

## Separate but Equal on College Campuses: A Case of “*Déjà Vu* All Over Again”

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### ABSTRACT

At many U.S. universities, the tendency to self-segregate has become a familiar and accepted occurrence, evident in a wide array of college settings including housing and social gatherings, classes and training events, protests, and grievance sessions, and even separate commencement events. In many ways, this trend represents a return to the “separate but equal” doctrine ruled by the U.S. Supreme Court in *Brown v. The Board of Education of Topeka* (1954) as unconstitutional, which gave birth to the Civil Rights Movement and integration. This further resulted in numerous benefits related to cross-racial interaction and increased ethnic heterogeneity. Today, however, some college leaders endorse student petitions for “safe spaces” and separate, distinct programming based on various demographic characteristics and assert that such efforts enhance the college experience and create a greater sense of belonging for underrepresented student groups. Segregation appears to be re-emerging at many U.S. universities as an example of *déjà vu* all over again. In this paper, the authors argue that segregation of racial and ethnic groups on university and college campuses generally appear to exacerbate racial tensions and reinforce in-group and out-group interactions and biases. However, multicultural integration builds trust, reduces out-group biases, increases friendships across racial and ethnic lines, and advances racial reconciliation.

Keywords: neo-segregation, safety-ism, homophily, intergroup contact theory, social identity theory

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## INTRODUCTION

“[O]ur Nation, I fear, will be ill-served by the Court’s refusal to remedy separate and unequal education, for unless our children begin to learn together, there is little hope that our people will ever learn to live together.”

—Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall (1974, p. 783)

In French *déjà vu* means “already seen” and usually refers to something excessively familiar. “It’s like *déjà vu* all over again,” is a redundantly mangled saying attributed to Yogi Berra, MLB Hall of Famer as he witnessed his New York Yankee teammates Mickey Mantle and Roger Maris hit back-to-back home runs. Yogi Berra made people laugh with mangled language witticisms that oddly made sense. Similarly, French critic, journalist, and novelist, Alphonse Karr (1866) is quoted as saying “plus ça change, plus c’est la même chose,” when translated means “the more things change, the more they stay the same” (p. 6). Karr suggested that while events of the outside world change constantly and considerably, human beings change far less. This appears to be the situation with some minority college students requesting to be segregated from their majority population peers and call for “safe spaces” on campuses designed only for them.

Such a perspective seems to run counter to Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall’s dissent in *Milliken v. Bradley* (Marshall, 1974) in which he broadly envisioned the harm produced by racially segregated education. Despite Marshall’s admonition, today’s self-imposed, voluntary segregation of minority and marginalized groups is said to benefit their members who are perceived to be vulnerable and in need of the benefits of group solidarity with like others. Some consider set-aside spaces for minority groups to maintain a positive learning climate and promote that group’s common experiences (Baker, 2013; Nicolazzo, 2017; Ong, Smith, & Ko, 2018). Moreover, some believe being surrounded with people of a common identifier allows people the safety and comfort to be an invaluable part of personal growth (Bathini, 2017). Some individuals prefer these locations where they can feel more understood by their peers. This allows students to retain their uniqueness while not being forced to assimilate. After establishing themselves, some think students are better suited to seek out peers who match their personal interests rather than their backgrounds. Way (2017) calls these practices “exclusion in the name of inclusion.”

This trend of re-segregation seems to contradict what Martin Luther King, Jr., Rosa Parks, Bayard Rustin, and what many other former civil rights leaders desired, a racially integrated America. This collegiate movement has been referred to as neo-segregation, that is, “voluntary racial segregation of students, aided by college institutions, into racially exclusive dormitories and common spaces, orientation and commencement ceremonies, student associations, scholarships, and classes” (National Association of Scholars, 2019). The reappearance of segregating racial and ethnic groups as separate but equal seems to be like “*déjà vu* all over again,” and of the maxim that the more things change, the more they stay the same.

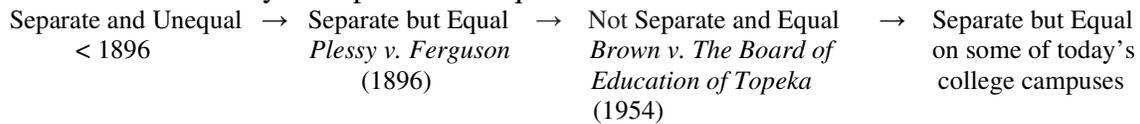
While there may be students of various demographics asking for separate safe spaces on campus (*e.g.*, LGBTQ, Hispanic/Latino, Asian students), this paper primarily focuses on Black, African American students, because it seems this demographic is seeking separateness to a greater degree than other student populations. Our discussion of neo-segregation in American universities today begins by first providing a historical summary of the doctrine of “separate but equal”. We then provide examples of this practice in higher education, followed by a discussion

of the benefits of racial integration and the psychological principles underlying these positive effects. Next, we review the negative effects of separating people and key forces driving university officials to support self-segregated events and facilities. An evaluation of various learning environments and the freedom to associate with similar others is then presented, followed by an analysis of various intergroup activities that colleges and universities may consider for improving campus racial relations.

**HISTORICAL SUMMARY**

Figure 1. A Brief History of Separate but Equal in Education.

Figure 1. A Brief History of Separate but Equal.



Prior to the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century many people recognized that there was significant inequality between the races, and segregation was routinely practiced. Whether in bathrooms or schools, when riding on buses, drinking at water fountains and eating at lunch counters, overt racial division was the norm. In the court case *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) the Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of racial segregation laws providing that the segregated facilities were determined to be equal in quality—a doctrine that came to be known as “separate but equal,” a principle in which equality could clearly be demonstrated to be false. In *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* (1954), however, the Supreme Court effectively outlawed racial segregation in schools.

The *Brown* decision invigorated the civil rights movement and spurred American colleges and universities by the early 1960s to good-faith efforts to achieve racial integration, which has been found to have significant positive effects. Meanwhile, the equal protection ruling in *Brown* spilled over into other areas of the law and into the political arena. *Brown* signified a critical moment in the fight for racial equality in America and the ending of the *Plessy* doctrine. Notions of separate spaces, separate entrances, and separate services for Americans was archaic, unworkable, and inherently racist.

Today, however, university policies permit, encourage, and oftentimes fund a Balkanized campus environment—albeit self-imposed and voluntary—and make race/ethnicity the primary determinant of student participation in many activities and events. These include racially separate student orientations, racially identified student centers, counseling, and academic programs, racially separate student activities, student associations, racially exclusive classes, graduation ceremonies, and alumni groups. In some instances, colleges and universities encourage racially divided student housing and common spaces. The National Association of Scholars (Pierre & Wood, 2019) documented nearly 200 colleges and universities in the U.S. that offer a wide variety of such segregated activities, events, and facilities. The integrationist ideal seemingly has been sacrificed almost entirely. Rather than providing opportunities for students to associate with students of dissimilar backgrounds, increasingly university officials seem to be promoting ethnic division.

## EXAMPLES OF NEO-SEGREGATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Re-segregation of college campuses came about through the often-reactionary ways some university officials attempted to achieve racial integration in the years following *Brown* and continues today (National Association of Scholars, 2019). Students appear to be grouped by race, rather than their potential degree, achievements, or level of education. Consider the following:

- “Students4Justice” at the University of Michigan have demanded that campus authorities provide “a permanent designated space on central campus for Black students and students of color” (Carnick, 2017).
- New York University (NYU), students demanded “an entire floor...be entirely dedicated to Students of Color, and another for Queer Students on campus” (Dent, 2016).
- At Oberlin, students demanded, “safe spaces” for “Africana identifying students. (Dent, 2016).
- At UCLA, the Afrikan Student Union stated, “Black students lack spaces where they feel safe and comfortable...The floor should be branded as a safe space for all Black students” (Griffin, 2019).
- Columbia University hosted a no-Whites-allowed student leadership retreat, and students who identify as a person of color can apply to attend a racially segregated retreat (Airaksinen, 2016).
- Harvard has alternative Black commencements for the graduates of the prestigious law, divinity, business, government and medical schools, a Black undergraduate ceremony, and a “Latinx” commencement ceremony for Hispanic-identifying students (Hartocollis, 2017).
- Students at the University of California-Berkeley petitioned the creation of an African-American Student Development Resource Center. “The resource center will serve as a space on campus for Black students to gather, host programming, and to offer support to Black student organizations...” (Ayers, 2015).
- In 2016, the University of Connecticut in 2016 publicized a living community specifically for Black men (Scholastic House of Leaders in support of African American Researchers & Scholars, 2019). The school did indicate that young men of all backgrounds will be permitted to apply to the living community (Deruy, 2016).
- In 2017, Evergreen College in Washington state held a “Day of Absence” where White students and faculty were asked to stay off-campus for a day of diversity programming (Gockowski, 2017).
- California State Los Angeles now offers to house open to any student interested in matters relating to the black community. The Halisi Scholars Black Living-Learning Community is designed to enhance the residential experience for students who are members of or interested in issues of concern to the black community (Palma, 2016).

Interestingly, some universities have initiated events only—or primarily—for White students. For example:

- The University of Vermont (UVM) in 2015 hosted a three-day voluntary retreat for White students to confront their privilege called “Examining White Identity Retreat.” The goal was to “build a community of dialogue and support in taking action against racism” (Chalfant, 2015). The program offered attendees the opportunity to “conceptualize and

articulate Whiteness from a personal and systematic lens” and “recognize and understand White privilege from an individual experience, as well as the impact of White privilege on the UVM community and beyond.”

- University of Maryland counselors advertised group sessions as a “safe space” for White students to talk about race and explore their experiences, questions, reactions, and feelings on race. The handouts asked: “Do you feel uncomfortable or confused before, during, or after interactions with racial and ethnic minorities?” Black students and alumni seemed puzzled that their White counterparts needed a safe space by one student tweeting, “Everywhere is a ‘safe White space’ like COME ON” (Roberts, 2018).

Colleges appear to be effective in increasing racial/ethnic awareness. The colleges’ own literature shows that colleges heighten racial differences among students. An Amherst University brochure quotes a Latino student describing how he found his bloodroots there: “For me, there’s more consciousness of my background as a Latino male. Before I came to Amherst, I wasn’t thinking about race or class or gender or sexual orientation, and I was just thinking about people wanting to learn” (cited in Afshar-Mohajer & Sung, 2002, p. 25).

## **BENEFITS OF RACIAL INTEGRATION**

Ethnic clustering—the tendency for ethnic groups to socially distance from one another—contradicts research findings of significantly positive effects of integration. Much research indicates that engagement in a racially diverse campus positively impacts critical thinking skills, reduces racial bias, and increases the possibility of working, socializing, and living in diverse settings (Chang, Witt, Jones, & Hakuta, 2003; Jayakumar, 2008).

Conversely, segregated populations appear to promote a sense of *us versus them*. According to James Sidanius, Harvard University professor of psychology and African American Studies, the effects of membership in “ethnic organizations,” also known as “ethnic enclaves,” such as a Black Student Organization or a Chinese Cultural Association, resulted in several negative effects including an increased sense of ethnic victimization, a diminished sense of social inclusiveness and collective identity. “Once having joined these [ethnic] organizations, the more likely [students] were to feel that they were in this zero-sum relationship with other ethnic groups on campus, and the greater level of hostility they had towards other members on campus, the greater the degree to which they felt ethnically victimized by other ethnic groups on campus,” Sidanius said (Airaksinen, 2016b). This feeling was supported by research (Sidanius, Levin, van Laar, & Sears, 2008).

Moreover, student engagement in cross-racial interaction was found to be associated with openness towards diversity, intellectual self-confidence, cognitive development, and other traits (Chang, Denson, Saenz, & Misa, 2006). Interracial interaction was also found linked to increased learning and satisfaction in college (Gurin, Dey, Hurtado, & Gurin, 2002; Milem, Chang, & Antonio, 2005). Additional benefits reported also include cognitive development (Hurtado, 2001; Nelson Laird, 2005), development of leadership skills and cultural awareness (Antonio, 2001; Astin, 1993), higher levels of civic interest (Hurtado, 2001), and increased civic engagement (Bowman, 2011).

Higher education integration has led to increased interracial friendships, which are associated with numerous favorable outcomes, including positive feelings towards other racial/ethnic groups and prejudice reduction (McClelland & Linnander, 2006; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2008; Powers & Ellison, 1995; Wong, 2009). Inter-ethnic friendships have also been

found to be an essential mechanism for the reduction of ethnic prejudices (Aboud, Mendelson, & Purdy, 2003; Levin, van Laar & Sidanius, 2003). Moreover, friendly contacts with ethnic minority members during childhood are a predictor of more inter-ethnic relationships in adolescence (Patchen, 1982) and reduced inter-ethnic prejudice as an adult (Ellison & Powers, 1994). Furthermore, promoting interracial friendships in college is especially important due to the challenges of formulating such friendships both before and following college. Lastly, prior to adulthood and before coming to college, residential and school segregation continue to be significant blocks to interracial friendship for most students (Joyner & Kao, 2000; Mouw & Entwisle, 2006). Because of neighborhood and school segregation, the first opportunity for many young adults to interact with students of different racial and ethnic groups is while attending college. Interaction is recognized as key, even among political leaders. In 2016, U.S. Senators Tim Scott (SC) and James Lankford (OK) called for Americans to get to know others of a different race and build relationships to fight stereotyping and promote racial reconciliation (Lankford & Scott, 2016).

### **THE POSITIVE EFFECTS OF INTEGRATION EXPLAINED THROUGH PSYCHOLOGICAL PRINCIPLES**

The psychological principles of intergroup contact theory, proximity, and exposure help explain the benefits of a racially integrated university experience.

#### *Intergroup Contact Theory*

Intergroup contact theory (e.g., Allport, 1954) argues that interaction between groups can reduce intergroup prejudice. Although other research indicates negative intergroup experiences can increase anxiety and threaten and hinder development of positive orientations toward the out-group (Plant, 2004; Tropp, 2003), most research shows general support for contact theory, suggesting that interaction typically reduces intergroup prejudice (Cook, 1984; Harrington & Miller, 1992; Jackson, 1993; Pettigrew, 1971, 1986, 1998). Wilder and Thompson (1980) demonstrated that people appear to form favorable views toward whomever they spend time with, even if they are members of a previously disliked or stereotyped out-group. Orbell, van de Kragt, and Dawes (1988) likewise found that instincts toward forming positive attachments could overcome oppositional patterns. In their study. They found that having a discussion period led to decreased competition and increased cooperation, as a result of either the formation of a group identity that joined the potential rivals together or explicit agreements to cooperate.

Pettigrew and Tropp (2006) found in their meta-analysis of 713 samples from among 515 studies that intergroup contact typically reduced intergroup prejudice. Attitudes toward the participants generally become more favorable in addition to attitudes toward the entire out-group, out-group members in other situations, and even out-groups not involved in the contact. Dovidio, Love, Schellhaas, and Hewstone (2017) reported similar findings. Moreover, numerous studies have shown that contact can reduce feelings of threat and anxiety about future cross-group interactions (Blair, Park, & Bachelor, 2003; Blascovich, Mendes, Hunter, Lickel, & Kowai-Bell, 2001; Islam & Hewstone, 1993; Paolini, Hewstone, Cairns, & Voci, 2004). Moreover, using data from 2,360 professional NBA players and 163 coaches from 1955 to 2000, Zhang (2017) reported coaches assigned more playing time to players of the same race. However, racial bias declines significantly when players and coaches spend more time on the same team. This suggests that continued interaction reduces bias.

Repeated interaction with out-group members, increases familiarity. Repeated interaction

increases comfort and trust toward the out-group, thereby reducing in-group preference. Repeated contact with out-group members also lets decision-makers recognize and correct inaccurate racial stereotypes (Hewstone & Brown, 1986; Pager & Karafin, 2009; Weber & Crocker, 1983). Across hundreds of studies, there is a consistent, small negative relationship between intergroup contact and prejudice (Pearson's  $r = -.21$ ; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006), suggests contact is beneficial for individuals, interpersonal relations, and society.

Intergroup contact study findings typically reflect *long-term* contact with out-group members (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006); however, when researchers examine *short* interactions between in-group and out-group members that typically involve stranger interactions (i.e., neither participant knows each other) that take place in laboratory settings, researchers usually find adverse effects connected to intergroup bias, resulting in heightened stress, intergroup anxiety, or out-group avoidance (Paolini, Hewstone, Voci, Harwood, & Cairns, 2006). MacInnis and Page-Gould (2015) attempted to reconcile these differences and noted that when a person has intergroup interactions, the experience may be quite variable. After a critical number of positive intergroup interactions, subsequent intergroup interactions are likely positive (Blascovich et al., 2001; Page-Gould, Mendoza-Denton, & Tropp, 2008), and more positive intergroup interactions improve attitudes (Paolini et al., 2006). So, although there may be short-term "costs" to intergroup interactions via heightened anxiety, the result could be long-term intergroup "gains" via lower prejudice (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). People may reach a level where intergroup interactions are no longer costly to individuals or society but instead, are beneficial for intergroup relations. This could explain the relatively few studies that reported adverse group contact experiences.

The MacInnis and Page-Gould (2015) finding is also consistent with research showing stereotypes automatically activated in initial interactions (Bielby, 2000; Reskin, 2000) and more likely to apply stereotypes to strangers than to familiar out-group members (Flynn, Chatman, & Spataro, 2001; Quinn, Mason, & Macrae, 2009). Repeated contact allows people to establish familiarity, acquire in-depth information about each other, and reduce same-race preference and out-group prejudice. In summary, it looks as if intergroup contact can be a practical, applied means of improving racial/ethnic relations by frequent interaction.

#### *Proximity Principle*

Another psychological principle that contributes to positive intergroup relations is the proximity effect, which represents the idea that psychological and physical nearness to others tends to increase interpersonal liking and attraction (Schneider, Gruman, & Coutts, 2012). Many studies have shown that individuals tend to be friends with those who live and work close to them (Ineichen, 1979; Segal, 1974). The more significant geographic closeness individuals have in their daily lives, the more exposure experienced, and the more they tend to like them. Festinger, Schachter, and Back (1950) found not only that people became friends with those who lived near them but that people who lived nearer the mailboxes and at the foot of a building stairway where they were more likely to come into contact with others were able to make more friends than those who lived at the ends of building corridors and thus had fewer social encounters. This is true even when apartments are assigned on a random basis, as one might find in university housing. Nahemow and Lawton (1975) replicated those findings and showed that pairs of best friends who differed by age or race were particularly likely to have lived very close together, suggesting that extreme proximity may overcome tendencies to bond with similar others.

Likewise, students who sit next to each other are more likely to become friends. This is

true even when the seating is assigned (Back, Schmukle, & Egloff, 2008). The relationship between proximity and liking also is present in Africa (Brewer & Campbell, 1976) and France (Maisonneuve, Palmade, & Fourment, 1952). Shin, Suh, Li, Eo, Chong, and Tsai (2019) reported that spatial proximity amplifies interpersonal liking in part because close (*vs.* far) targets seemed psychologically more accessible to the perceiver. In summary, people tend to become better acquainted and fonder of each other when social situations bring close in proximity.

#### *Mere Exposure Effect*

The third determinant that promotes positive intergroup relations is the psychological phenomenon whereby individuals feel a preference for people or things because they are familiar. Research suggests that people like what is familiar. Zajonc (1968) labeled this phenomenon the mere-exposure effect. While this is often on a subconscious level, research has found this to be one of the most basic principles of attraction (Zajonc, 1980) and occurs in a wide variety of situations (Bornstein, 1989). As an example, babies are found to smile at people who smile more at them. Moreland and Beach (1992) had female colleagues attend a large lecture class of over 100 students varying numbers of times or not at all during a semester. At the end of the term, students were shown pictures of their colleagues and asked to indicate recognition and how much they liked them. The number of times their colleagues attended class did not influence the others' recognition of them, but as predicted, students who had attended more often were liked more. Another study by Sidanius et al. (2008) determined that racial prejudice generally decreased by exposure to an ethnically diverse college environment. Students who were assigned roommates of a different ethnicity developed more favorable attitudes toward students of different backgrounds, and the same associations held for friendship and dating patterns. By contrast, students who primarily interacted with others of similar backgrounds were more likely to exhibit a bias toward others and perceive discrimination against their group.

### **SOME EFFECTS OF SEPARATING PEOPLE**

Several studies have demonstrated that when individuals are separated into categories on a seemingly arbitrary basis it was enough to cause them to show favoritism (prejudice) by allocating greater rewards to in-group members than to out-group members (Billig & Tajfel, 1973; Tajfel, 1970; Tajfel & Billig, 1974) and that this favoritism appeared quickly (Tajfel, Flament, Billig, & Bundy, 1971). Such in-group preferences occurred in groups even when nothing more significant than t-shirt color (Bigler, Brown, & Markell, 2001) or eye color (Bloom, 2005; Peters, 1971) were investigated. In a series of studies, Bigler and her colleagues (e.g., Bigler, Brown, & Markell, 2001; Bigler, Jones, & Lobliner, 1997; Patterson & Bigler, 2006) randomly assigned elementary school students to wear t-shirts in one of two colors. Teachers used color to refer to students and groups and to structure activities. Afterward, children were evaluated on attitudinal and behavioral measures, and unsurprisingly, children developed stronger stereotypes and prejudices favoring their own color group and denigrated the other color group.

Likewise, in an important exercise in response to the 1968 assassination of Martin Luther King, third-grade teacher, Jane Elliott, devised a simple classroom exercise to facilitate discussion of discrimination (described in Peters, 1971). Students were divided based on eye color; brown-eyed people were pronounced as superior to blue-eyed people, and the roles would be reversed the following day. Ms. Elliott further explained: “[B]rown-eyed people are better than blue-eyed people. They are cleaner than blue-eyed people. They are more civilized than

blue-eyed people. And they are smarter than blue-eyed people.” Brown-eyed children were seated in the front, allowed to go to lunch first, and given more recess time. Blue-eyed students slumped, accepted their inferior positions, and became angry and frustrated. These behavioral differences were reversed when the roles switched the next day.

Such studies illustrate that dividing groups, even on seemingly arbitrary bases, causes negative affect and that this occurs early on in life. The students began to enhance the status of the group to which they belonged (the in-group) and dehumanized over time, those in the other group (the out-group). Categorizing people into in-groups and out-groups minimizes within-group differences and accentuates between-group differences (Fiske, 1998).

#### *Social Identity Theory*

The central tenant of social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) is that members of an in-group will try to find negative attributes of the out-group, thus enhancing their self-image and leading to prejudice and discrimination toward the out-group. Prejudiced views between segregated cultures (not necessarily separated by race or ethnicity) may result in racism and its extreme forms, genocide. History is replete with examples of inhumane treatment of those deemed different (e.g., the Salem Witch trials, the Holocaust, the lynching of African Americans, the treatment of Moslems in Bosnia, and the clash of Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland). Moreover, the differences do not have to be great. As Sigmund Freud (1918/1957) wrote, “It is precisely the minor differences in people who are otherwise alike that form the basis of feelings of strangeness and hostility between them” (p. 199).

The creation of safe space segregation based on any number of characteristics can diminish the benefits of diversity and inclusiveness, which universities have championed for decades. The mere perception of belonging to different groups triggers in-group favoritism and relative out-group discrimination. So, what factors appear to be motivating administrators to sanction voluntary, self-segregation in higher education?

### **FORCES DRIVING COLLEGE ADMINISTRATORS’ ENDORSEMENT OF NEO-SEGREGATION**

Given the numerous benefits associated by cross-racial interaction and increased ethnic heterogeneity, one would think that college executives would be promoting integrative events and activities and making those a priority on their campuses. However, this does not seem to be the case, and other forces are pressuring university leaders to endorse the tendency for students to self-segregate (e.g., Broadway & Flesch, 2000; Crisostomo, 2001; McDermott, 2002) based on grievances, safety-ism, and identity politics.

#### *Grievances*

One force influencing university administrators to support neo-segregation today were activities occurring after the *Brown* (1954) decision, specifically, the effort to assimilate increased numbers of underrepresented students who were not yet (primarily as a result of segregated public schools) prepared for elite academic programs. In a rush to overcome the legacy of racial discrimination, political forces, regents, trustees, and higher education administrators adjusted entrance requirements. The consequence was a higher failure and lower retention. Individuals who remained were often embittered by the experience. In the late sixties, militant Black groups sometimes emerged on campus that rejected the principle of racial integration and voicing a new separatist ethic (Pierre & Wood, 2019).

The pattern of college officials acquiescing to these demands came to dominate much of

American higher education, leading some to suggest that many higher education institutions promote racial self-segregation (e.g., Blitzer, 2000; Lipsky-Karasz, 2003; Mincer, 2005). Rather than providing opportunities for students to associate freely with others of different backgrounds, increasing numbers of colleges permit and often promote ethnic enclaves claiming they enhance the college experience and create a greater sense of belonging on campus for minorities, but in the process stoke racial resentment and build organizational structures based on grievance (Pierre & Wood, 2019).

Student associations sprang up and led the way to the creation of the first ethnic studies programs, demands for admissions quotas, the hiring of minority faculty, and what we know today as the “diversity and inclusion” movement. Colleges have often reacted to grievances of minority student groups. For example, Cornell’s promotional materials explain that “a student protest led by a La Asociación Latina led (in part) to the creation of the Latino residential house program and focused attention on Cornell’s efforts to recruit and retain more Latino faculty members” (cited in Afshar-Mohajer & Sung, 2002, p. 9). Such efforts formed the path to more entrenched segregation, not enforced by law but by trustees and regents, college administrators, and the grievance lobby.

It seems that a generation of Black college students are demanding the same thing that the leaders of the Civil Rights Movement fought against. Some Black students, with the tacit approval of college officers, are requesting to live and learn in isolation. That social and spatial exclusion be based on precisely defined identities of race, ethnicity, or other protected legal classifications. A racial advocacy group called the “Black Liberation Collective” tracks such demands on their website, *TheDemands.org* (n. d.). On numerous campuses, Black separatists won concessions from administrators who were concerned about further alienating Black students.

Relatedly, the idea of economic commoditization of higher education has gained popularity and has depicted students as fee-paying *customers*, and universities are gravitating from teacher-centered to student-centered approaches for attracting and retaining students (Fontaine, 2014). Such customer-oriented approaches often tacitly endorse the philosophy that the “customer is always right” (Maringe & Gibbs, 2009). Students who complain and are responded to immediately, even if the response is not favorable, can become more loyal than students who appear to be satisfied without complaints (Kotler & Fox, 1995). The idea being that retaining satisfied students proves more cost-effective than spending marketing dollars on securing new students comes directly from developing customer relationships in the practice of marketing (Fontaine, 2014).

### **Safety-ism**

Another force driving neo-segregation has been the increased calls for safe spaces—a place or environment where an individual or group of people can feel confident that they will not be exposed to harassment, criticism, discrimination, or any other harm—on college campuses that are exclusive for people of color or other historically marginalized individuals (Skenazy & Haidt, 2017). This is in response to a belief that words and ideas themselves can be traumatizing. Safe space ideology endorses the notion that it is beneficial that minorities be segregated from adversity and the inevitable pain and trauma resulting from participation in a university populated by a privileged majority. Safe areas are said to build resilience, help members prepare to engage deeply with other groups, and empower each other to act (Bathini, 2017). More

extreme views are typified by Reed College in Portland, Oregon which has approved a residential living space exclusively for Students of Color (SOC), which their website describes as “an intentional living community for students of color from all backgrounds to heal together” (Reed College, n. d.). Reed College stated the SOC “is an intentional living community for returning students of color to heal together from systemic White supremacy, recover the parts of ourselves and our cultures that have been stolen through colonization, and dream new visions as we build a vibrant, loving community together” (Macken, 2016).

Neo-segregation is said to provide safe spaces for marginalized students who do not want to associate with others. Formerly called segregation, today, it is called safety (Green, 2018). Most troubling about current safe-space petitions is that they seem to be encouraging racialization and fostering a sense of insecurity (Furedi, 2017). Segregated group members are trained to fear other groups and encouraged to see themselves as targets or potential targets as well as past grievances. Segregation is also harmful as it motivates an endless quest for confirmation that the broader community is hostile to the minority group (Campbell & Manning, 2018).

University officials in support of safe spaces argue they want to protect students from controversial words, books, ideas, and speakers by which (some) students may disagree or find offensive. They also frequently encourage faculty to provide trigger warnings (statements cautioning students that content may be disturbing or upsetting), and to hunt for and confront microaggressions, which are defined as “the brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, and environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial, gender, and sexual orientation, and religious slights and insults to the target person or group” (Sue, 2010, p. 5). The Director of Multicultural Student Affairs at North Carolina State University indicated her support for segregated housing, which she compared to a support system to deal with all-day microaggressions (Wardle, 2017). While well-intentioned, these efforts only hyper-racialize the campus climate, and it should be no surprise that this results in re-segregation.

According to Lukianoff and Haidt (2015, 2018), the increased emphasis on safe spaces emerged from multiple factors, including rising political polarization, increased rates of anxiety and depression, and helicopter parenting. Such parenting has spawned helicopter universities (Von Bergen & Bressler, 2017). Moreover, helicopter parenting has morphed into lawnmower parenting in which parents go to whatever lengths necessary to prevent their children from having to face adversity, struggle, or failure. Instead of preparing children for challenges, they “mow” obstacles down so their kids will not experience them in the first place (Puhak, 2018).

Lukianoff and Haidt (2015, 2018) discuss the unintended consequences of safety-ism, the idea that people should be protected rather than exposed to challenges. Safety culture has the best of intentions: protection from danger and begins with a focus on physical safety—removing sharp objects, requiring child seats, and not letting children walk home alone. Safety, however, has experienced substantial concept creep and now includes protection against exposure to ideas that could cause psychological distress. Taken together, a hyper-focus on physical and mental safety has the potential to make people weaker.

Moreover, Campbell and Manning (2018) and Lukianoff and Haidt (2018) believe that society and universities have coddled undergraduates and have unwittingly taught a generation of students the mental habits of anxious, depressed, and polarized people. The powerful influence of therapy culture has also played a significant role in society’s preoccupation with the self, self-esteem, and safety. Nevertheless, that safety-ism mentality, apart from its chilling effect on free

speech (Weale, 2018), has if anything made students feel *more* vulnerable, not less, as rates of depression and anxiety climb on campus and across the country. Universities are quick to inform students that counseling is available for those aggrieved or threatened, even by ideas that are counter to their world views, solidifying the idea that the mere existence of a contrarian's voice necessitates therapy. One study showed that trigger warnings increase people's perceived emotional vulnerability to trauma, increase the belief that trauma survivors are vulnerable, and increases anxiety to written material perceived as harmful (Bellet, Jones, & McNally, 2018). Such actions make it harder for students to become autonomous adults who can navigate the frequently tricky paths in life.

The over-emphasis on a safety culture undermines the purpose of higher education. Universities are designed to challenge students, enlarge their worldview, and develop critical thinking. This is achieved by listening and countering ideas with which they are uncomfortable. Limited exposure to diverse ideas results in more limited and weaker education. As British philosopher John Stuart Mill (1859) wrote, "He who knows only his own side of the case knows little of that" (p.32). Stated another way, in order to make a thoughtful argument, it is necessary to understand the counterfactual of one's argument.

By shielding students from risk, universities that promote segregated spaces may lead them to react with exaggerated fear to situations that are not risky at all and isolate them from adult skills they will one day have to master. "Every society has realized that children—and adults, too—need adversity to grow strong. We can't reach maturity without adversity," social psychologist Jonathan Haidt said (Brown, 2018). Humans are not fragile, meaning they become stronger through testing and stress. According to Taleb (2012), humans benefit from shocks and thrive when exposed to volatility, disorder, risk, uncertainty, and stressors.

Indeed, many things require some stress or irregularity to function well, and the absence of stress or irregularity can be harmful. *Iatrogenics* is the urge to do something to make things better but instead makes things worse. In the medical literature, iatrogenics is a problem or disorder-induced inadvertently by a physician, treatment, or procedure. For example, in our physical bodies, vaccines introduce a little of what is harmful to build resistance to disease; human muscles strengthen from the stress of working out; the human immune system becomes tougher when subjected to a variety of foods, bacteria, and even parasites. Consider peanuts. From the 1990s, parents were encouraged not to feed children peanuts, and childcare centers, kindergartens, and schools banned them. However, this action boomeranged. Du Toit et al. (2015) found that *not* eating peanut-containing products during infancy *increases* allergies. The study of 640 infants with a high risk for peanut allergy found that 17 percent of those children who did not eat peanuts developed an allergy by age 5, compared to just 3 percent of children who consumed a peanut snack. Iatrogenics is recognized in medicine as a problem and is becoming more recognized in other complex fields—including education.

Van Jones, an adviser to former President Barack Obama speaking at the University of Chicago about safe spaces (Rose, 2017) stated:

"There are two ideas about safe spaces," he explained, referring to some college students' request for "safe spaces," where they can get together without being exposed to ideas and speech that make them feel uncomfortable. "One is a very good idea, and one is a terrible idea." The good idea, he said, is "being physically safe on campus, not being subjected to sexual harassment and physical abuse. "But there is another view that is now ascendant ... It's a horrible view, which is that 'I need to be safe ideologically, I need to be safe emotionally, I just need to

feel good all the time. And if someone else says something that I don't like, that is a problem for everyone else, including the administration' . . . I don't want you to be safe ideologically. I don't want you to be safe emotionally. I want you to be strong. That's different. I'm not going to pave the jungle for you. Put on some boots and learn how to deal with adversity. I'm not going to take the weights out of the gym. That's the whole point of the gym.

"You can't live on a campus where people say stuff that you don't like? [Y]ou are creating a kind [of] liberalism that the minute it crosses the street into the real world is not just useless but obnoxious and dangerous. I want you to be offended every single day on this campus. I want you to be deeply aggrieved and offended and upset and then to learn how to speak back."

The second safety orientation Jones asserted, is poor preparation for life. Students who venture outside segregated bubbles will indeed encounter some hostile attitudes and racial stereotypes but certainly, it is preferable to learn how to handle these realities rather than to hide from them. Emotional safety not only makes free and open debate impossible, but it also sets up a generation for more anxiety and depression. Consistent with Van Jones' opinion, University of Chicago president Robert Zimmer penned a *Wall Street Journal* op-ed (2016) warning that "free speech is at risk at the very institution where it should be assured: the university," and concluded that "having one's assumptions challenged and experiencing the discomfort that sometimes accompanies this process are intrinsic parts of an excellent education."

### Identity politics

Another factor driving neo-segregation is identity politics, which references the political activity by a group that is organized not on ideology or economic status, but rather around a characteristic such as gender, race, religion, age, sexuality, ethnicity, disability, nationality, veteran status. It seeks to remedy injustices suffered by the group because of its very identity that could include denial of civil rights, violence, stereotyping, marginalization, and exploitation (Petrakis, 2017). It refers to a tendency of people sharing an identity to form exclusive political alliances, instead of engaging in traditional broad-based party politics to promote their interests without regard for interests of a larger political group. Identity politics is closely connected to the idea that some social groups are oppressed. In other words, one's identity makes one peculiarly vulnerable to cultural imperialism, violence, exploitation, or powerlessness (Young 1990). Identity politics advanced in the 1960s following major social movements that emerged then built around the marginalization of different groups in society. The central demand was equal recognition of dignity and substantive redress of social condition. The civil rights movement, the feminist movement, and the gay liberation movement are all examples of this kind of political organizing. Identity politics critics assert that it deepens the divide that exists between different groups in society and suggest the focus should be on individuals recognizing their common humanity.

An obsession with identity politics is a recipe for endless struggle and division in part because each marginalized group is presented with a choice: demand that society treats its members the same way it treats the members of dominant groups, or assert a separate identity for its members and demand respect for them as different from the mainstream society—*isothymia* (Fukuyama, 2018). Over time, the latter strategy tended to be adopted over the strategy of the leaders of the earlier civil rights movement. Minority groups increasingly demanded not only

that laws and institutions treat them as equal to dominant groups but also that the broader society recognizes and celebrate the intrinsic differences—their identities—that set them apart. The symbol of American society where many different types of people blend together (assimilate and integrate) to build a stronger, united whole by incorporating the strengths of diverse components, has given way to a salad bowl simile in which different ethnic groups now coexist in their separate identities like the ingredients in a salad, bound together only by the “dressing” of law and the market.

Historian Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. (1991), in discussing identity politics, indicates that basing politics on group marginalization fractures civil polity and that identity politics, therefore, works against creating real opportunities for ending oppression. Schlesinger (1991), believes that “movements for civil rights should aim toward full acceptance and integration of marginalized groups into the mainstream culture, rather than ... perpetuating that marginalization through affirmations of difference” (p. 112). This is not to advocate a position that refuses to celebrate diversity and culture. The rich diversity of humanity is worthy of celebrating. However, identity politics can be argued has reinforced social divisions and discouraged integration.

## UNIVERSITY GROUPINGS AND FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION

Homophily, a term created by Lazarsfeld and Merton (1954), is the tendency of various types of individuals to associate with others who are like themselves. It applies to any number of characteristics including age, race, gender, religion, class background, profession, educational attainment, and is generally a reliable and robust observation (see McPherson, Smith-Lovin, & Cook, 2001; Monge & Contractor, 2003). Homophily has been observed throughout history and reflects the rather unremarkable observation that people generally find it easier to develop and enjoy relationships with others who share similar interests, tastes, and life experiences. At one level, it is enshrined in the U.S. Constitution’s Bill of Rights, where the First Amendment guarantee of the right to assembly has been held by the Supreme Court to include the “freedom of association” (HighBeam Research, 2000). At another level, when given a choice, individuals prefer to spend time near people with whom they “get along,” and they tend to get along especially well with others when they share things in common. Such common ground makes people’s social encounters with one another more mutually gratifying, which in turn leads individuals to feel more inclined to engage in future sociable interactions with each other (DiMaggio, 1987). These repeat encounters often eventually develop into friendships and other enduring relationships.

Homophily occurs not only on salient demographic or surface-level qualities such as age, race, and gender, but also concerning “deep-level” characteristics, such as core values, beliefs, interests, and personal idiosyncrasies (Byrne, 1961). This preference is due in part to the uncertainty of working with unfamiliar individuals (Gilbert, Stead, & Ivancevich, 1999) and by the similarity-attraction paradigm which suggests that people are drawn to and prefer to be with similar others because it is thought to ease communication, increase the predictability of behavior, and foster trust and reciprocity (Byrne, 1971).

Universities and colleges understand the appeal of homophily and endorse its application in supporting various like-minded groupings such as fraternities and sororities, athletic dorms, interest clubs, religious associations, and unique housing communities, including residential halls such as First-Year Communities and Honors Dorms. Residential colleges essentially divide a large school into small, permanent, often faculty-led, cross-sectional, human-friendly

components that promote both learning and loyalty (Miller, 2018). College themed housing and living-learning communities (LLC's) are different from residential colleges because the primary affinity of the latter is a common interest among the students. For example, American University (n. d.) explains their LLCs as "cohorts of students who live and explore a common interest or academic pursuit together. Some include required courses...and others are organized around a...community interest."

The formation of self-selected campus communities based on perceived commonalities reflects the inevitable process of group aggregation. Unfortunately, there appears to be a thick wall of exclusion built by homophily, and this preference for the company of similar actors can often be a barrier to the pursuit of diversity. Nevertheless, where race or ethnicity are considered, there is pushback, and political fallout as American history has demonstrated that racial division inevitably leads to injustice (Pierre & Wood, 2019), because racial division is incompatible with justice, and justice demands that the same standards apply to all. Few believe that division into racial groups is compatible with equal protection of the law, let alone equality in everyday life. However, backers of separate housing and enclaves for underrepresented students appeal for such as merely a type of "themed housing."

Such ethnic homophily, conceived as a preference for friends with the same ethnic background, is one of the most crucial sources of secure social connections in Western societies (Smith, Maas, van Tubergen, 2014; Wimmer & Lewis, 2010). Seebruck and Savage (2014), however, reveal that while homophily may not in itself advantage White employees, it does disadvantage ethnic minorities because information takes much longer to arrive from the majority to minorities, which means that they are less likely to hear about novel ideas or reasonable job offers (Karimi, Génois, Wagner, Singer, & Strohmaier, 2018) and because it creates "relational inertia" (Gargiulo & Benassi, 2000) since the ease of having a network of bonding ties tends to encourage individuals to deepen those ties becoming more insular and dissuading them from forming new bridging ties.

## **CREATING INTERGROUP ACTIVITIES AS AN ANTIDOTE TO SEGREGATED HOUSING**

Bias can be reduced by factors that transform individuals' perceptions of group boundaries from "us" and "them" to a more inclusive "we" (Gaertner, Dovidio, Anastasio, Bachman, & Rust, 1993). When members of different groups consider themselves a single entity rather than separate groups, intergroup bias will lessen through processes involving pro-in-group favoritism (Dovidio, Gaertner, Validzic, Matokac, Johnson, & Frazier, 1997). Activity (or task) structures and collective interest interventions create interdependencies which often reduce the salience of demography-based collective identities and increase the salience of other superordinate group identities (Chatman, Polzer, Barsade, & Neale, 1998), and Gaertner, Mann, Dovidio, Murrell, and Pomare (1990) found that intergroup cooperation reduced bias by transforming members' cognitive representations of the aggregate from two groups to one group.

Underlying this argument is the notion of the functional relations developed by Sherif, Harvey, White, Hood, and Sherif (1961), which suggests that by manipulating tasks, institutions may be able to generate meaningful interpersonal relationships that cross-group boundaries. Sherif (1966) noted the need among the parties for contact. "Contact is an effective medium for change when groups are directed toward superordinate goals overriding their separate concerns" (pp. 146-147). Underlying this proposition is the idea that interdependence enhances intergroup

relations by inducing a collective in-group identity. The emergence of a collective in-group identity does not require each subgroup to forsake its racial identity, yet Turner, Oakes, Haslam, and McGarty (1994) found that the increased saliency of membership in a superordinate group comes at the expense of the saliency of membership in some demography-based subgroup.

Indeed, in their classic “jigsaw studies” of cooperative interdependence, Aronson and associates demonstrated that when students in heterogeneous learning groups each received only one of several complementary segments relating to a subject that the group as whole had to learn, the students had no choice but to cooperate in order to see the big picture, and this cooperation decreased intergroup bias (Aronson, Blaney, Stephan, Rosenfield, & Sikes, 1977). The task interdependence focus of jigsaw classrooms makes students dependent on each other to succeed and results in dramatic academic and social improvements. Students in these classrooms also come to like each other more as students begin to form cross-ethnic friendships and discard ethnic and cultural stereotypes and prejudices. Jigsaw classrooms also lead to decreases in absenteeism, and they even seem to increase student empathy levels (Aronson & Patnoe, 1997).

When tasks are structured to require cooperative interdependence, the members of a given group may come to associate the rewarding aspects of achieving success with members of other groups. Such association increases intergroup attraction and provides a basis for the emergence of supportive intergroup relationships (Dovidio, Gaertner, & Kawakami, 2003). Finally, in keeping with social identity theory (Tajfel, 1969), task structures creating task-based interdependencies may reduce the salience of demography-based collective identities and increase the salience of other superordinate organizational or occupational identities (Chatman, Polzer, Barsade, & Neale, 1998). For example, Gaertner et al. (1990) found that intergroup cooperation reduced bias by transforming members’ cognitive representations of the aggregate from two groups to one group. Regardless of a group’s level of racial heterogeneity, such a superordinate identity is likely to facilitate the emergence of effective support relationships that, over time, may deepen and become more personal and intimate. Taken together, these perspectives all suggest the higher the degree of unit-level task interdependence, the higher the relative prevalence of supportive relationships with racially dissimilar peers. Gaertner and Dovidio (2000) suggest that students from different ethnicities are more likely to develop positive interpersonal attitudes and eventually even intergroup friendships if an intervention directs their attention to a shared interest.

In Sherif’s (1958, 1966) classic studies, it was cooperative contact, established after the imposition of a categorical distinction, that reduced in-group favoritism. Results of the study strongly suggested bringing groups together can be a significant factor in creating better intergroup relations (e.g., Hewstone & Brown, 1986; Pettigrew, 1997). Gaertner and Dovidio (e.g., Gaertner et al., 1990; Gaertner, Mann, Murrell, & Dovidio, 1989) experimentally created intergroup contexts in which groups were either segregated and distinct or were cooperatively integrated. Their findings, consistent with the recognized effects of contact in varied settings, were that cooperative contact was successful in reducing intergroup bias. More importantly, they established that the formation of collective in-group identity was the mediating process. In other words, psychological boundaries between the in-group and out-group were eliminated, resulting in reduced bias, and a new overarching group was formed that included former out-group members.

Even small efforts to bring individuals together can be useful in enhancing the positive affect. For example, Wiltermuth and Heath (2004) randomly assigned people in groups of three to listen to the Canadian national anthem under different conditions. In the control condition,

participants read the works silently while the song played. The synchronous group sang the song together out loud. The asynchronous group sang, although not in unison: each person heard the song at a different tempo. The participants in the study believed they were being analyzed on their singing. However, after singing, they moved into what they believed was a different study, where they had a chance to keep the money for themselves or share it with the group. The group that sang together shared significantly more. They reported feeling like each other and more like a team than participants in the other conditions.

Other activities to get ethnically different students to work together toward common goals are limited only by the creativity of university officials. For example, Rutledge (n. d.) generated a list of 30 Community Service Project Ideas for College Students. Similarly, Cornell University (2019) has “Pre-Orientation Service Trips” for incoming first-year students that provide the opportunity to build college networks and shape new friendships through community service projects and fun evening activities the week before classes start. Projects have included: painting and light demolition work, trail maintenance, visiting with residents at area nursing homes, working in community gardens, and preparing local schools for opening. Such mixed-group activities will help all students to acclimate to the world outside the campus and build students’ social capital—“the ability of actors to secure benefits by virtue of membership in social networks or other social structures” (Portes, 1998, p. 6).

Universities should encourage students to engage with the entirety of the school’s diversity because graduates will face diversity challenges beyond college and in the workplace (Rice-Cameron, 2017). Allowing students to self-segregate based on race-related characteristics may impede their ability to forge relationships and social capital with people outside of their racial background, and this may negatively impact minorities to a greater extent than the majority. Woodson (2015) emphasized this point in his discussion of the disadvantages many Black attorneys face in America’s largest law firms because homophily-based life experiences deprived them of equal access to critical relationship capital in predominantly White firms, thereby reinforcing racial inequality.

Woodson (2015) interviewed 75 Black attorneys and found that those lawyers who exhibited limited contact with the majority (i.e., Whites) in their background experiences suffered career disadvantages. Although race-based distance may potentially impede Black and White attorneys alike, given the skewed racial demographics of large law firms, Black associates bear the brunt of this problem. According to Woodson (2015), “the burden of interracial acclimation will likely continue to fall disproportionately upon Black associates. Black attorneys, an underrepresented and marginalized group, have far greater personal incentives to seek out opportunities to develop common ground with their White colleagues and face far greater costs for failing to do so” (p. 2574).

This was evident in the Woodson’s accounts of several of the interviewees who had arrived at their firms with extensive prior acclimation to their White counterparts through high quality interracial social relationships and interactions. A few interviewees indicated their experiences had provided them the comfort and acclimation necessary to develop relationship capital at their firms. One interviewee who had attended several elite, predominantly White schools and included several White men among his closest friends, explained the difficulties of his Black peers while distinguishing his own experience. He went on to explain: “From the day you walk in the door, it’s based on who you know, who you can create relationships with, so it’s a very tricky place to navigate . . . . For me, to be clear, this wasn’t really a problem because I’ve pretty much been operating in these environments . . . for most of my life...[I]t didn’t feel any

different than anywhere else I've ever been (Woodson, 2015, p. 2574). Similarly, another interviewee noted, "I've just been in a lot of different social environments, and I have a lot of different types of friends so for me fitting in is not something that's that difficult...but I think for other [Black attorneys] it is a lot more difficult" (Woodson, 2015, p. 2574). Such career advantages due to interracial contact demonstrated a vivid account of the benefits of interracial acculturation and the development of social, relationship capital. These interviews are consistent with Seibert, Kraimer, and Liden's (2001) observation that social capital is considered a key variable for the explanation of successful careers.

## CONCLUSION

It is acknowledged that the intentions and goals of proponents of separate spaces, programs, and opportunities such as LLCs are motivated by the desire to assist disadvantaged, vulnerable, or otherwise at-risk students on campus. The scope of this paper's concerns, however, is focused primarily on those efforts that result in segregation—primarily as concerns racial and ethnic differences. Furthermore, this paper addresses such concerns in the context of primarily public schools, universities, and colleges, though yes, the findings apply to many private universities as well. It is noted that particularly the founding purposes of some private primary, secondary, and higher education institutions were based on segregationist ideology and that as a result of white supremacy, prejudice, and segregationist ideology, many Historically Black Colleges and Universities were founded. The continued mission, purpose, and necessity of respective HBCUs is a unique topic outside the scope of this paper and therefore, not addressed in the research or conclusions.

The 1954 Supreme Court decision in *Brown* (1954) ended separate but equal in America and spurred colleges and universities to lead an effort to achieve racial *integration*, which research overwhelmingly reports as beneficial concerning racial relations. Indeed, in much of the academic world, a consensus exists regarding the positive benefits of integration. However, even though colleges and universities succeed in using admissions processes to achieve more diverse student bodies, they seldom achieve the more important goal that diversity ideally serves—significant interaction between students from diverse backgrounds, with diverse experiences, and different worldviews (Bruni, 2015). Increasingly, universities that advocate and endorse the benefits of diversity seem to be embracing ethnic division in which minority groups have their own spaces, celebrations, and distinct events to make students who have traditionally been underrepresented on campus feel welcome and safe. Such groupings, proponents suggest, are necessary to combat the sense of isolation that many minority students feel and to find a sense of belonging that cannot be satisfied by being on a predominately or traditionally White campus. This neo-segregation is allowed in the name of lifting those who have been discriminated against in the past and is encouraged as an initiative to build stronger communities.

However, few would argue that such segregation should be applied in the military. No serious leader in society seeks a return to segregated housing. No one advocates for separate but equal housing, transportation, or facilities for different races on sports teams. Homophily and the need to belong have powerful, fundamental, and pervasive effects (Baumeister & Leary, 1995), but to attain the benefits of diversity continually advocated in higher education, such inclinations must be overcome. Unfortunately, the expected beneficiaries of this benign discrimination often feel isolated and treated differently. That separation, in turn, fosters prejudice, racial stereotyping, and discrimination toward out-groups; by design, universities have isolated them

and treated them differently. Such re-segregation into ethnic enclaves may unintentionally align minority students into coalitions of mutual resentment against their majority peers and even the university itself.

Undoubtedly, some university officials feel that neo-segregation is beneficial. However, such altruistic intentions can be self-justifying; that is, the desire to help and assist others relieves individuals of responsibility for the results of such action (Mitschow, 2000). There appears to be a blind trust that if a goal is altruistic and compassionate, then one's actions need no explanation. Although many prosocial actions can be excellent and have noble intentions, they are no absolute substitutes for effective helping strategies. Nobel Prize-winning economist Milton Friedman (1975) stated in an interview that: "One of the great mistakes is to judge policies and programs by their intentions rather than their results. We all know a famous road that is paved with good intentions."

Homophily, that results from well-intentioned efforts of more homogeneous learning communities, "poses a fundamental challenge that faces learning community initiatives by emphasizing programs' vulnerabilities to the interplay of social forces" (Smith, 69). As Smith pointed out, "While homophily is not necessarily synonymous with dysfunction...[within such learning community initiatives]...its influence [can shape] the outcomes of individuals'... experiences...[and i]n some instances, the broad, integrative experience students hope to gain from a learning community program may succumb to a stronger current of conformity (Smith, 69). In other words, good intentions can sometimes have unintended pernicious consequences (Grant & Schwartz, 2011). For example, recent changes in U.S. military policy that now allow for payment of death benefits even in cases of suicide have, it seems, helped create the recent epidemic of suicides in the military (Grazier, 2013). Note too that the well-intentioned efforts to raise self-esteem have instead increased problematic narcissistic behavior (Twenge, Campbell, & Gentile, 2012). As another illustration, consider the U.S. sub-prime mortgage crisis. To provide housing to a broader demographic of families, lenders were encouraged by changes in government policies to open homeownership to more Americans poorly prepared to manage the debt burden they incurred. When many high-risk subprime mortgage borrowers could not make loan payments nor sell their home for a profit during the Great Recession of 2008, they defaulted and found themselves in more significant financial difficulties than before they purchased a home. As another example, consider the words of Goldman, Sachs economist, Dambisa Moyo (2009a), who observed:

Evidence overwhelmingly demonstrates that aid to Africa has made the poor poorer, and the growth slower [...] [Western] insidious aid culture has left African countries more debt-laden, more inflation-prone, more vulnerable to the vagaries of the currency markets and [...] it's increased the risk of civil conflict and unrest [...] Aid is an unmitigated political, economic, and humanitarian disaster. [...] It is the disease of which it pretends to be the cure (p. 10). [See also Moyo, 2009b]

Angus Deaton, the 2015 recipient of the Nobel Prize in Economics, empirically supports Moyo's assertion about the dysfunctional consequences to African countries that receive foreign assistance and where almost all government expenditure comes from external sources such as aid agencies and foreign governments (Deaton, 2013). Beneficence may be well-intended; however, good intentions may not always translate into good outcomes (Wade-Benzoni, 2002). Helping sometimes hurts those for whom the aid was intended (Von Bergen, Soper, Rosenthal, Cox, &

Fullerton, 1999; Von Bergen et al., 2017).

Well-meaning actions can wind up hurting the very parties designed to be helped. Such seems to be the case with modern college trends of neo-segregation. In denying neo-segregation efforts, University officials must be sure to communicate the decision with a kind spirit and with the explicit goal of educating students as to the rationale and scholarship behind such declinations. Universities must realize that they are not genuinely helping students if re-segregation leads to increased levels of prejudice, bigotry, discrimination, and low social capital over the long term. Sometimes college administrators need to love students enough to say “no” to separatism, which the students often perceive as helpful. The paternalism of separatist thinking infects students and faculty alike, resulting in more racial tensions and resentment. Psychologist Kenneth Clark’s (1953) early studies of racial segregation are confirmed by the climate fostered in academia today—that is, racial segregation harms both majority and minority students, especially and particularly when supported and reinforced by university authorities.

After decades of struggle to celebrate diversity, provide equal access and treatment, and reconcile different ethnic groups, many universities across the country seem to be advocating a return to racial and ethnic separateness. In many cases, higher education has turned back the clock by establishing distinctions across various domains, done under the pretext of establishing cultural bonds, uniting people with shared values, and strengthening identities. By amplifying characteristics that are exclusive to some, ethnic collectives encourage a sort of racial factionalism that undermines the strength of campus communities. Such separation emphasizes differences, and differences often create dynamics that lead to negative learning experiences. By encouraging students to adhere to their racial identities, ethnic groups sometimes harden racial divides and promote racial isolation on campus that undercut both the individualism and the social cohesion that an enduring civil society requires. Such separation of students is reminiscent of the horrific words of former Alabama Governor George C. Wallace, who in 1963 affirmed, “Segregation today. Segregation tomorrow. Segregation forever!”

It seems that a generation of college students are demanding the same thing the leaders of the civil rights movement fought against. In a 1967 speech to the American Psychological Association titled “The Role of the Behavioral Scientist in the Civil Rights Movement” Martin Luther King, Jr. said “[W]e must reaffirm our belief in building a democratic society, in which Blacks and Whites can live together as brothers, where we will all come to see that integration is not a problem, but an opportunity to participate in the beauty of diversity.” Dr. King was able to help people to understand that our destiny as a country depends on us working and living together in harmony.

Civil rights leaders placed their lives at risk working to achieve a non-race determined society. Most memorably, Dr. King articulated his dream when people “will not be judged by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character” (King, 1963). The struggle to tear down racial distinctions in education continued for decades, yet universities are reintroducing neo-segregation, making race a key determinant for student participation in activities and assignment to housing facilities. While we agree with multiculturalists that ethnic similarities seem to offer minority students a sense of safety, a platform from which to engage in political activism, and even a springboard for increased levels of achievement (Levin & van Laar, 2002; van Laar & Levin, 2002; see also Hall & Allen, 1989), it is also true that membership in these organizations can result in unintended consequences and harmful effects. Neo-segregation appears to be a double-edged sword.

At least superficially, neo-segregation is a personal choice. It is acknowledged that

universities are not forcing minority students into segregated social groups, segregated classes, or to march in segregated graduations. Nevertheless, the voluntary character of neo-segregation can itself be illusory. “Voluntary” in name only, it would call for an unusually skillful and determined student to avoid them. Segregated orientation programs, for example, lead to other forms of segregation because they result in the first classmates a student meets and gets to know belongs to the same ethnic group. The typical vulnerability and social awkwardness of first-year students is channeled into reinforcing minority identity and preparing students for the security of a segregated support group. Those who resist may be exposed to both isolation and peer pressure.

Universities face the challenge of facilitating healthy, supportive, and affirming group aggregation while at the same time trying to inhibit calcification into self-segregation. To achieve this, colleges and universities need to build bridges among varied communities. That challenge gives rise to opportunity—fostering intergroup relations through serious, civil intergroup conversation and collaboration. How, then, do we balance the quest for equality with freedom of association? Although we do not present a comprehensive solution, we do offer a recommendation. A critical first step in managing conflict between these two principles is to stop exacerbating the conflict. Allow for the celebration of diversity and the freedom of association, but do not plot to divide and create more segregation intentionally. Design and provide more activities with superordinate goals where all races and special interest affinity groups can participate, contribute, and interact.

While some consider creating safe spaces for ethnic minority students and other social classifications a positive step toward helping particular demographic groups navigate university life, research and multiple studies have determined that when individuals are divided into categories or groups they begin to enhance the status of that group (the in-group) and demonize over time those in other groups (the out-groups). People are most likely to be prejudiced against members of groups to which they have little or no opportunity to belong. Individuals bolster their own in-group at the expense of out-groups (Meindl & Lerner, 1984). Safe space segregation determined by demographics may diminish the values of diversity and inclusiveness that universities have advanced for decades. Society as a whole should also be concerned with neo-segregation because it can be a breeding ground for racial conflict. As more and more universities accept the problematic reality of multiple, separate groupings defined by racial and ethnic background, this portends continual racial strife for the nation. Americans are increasingly self-divided and well-supplied with stereotypes and invectives to use against each other. Our descent into such polarization has many causes, but neo-segregation may prove to be among the deepest. It is essential that higher education leaders take proactive actions to promote and encourage racial reconciliation. On the college campus, this includes efforts toward matriculation, retention, and successful graduation of those students who are disadvantaged, vulnerable, or otherwise at-risk. However, research indicates that those actions are taken—no matter how well-intentioned—that result in the re-segregation of student populations based on race and ethnicity, can be counterproductive to their intended results. Moreover, a plethora of studies demonstrate the benefits of desegregation and the resulting advantages of a vibrant, multicultural living, learning, and highly interactive environment. In brief, segregation of racial and ethnic groups on university and college campuses generally appear to exacerbate racial tensions and reinforce in-group and out-group interactions and biases, while multicultural integration builds trust, reduces out-group biases, increases friendships across racial and ethnic lines, and advances racial reconciliation.

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