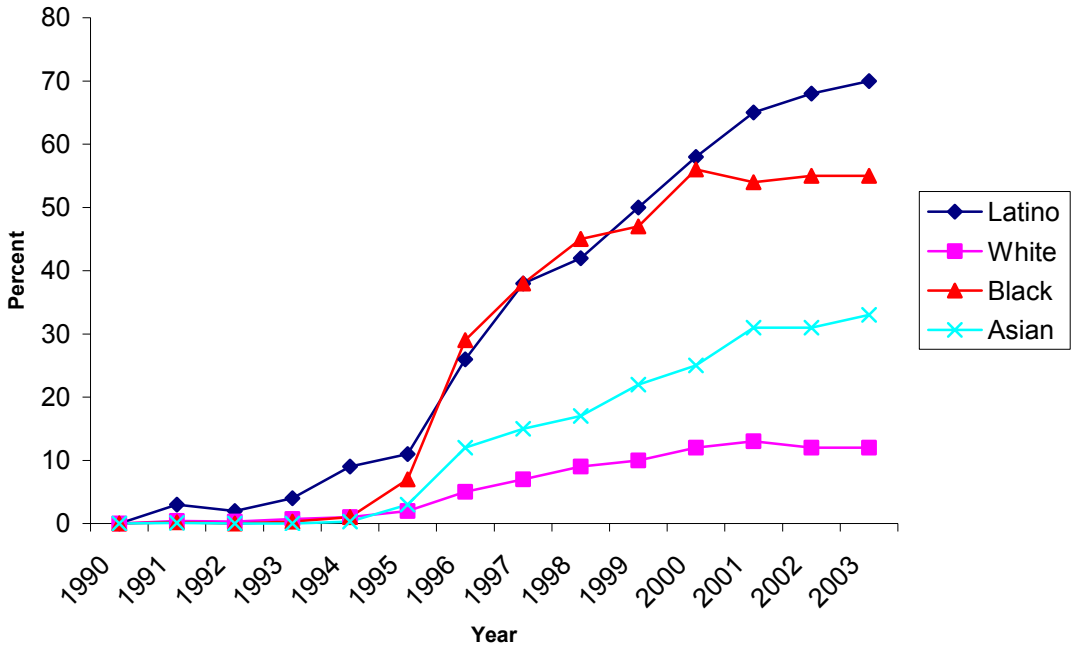
Source: National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data, 2003-04

Given the demographic trends outlined above, one might be inclined to attribute the declining exposure to White students to the decreasing share of White enrollment in the Denver public schools over the same period. While we fully acknowledge the importance of considering these demographic changes when evaluating segregation levels, to attribute changes in segregation levels exclusively to demographics ignores the segregation trends documented here. One would expect that as the share of Whites in a district declined White students would tend to be in schools that, on average, had an increased share of minority students. In Denver, however, even though the percentage of White students has declined significantly, the level of White contact with Latinos actually fell.

Furthermore, demographic changes alone cannot explain the shifts in White exposure during this period. Despite the drop in the White share of the population, the share of White students in the school attended by the average White student has actually slightly increased since 1990 (Table 5). While White isolation decreased from 40 percent in 1990 to 35 percent in 1996, the average White student in DPS attended a school that is 42 percent White in 2003. There is a mirror shift in White exposure to Latino students. While the percent of Latino students in the school of the average White student increased from 34 percent in 1990 to 38 percent in 1995, White exposure to Latino students dropped thereafter to its current rate of 34 percent. During the same time, Black, Latino, and Asian exposure to Latinos increased by 21, 16, and nine percentage points respectively. These trends suggest that one cannot explain this pattern simply as a reflection of demographic forces—it may also be a reflection of external pressures, in particular the *Keyes* decision, since many of the shifts in the trends coincided with the termination of the court order in 1995.

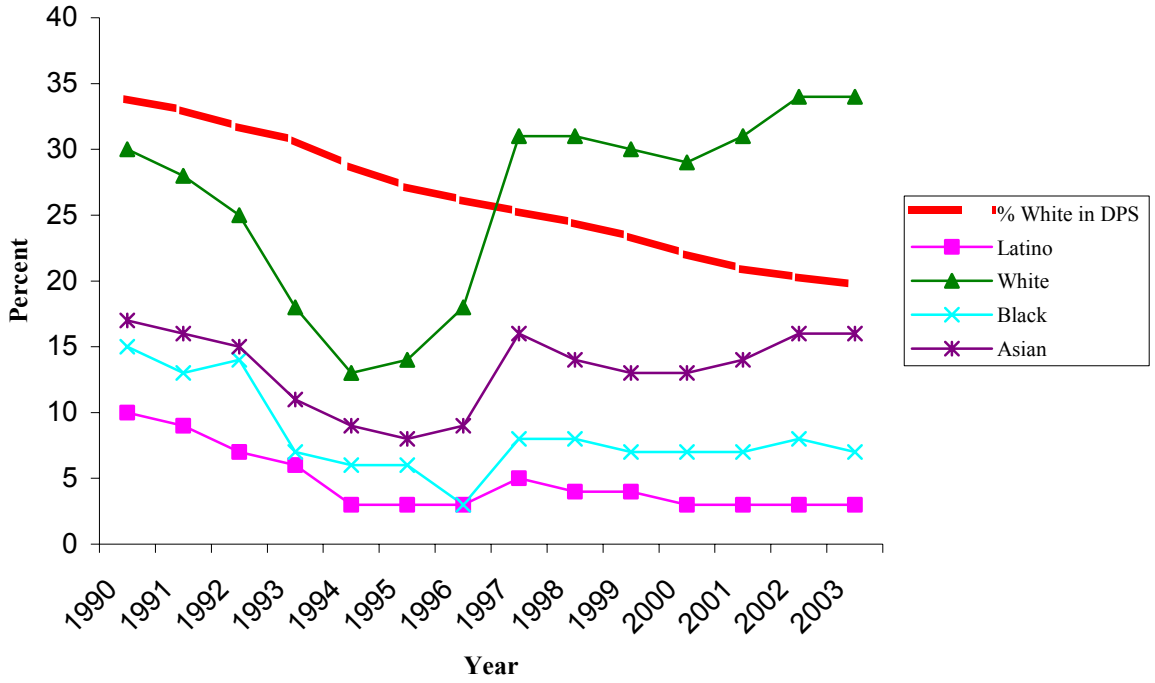
The termination of the court order in 1995 was followed by growing concentration of minority schools in intensely segregated (90-100%) minority schools (Figure 2). In a little over a decade, the percentage of Latino students attending these schools shot up from zero percent in 1990 to 70 percent in 2003. More than half of Black students and a third of Asian students attend these schools, compared to about one-eighth of White students. The steepest increase in the share of minority students attending these schools occurred around the time that the desegregation order was dismantled in 1995. In a period of two short years from 1995 to 1997, the share of Latino students attending intensely segregated schools more than tripled from 11 percent to 38 percent. The increase in segregation was even more dramatic for Black students, jumping as much as 31 percentage points during this time period. The share of White enrollment at these racially isolated minority schools also increased somewhat during this period, but at a much slower rate and for a much smaller number of students (from 2% to 7%).

Figure 2: Percentage of Students in 90-100% Minority Schools in Denver Public Schools, 1990-2003



The rise in isolation of White students in concentrated White schools has been especially steep in the years following the lifting of the desegregation order in 1995 (Figure 3). In 1995, 14 percent of White students attended schools that were majority White. Two years later, in 1997, the percentage of White students in majority White schools had more than doubled to 31 percent. While the share of minority students also experienced a slight increase in representation at majority White schools during this period, the increase was not as steep or as sustained as that of White students. The share of Latino and Black students in majority White schools decreased from ten and 15 percent in 1990 to three and seven percent respectively by 2003. As the White share of enrollment decreased for the district overall, following the dismantling of the desegregation order in 1995, there was an increased concentration of White students in a smaller number of schools in DPS. In a district where only 20 percent of the students are White, more than one third of White students (34%) in 2003-2004 attended schools in Denver that were majority White. In short, actions taken by the school district at the end of the desegregation order in 1995 further exacerbated the segregation levels of minority students at a time when the White enrollment share was already dropping in the school district.

Figure 3 : Percentage of Students in 50-100% White schools in Denver Public Schools, 1990-2003



Segregation by Language: Isolation of English Language Learners

Increasingly, students are not only isolated by race but by language as well. Nationally, the average Latino English Language Learner attends a school where over three-fifths of the students are Latino.[14] In the Denver Public Schools, Latino students in general and Latino English Language Learners in particular are especially isolated compared to other English Language Speakers (Table 7). The average Latino ELL student attends a school that is 73 percent Latino compared to the exposure of the average English Language Speaker to Latino students (57%). Asian ELL students also attend schools with large percentages of Latino students; the average Asian ELL student attends a school where more than half (52%) of the students are Latino. In short, Latino English Language Learners in Denver are more isolated with other Latino students than the national average.

[14] Horn, C. (2002) *The intersection of race, class and English Learner status*. Working Paper. Prepared for National Research Council.

Table 7
Racial Composition of Schools Attended by English Language Learners in Denver Public Schools, 2003-04

Average Percent of Each Race in School (%)	***Racial Composition of School Attended by Average:***			
	English Language Speakers	**English Language Learner**	**Latino English Language Learner**	**Asian English Language Learner**
White	*19*	12	10	26
Black	*19*	13	13	13
Latino	*57*	71	73	52
Asian	*3*	3	2	7
Total	*98*	99	98	98

Source: Office of Civil Rights, 1999-2000

THE POVERTY DIMENSION IN SEGREGATION [15]

Racial segregation must be examined in the context of the strong relationship that exists between race and poverty. Many who question the goals of desegregation might assume that as a society we are too preoccupied by issues of race. Moreover, some might argue that it is illogical to think that changing the color of a student's classmates would make any real educational difference. Many cite as examples minority schools that despite all odds were able to provide quality education to students.

Yet, segregation has never just been about race. Racial segregation is systematically linked to other forms of segregation, including segregation by socioeconomic status, by residential location, and increasingly by language. Past research has shown that segregated schools tend to have high concentrations of poverty, low parental involvement, and high dropout rates.[16] Students attending these schools are exposed to less credentialed teachers, higher teacher turnover, and lower educational aspirations and career options than students in more desegregated settings.[17] In contrast, suburban schools, which tend to be majority White, usually

[15] Parts of the text have been adapted from Orfield, G. and Lee, C. (2005). *Why Segregation Matters: Poverty and Educational Inequality.* Cambridge, MA: The Civil Rights Project.

[16] Balfanz and Legters (2001) found that cities with high dropout rates also had high poverty rates. See Balfanz, R. and Legters, N. (2001). "How Many Central City High Schools Have A Severe Dropout Problem, Where Are They Located, and Who Attends Them?" Paper presented at the Dropouts in America Conference, Graduate School of Education at Harvard University. See also Schofield, J.W. (1995). "Review of Research on School Desegregation's Impact on Elementary and Secondary School Students." In Banks, J.A. and Banks, C.A.M. (Eds.), *Handbook of Research on Multicultural Education.* New York, NY: Simon & Schuster Macmillan; Natriello, G., McDill, E.L., and Pallas, A.M. (1990). *Schooling Disadvantaged Children: Racing Against Catastrophe*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

[17] In Georgia, Freeman, Scafidi, and Sjoqist (2002) found that teachers who transferred moved to schools with higher student achievement and fewer minority and poor students. See Freeman, C., Scafidi, B., and Sjoquist, D.L. (2002). "Racial Segregation in Georgia Public Schools, 1994-2001: Trends, Causes, and Impacts on Teacher quality." Paper presented at Resegregation of Southern Schools Conference, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; Anyon, J. (1997). *Ghetto Schooling: A Political Economy of Urban Educational Reform*. New York, NY: Teachers College Record; Dawkins, M.P. and Braddock, J.H. (1994). "The Continuing Significance of Desegregation: School Racial Composition and African American Inclusion in American Society." *Journal of Negro Education.* 63(3): 394-405.

provide a more rigorous curriculum, have more highly skilled and experienced teachers, and tougher academic competition than their urban counterparts.[18]

Numerous scholars have documented the real educational and opportunity costs of attending segregated schools in inner cities. In fact, since the 1970s, there has been a gradual decline of White families in large metropolitan centers as they moved to suburbs or small cities, leaving a large concentration of Black and Latino students in central cities.[19] These urban communities usually reflect conditions of distress—housing inadequacy and decay, weak and failing infrastructure, and unemployment—all of which directly affect inner city children's educational success.[20] Schools in these urban settings are often high poverty schools[21], and segregated high poverty schools often struggle with attracting and retaining good teachers.

Nationally, the average Black or Latino student attends a school where close to half of the students present are poor while less than one-fifth of Black and Latino students attend schools where less than 30 percent of the students are poor.[22] In contrast, more than half of White students attend schools where less than 30 percent of the students are poor. At the other end of the spectrum, Black and Latino students are over-represented in extreme poverty (90-100% poverty) schools: 12 percent of Black and Latino students attend these schools, compared to one percent White and four percent Asian.

Table 8 details the correlation between poverty (as measured by free school lunch eligibility) and segregation in the Denver Public Schools. Each column represents the share of minority students in schools, and each cell indicates what percentage of schools of a certain racial composition are also of a specific poverty level. For example, of those schools with 10 percent or fewer minority students, all were low poverty schools, or schools that had 10 percent or fewer students eligible for free or reduced lunch. Yet, close to all (98%) of the intensely segregated minority schools (more than 90% minority) were also high poverty schools where more than half of the students were on free or reduced lunch. What is further disturbing about this pattern is that more than two-fifths (43%) of Denver Public Schools are intensely segregated (90-100% minority) and more than half of the schools (58%) have at least an 80 percent minority student body. Almost all of these schools (98% and 100% respectively) are serving largely free and reduced lunch eligible students.

[18]Eaton, S.E. (2001). *The Other Boston Busing Story.* New Haven: Yale University Press. In this study, Eaton documents the experiences of scores of Boston students who had access to the White suburban public schools and the powerful impact this has had in their adult lives. See also Wells, A.S., and Crain, R.L. (1994). "Perpetuation Theory and the Long-Term Effects of School Desegregation." *Review of Educational Research*, 64, 531-555.

[19] Hauser, R., Simmons, S. and Pager, D. (2004). High school dropout, race/ethnicity, and social background from the 1970s to the 1990s. In G. Orfield, (Ed.). *Dropouts in America: Confronting the graduation rate crisis*. Cambridge: Harvard Education Press.

[20] Rothstein, R. (2004). *Class and schools: Using social, economic, and educational reform to close the Black-White achievement gap*. Washington: Economic Policy Institute.

[21] Orfield, G. and Lee, C. (2005). *Why Segregation Matters: Poverty and Educational Inequality.* Cambridge, MA: The Civil Rights Project.

[22] Frankenberg, E., Lee, C., and Orfield, G. (2003). "A Multiracial Society with Segregated Schools: Are We Losing the Dream?" Cambridge, MA: The Civil Rights Project.

Table 8
Relationship Between Segregation by Race and by Poverty in Denver Public Schools, 2003-04

	Percent Minority Students in Schools									
% Poor in Schools	**0-10%**	**10-20%**	**20-30%**	**30-40%**	**40-50%**	**50-60%**	**60-70%**	**70-80%**	**80-90%**	**90-100%**
0-10%	100	25	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
10-25%	0	75	100	33	0	0	9	8	0	0
25-50%	0	0	0	67	86	80	45	23	0	2
50-100%	0	0	0	0	14	20	45	69	100	98
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
% of Schools	**1**	**3**	**2**	**4**	**5**	**10**	**8**	**9**	**15**	**43**

*The correlation between percent Black and Latino enrollment and percent poor is very strong (r=.88).
**Numbers may not add up to one hundred due to rounding.
Source: National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data, 2003-04

These trends are consistent with previous research on the relationship between racial segregation and poverty. The reality of segregation by race means that, while the majority of White students attend middle class schools, minority students in racially segregated schools are very likely attending a school of concentrated poverty.

Segregation and Graduation Rates in the Denver Metropolitan Area[23]

The nation's dropout problem is concentrated in segregated high poverty schools.[24] For the class of 2001, the highest graduation rates are found in suburban districts (73%) and the lowest in central cities (58%). More than three quarters of White and Asian students complete high school with a diploma, compared to 50 percent for Black students and 53 percent for Latino students. Nationally the gap in graduation rates between districts with high and low proportions of low-income students was 18 percentage points.[25]

In Denver Public Schools, only 43 percent of students in the class of 2002 completed high school with a diploma (Table 9). In Adams County, where 71 percent of the student population is Latino, only 36 percent of the ninth graders graduate with a diploma four years later. In contrast, heavily White and suburban districts have much higher graduation rates: 82 percent of the students in Douglas County and 91 percent of the students in Cherry Creek completed high school with a diploma.

[23] Developed by Christopher Swanson at The Urban Institute, the CPI tracks three grade-to-grade promotion transitions and the ultimate graduation event over two successive years instead of following particular students over time. For a more detailed explanation of the CPI index, see Appendix A.
[24] Swanson, C. (2004). Who Graduates? Who Doesn't? A Statistical Portrait of Public High School Graduation, Class of 2001. Washington, D.C.: The Urban Institute.
[25] Swanson, C. (2004). Sketching a portrait of public high school graduation: Who graduates? Who doesn't? In Gary Orfield, (Ed.), *Dropouts in America: Confronting the graduation rate crisis*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press, p. 29.

Furthermore, there is a graduation gap that separates the highest and lowest performing groups even within districts. For example, while less than 30 percent of the Latino students in Denver Public Schools graduate with a diploma, 69 percent of the White students do. In Douglas, while 83 percent of White students and 78 percent of Black students graduate with a diploma in four years, only 56 percent of the Latino students do.

Table 9
Graduation Rates of Selected School Districts in the Denver Metropolitan Area[26]

		2001-02 Graduation Rate					
	Enrollment in 2003-04	Total CPI	Native American	Asian	Latino	Black	White
Adams 12	34,869	74.8	65.2	71.1	68.6	67.4	74.7
Adams County 14	6,528	36.2	***	***	37.4	44.4	31.4
Adams-Arapahoe	32,530	46.4	56.4	53.7	33.2	49.5	53.7
Brighton	8,261	66.5	***	***	59.4	***	71.5
Cherry Creek	46,594	91.0	***	91.9	80.8	84.0	90.6
Denver County	72,100	42.6	28.0	76.8	29.6	44.1	69.0
Douglas County	41,924	81.5	***	76.3	55.9	78.4	83.1
Littleton	16,458	80.2	***	95.3	***	***	82.0
Mappleton County	5,716	67.0	***	***	***	***	67.5
Westminster County	10,467	54.6	***	62.6	50.9	***	57.1
Jefferson County	87,172	75.4	54.7	79.6	56.0	71.9	77.6

****Numbers were too low for calculation*
Source: National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data, 2001-02 and 2002-03

CONCLUSION

While metropolitan Denver is still majority White, its growth is increasingly non-White and specifically Latino. The Denver metropolitan area enrolls a smaller share of the area's school age population while capturing an increasing share of the non-White population. Even before the *Keyes* decision, attempts to desegregate within an urban center became increasingly difficult amidst a declining White enrollment. After the Poundstone Amendment, it became virtually impossible for Denver to maintain meaningful desegregation for all students within its boundaries given demographic changes, increasing suburbanization, and a segregated housing market. The Black community, which was very active in pursuing desegregation litigation a quarter of a century ago, has experienced a dramatic decline in exposure to White students. The dismantling of the desegregation order in 1995 has further accelerated the trend towards increasing segregation by race and language.

The increasing segregation levels disproportionately affect the educational opportunities of minority students. In the 2003-04 school year, more than half of the Denver Public schools have at least an 80 percent minority student body and, with a few exceptions, at least a 50 percent of

[26] Due to data limitations, graduation rates for Broomfield could not be calculated.

students eligible for free or reduced lunch. Only 43 percent of the class of 2002 in Denver completed high school with a diploma. Moreover, less than a third of Latino students graduated with a diploma, compared to more than two thirds of White students.

Segregation has never been just about race. Segregated schools are still profoundly unequal and any serious desegregation plan that purports to address segregation in large urban centers with decreasing shares of White enrollment must do so at the metropolitan level to have a lasting effect. Notably, one of the most successful desegregation plans is in Louisville-Jefferson County in Kentucky, which implemented city-suburban desegregation in 1975 and recently successfully defended its desegregation plan in court.[27] Various other efforts have been made to mitigate some of the adverse impacts of segregation. In communities such as Wake County in metropolitan Raleigh, North Carolina, educational leaders and policy makers have attempted to moderate the effects of segregation by limiting the number of high schools with high concentrations of poverty. In the Boston metropolitan area, the METCO program provides students from inner city schools access to more affluent schools and networks through inter-district transfers to the suburbs. The Gautreaux program in Chicago provided poor families access to suburban communities through subsidized housing. In places where desegregation by race is not possible, school districts such as Cambridge, Massachusetts have used social and economic integration to keep diversity in the schools with some success. Other possible interventions include designing education choice programs to promote integration. For example, charter schools should have equity provisions built into their charters so as not to discriminate against students of different racial/ethnic backgrounds in providing equal access.

These efforts are of course limited, given the strong relationship between school and residential segregation. This is troublesome for many reasons. As this report has shown, segregation is currently on the rise. Unless we actively take measures to create more integrated schools for all students, the adverse impacts of segregation will disproportionately affect minority students. These largely Black and Latino students find themselves in increasingly high poverty schools with weaker academic outcomes, such as low graduation rates. An upcoming report—also sponsored by the Piton Foundation—will evaluate the extent to which the end of court ordered school desegregation and busing in Denver in 1995 has impacted the achievement levels of Black, Latino and White students in Denver Public Schools. In addition, researchers and educators must be concerned with what is lost for all students, including White students, in a segregated school. We know from the desegregation literature that segregation tends to be self-perpetrating, such that those who experience desegregated environments earlier in life are more likely to end up in more integrated environments later in life.[28] In an increasingly multiracial society, public schools can play a critical role in preparing all individuals to live and work among people of diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds.

[27] M*cFarland v. Jefferson County Public Schools*, 416 F.3d 513 (6th Circuit, 2005).

[28] Wells, A.S., and Crain, R.L. (1994). "Perpetuation Theory and the Long-Term Effects of School Desegregation." *Review of Educational Research*, 64, 531-555.

Technical Appendix

Calculating The Cumulative Promotion Index

The Cumulative Promotion Index (CPI), developed by Christopher B. Swanson of the Urban Institute, is a method for measuring completion rates, and differences between using CPI versus official dropout rates are detailed in "Who Graduates? Who Doesn't? A Statistical Portrait of Public High School Graduation, Class of 2001."[29]

This study used the CPI along with enrollment data from the National Center for Education Statistics Common Core of Data to "approximate the probability that a student entering the 9th grade will complete school on time with a regular diploma. . . . It does this by representing high school graduation as a stepwise process composed of three grade-to-grade promotion transitions (9 to 10, 10 to 11, and 11 to 12) in addition to the ultimate high school graduation event (grade 12 to diploma.)"

The equation below illustrates the formula for calculating the CPI using the class of 2002 as an example:

$$CPI = \left[\frac{E^{10}_{2003}}{E^{9}_{2002}}\right] * \left[\frac{E^{11}_{2003}}{E^{10}_{2002}}\right] * \left[\frac{E^{12}_{2003}}{E^{11}_{2002}}\right] * \left[\frac{G_{2002}}{E^{12}_{2002}}\right]$$

where

G_{2002} is the count of students who graduated with a regular high school diploma during the 2001-2002 school year

E^{9}_{2002} is the count of enrolled in grade 9 at the beginning of the 2001-02 school year

E^{10}_{2003} is the count of students enrolled in grade 10 at the beginning of the 2002-03 school year

By multiplying grade-specific promotion ratios together, the CPI estimates the likelihood that a ninth grader from a particular school system" (or grouping of school systems,) "will complete high school with a regular diploma given the conditions prevailing in that school system during the 2001-02 school year."[30]

[29] http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/410934_WhoGraduates.pdf
[30] Swanson, Christopher B. (2004). *Who graduates? Who doesn't? A statistical portrait of public high school graduation, Class of 2001.* Washington, D.C.: The Urban Institute, p. 7.