

School segregation harms Black children's health and well-being

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There has been a **200% increase** in highly segregated schools in the U.S since 1991. That year, the Supreme Court issued rulings that made it easier for districts to be released from Brown vs. Board.



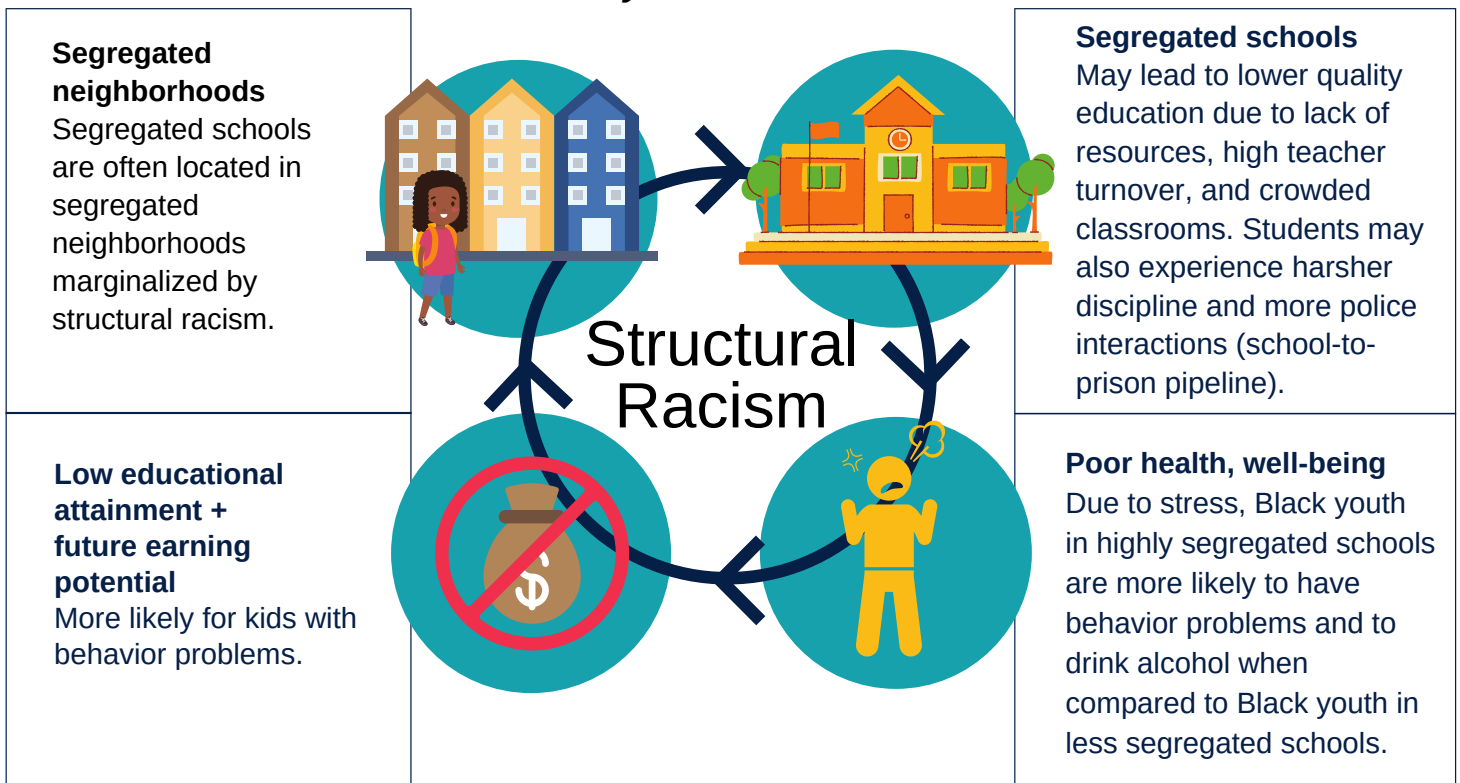
Background

Highly segregated schools with 10% or less white students have more than tripled since 1991.¹ Meanwhile racial and ethnic inequities in child health and health behaviors in the United States persist, with worse health among Black children.

Schooling can influence one's health and life course, and attending segregated schools is commonplace for Black children. Yet, research about its impact on Black children's health has been scarce until now.

New UCSF studies have found that school segregation is associated with poor well-being among Black children. Frequent discrimination and stress, combined with lack of resources, increase the likelihood of behavioral problems and drinking during childhood. It then contributes to worse health later in adulthood.

Segregated schools harm Black children's well-being. They propagate a harmful cycle of intergenerational inequities driven by structural racism.



These findings highlight the need to promote school racial integration and support Black youth attending segregated schools.

The historic 1954 Brown vs. Board of Education Supreme Court ruling led to substantial increases in racial integration across schools in the 1960s-1970s. This improved Black people's well-being, including increasing educational and occupational attainment and self-rated health.^{2,3}



Integrated schools can help break the cycle

- More resources and support
- Higher-quality education and greater educational attainment
- Greater earning potential
- Greater well-being

Recommendations

Structural interventions to address school segregation or its consequences may be important for reducing the Black-White gap in health. School officials, policymakers, and other stakeholders could consider the following interventions to improve the school environment for Black children:



Reform school funding formulas to increase government funding and education resources in segregated districts.



Reduce biased and disproportionately harsh treatment targeted at Black children.



Promote school racial integration (eg, initiatives proposed in the Strength in Diversity Act).

References:

Wang et al. School Racial Segregation and the Health of Black Children. *Pediatrics* May 2022; 149 (5): e2021055952. <https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2021-055952>

Kim et al. School racial segregation and long-term cardiovascular health among Black adults in the US: A quasi-experimental study. *PLoS Med* June 2022; 19(6): e1004031. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pmed.1004031>

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