

Why Diversity is a Compelling Interest: Social Science Evidence Since 1990

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The effects of school and classroom composition on educational outcomes

■ **ASA's Spivack Project (2005)**

- surveying, evaluating, synthesizing and archiving social and behavior science research N = 450

■ **NSF Project (2006)**

- school and classroom compositional effects on math and science

■ ***Teachers College Record***

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The Use of Social Science Evidence in PICS Opinions

- Justice Breyer
- Justice Thomas
- Justices Kennedy and Stevens
- Chief Justice Roberts

A Comparison of Social Science Evidence in PICS Amicus Briefs

■ Petitioners

- Relied on research from 1970s & 1980s
- Social Science doesn't support a compelling interest in racially diverse schools

■ Respondents

- Relied on research since 1990
- Social science supports a compelling interest in diversity and avoiding racial isolation

Table 1: Number and Percent of Social Science Citations by Decade in PICs Social Science Amici Briefs

Amici	1970s	1980s	1990s	2000 +
Murphy et al N =20	40%	15%	30%	15%
Armor et al N = 29	24%	28%	24%	24%
APA N = 57	4%	16%	33%	47%
AERA N = 54	4%	17%	13%	66%
553 SOCIAL SCIENTISTS N=213	9%	14%	18%	59%

How Does Social Science Differ by Decade?

- Early research (1970s, 1980s)
 - Simple statistical analysis
 - Single districts case studies soon after implementation of desegregation
 - Quasi-experiments with poor measures of key variables (e.g., socioeconomic status)
 - Small, nonrepresentative samples
 - Cross-sectional data

Later research (1990s to present)

- Superior to early research
- Data from nationally representative samples or state-wide populations
- Valid and reliable measures of key concepts
- Longitudinal data
- Advanced statistical modeling

Advances in Statistical Modeling

- Multilevel modeling
 - Recognizes students are nested within classrooms & schools
 - Disentangles the contributions of school, classroom, and student factors to educational outcomes
 - Distinguishes effects of school racial composition from school SES composition and other school factors that influence outcomes

Conclusion I: The Preponderance of Recent Social Science Research Shows

- Diverse schools
 - Promote achievement in
 - Mathematics
 - Science
 - Language and reading
 - Benefit students in
 - Elementary, middle, and high school
 - Benefit students from all racial & SES backgrounds

Diverse schools

- Undermine intergenerational perpetuation of racial prejudice and fear
- Promote interracial friendships
- No evidence of academic harm to any student groups

Diverse schools

- Promote
 - Educational and occupational attainment
 - Integrated neighborhoods and workplaces
- Prepare students for citizenship in a multiethnic democratic society in a rapidly globalizing world

Research also confirms that

- Both racial and SES diversity are important
- Tracking and ability grouping resegregate students even in diverse school

Conclusion II: More Research is Needed

- Why, when, and how diversity affects outcomes
- Optimal ranges and tipping points
- How diversity affects students from varying backgrounds
- How organizational features of schools and classrooms interact with human agency

Conclusion III: The Next Steps

- The Courts
- Educational Practitioners and Policy-makers

Thank you