



Racial Equality in the St. Louis Region: A Community Call to Action

INTRODUCTION

The United States was founded on the principles of freedom, equality and equal opportunity for all people. We all know the famous lines from the Declaration of Independence-“that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness.” In the last half of the 20th century, the federal courts and legislature mandated that these inalienable rights belong to all citizens of the United States.

However, the daily reality for many in this country is far more inequitable and unjust than some realize. This is true despite a decade of national prosperity. A FOCUS task force of 30 citizens studied the state of racial equality in the St. Louis region over the course of the past 18 months with the hope of furthering equal opportunity for all people in the St. Louis region. The FOCUS task force found that while individual attitudes towards race improved substantially over the past decade, institutional change has not followed suit. Though there has been overall improvement for all racial groups in the St. Louis region in terms of economics, housing and education, the relative disparities between people of color and Whites, particularly between African Americans and Whites, have basically remained the same and in some cases worsened.

The purpose of this report is to bring the issue of racial equality to the forefront, to demonstrate why providing equal opportunity to all citizens must become a community priority and to assure that it becomes and remains one. With respect to racial equality, this report serves as a reflection of how far we have come as a region while simultaneously assessing how far we have yet to go to achieve true equality and equal opportunity for all people in the region. The report is meant to build on other community efforts to address racial disparity, encourage dialogue, and more importantly, call all citizens of the St. Louis region to action. It is not meant to place blame or dwell on the past, but to learn from history as we courageously and collectively address the future.

The data and findings of this report make it clear that for the St. Louis metropolitan area to be a progressive community that attracts and retains bright, innovative people and businesses, we must work collaborative-

ly to improve the state of racial equality in our region. Each of us has the ability to effect change within our own spheres of influence and the responsibility to do so. The future strength and prosperity of the St. Louis metropolitan area rests largely on our ability to make real progress in addressing this issue in every sector, community and neighborhood of our region.

As reports continue to be published on different challenging issues facing the St. Louis region, they are often met with the shrug of shoulders and sighs of “not another report.” Yet, the FOCUS task force believes that this report is valuable in its ability to serve as a community-wide intervention and catalyst for change. Racism is a challenging and complex problem that is deeply entrenched in our culture. Unfortunately, there is no quick fix to address this problem. If change were easy, this report and the ongoing dialogue about race and racism would not be necessary.

A CALL TO ACTION

In examining the complex issue of racial equality, the FOCUS task force faced the critical question of:

“How can we get people to pay attention and take meaningful action?”

Mobilizing people around a crucial community issue is always a daunting challenge even under the best of circumstances. Those challenges are especially delicate and problematic when it comes to racial equality. Getting people to take action on an issue of this magnitude usually comes down to one key question: “*What’s in it for me?*” Coarse as that may sound, it is a reality we must face if we expect to shift people’s attitudes and behaviors regarding racial equality. People of color as well as Whites wonder what’s in it for them to take action - but for different reasons.

For many people of color, it is often a matter of frustration, and even antagonism. They see racial inequality as a persistent and pervasive indignity they confront every day in many ways-some subtle and insidious, some flagrant and hostile. They have experienced it all their lives, and they believe it is unlikely

that the White community as a whole will come to a collective awakening about the need to eradicate inequality.

For many Whites, the issue often seems remote and overblown. Many see racism and deliberate inequality as an isolated occurrence, believing we have a level playing field and everyone has equal opportunity to realize the American dream if they just work hard and play by the rules.

As a result, many people of color and Whites—including those who acknowledge and denounce inequality—often react with resignation. Even if they want to change racial conditions, they see it as a problem too big and rooted in biases too deep.

It would be foolhardy to believe that this report or any such research effort might wash away those perceptions by the sheer evidence and weight of the data. But it is still essential to reveal the facts and make a compelling case for why it is so vital for all of us to take action.

Why should we care? Why is action so important? The reasons are many. Following are a few of the more significant ones.

- **Economic Strength:** In any community, whatever its size or complexion, people are either contributing to the economy or putting a drain on it. Those communities that offer the maximum number of people a first-rate education, high-level skills and ample opportunities for high-paying jobs are the ones that will generate the greatest economic strength. They also will be the communities that attract the businesses of the future. High-tech is here to stay, and it will become an increasingly prevalent feature of the economic landscape. Imagine the advantage it would be for our community to have a rich, diverse and deep reserve of highly-skilled workers. This is what will entice the most advanced companies to locate their businesses in the St. Louis region and create greater economic opportunities for citizens as well as the larger community. The bottom line reality is clear. For every human being who fails to realize their fullest potential, we diminish the economic strength and quality of life for everyone in our community.
- **Attracting and Retaining Young Talent:** The best and the brightest of our country's young people—those with the most to contribute—are very clear about their priorities. One of them is to work in a vibrant, expansive and progressive community where economic and social opportunities are bountiful,

diverse and exciting. For many of those exceptional young people, our community simply is not making the grade. Many young people from other communities will not come here. Many from the Bi-state region are seeking opportunities elsewhere. Beyond the obvious economic impact of this “brain drain,” the migration of young people away from the St. Louis region poses an important social issue. Forging a vibrant community of equality and diversity will help stem the migration of ambitious young people leaving their parents and siblings behind—sometimes for distant places and often only because the social and economic climate offers a broader spectrum of opportunity somewhere else.

- **Community Pride:** In terms of several important social and economic indicators, our community is slipping behind when compared to others across the country. In large part, that decline is due to the racial inequality that continues to deny so many of our citizens the opportunity for the economic and educational opportunities that many of us take for granted. This not only damages our economy, but it is an assault on the sense of pride that every person wants to feel about the place they call “home.”
- **Moral Imperative:** It was clear to the FOCUS task force from the outset that it would be difficult to appeal to people on the most basic and most humane premise of all—that ensuring racial equality is simply the right thing to do. Still, it is a vital message that we all must hear and share with others. It may not be the first or final force that moves people into action, but ultimately, it must be the most important and lasting rationale for any society built on the belief that all people are created equal.

While there are excellent efforts in our community to address racism, the issue has not been a regional priority commanding the attention, resources and problem-solving skills of people from every sector of the St. Louis region. Our region must aggressively address the issue of racial equality; it is a matter of collective quality of life for everyone, but more importantly, it is a matter of justice for us all. If this does not happen now, the region will become even further divided. In addition to the recommendations made in this report, here are a few action steps that each and every community member can do to improve racial equality in the St. Louis region.

- Join the FOCUS racial equality implementation/ advocacy committee to address the recommendations and action steps in this report.
- Start an interracial dialogue group among colleagues, friends, neighborhoods or others.
- Learn about the history of another racial or ethnic group.
- Attend a cultural event that is different from the kinds of events you normally attend.
- Visit a different part of the St. Louis region outside of the neighborhoods with which you are most familiar.
- Read a newspaper, magazine or book that focuses on a different racial or ethnic audience.
- Work to understand biases and stereotypes you may hold within yourself and how you came to believe what you do.
- Read multicultural books to your children, and talk to them about valuing diversity.
- Write a television station, newspaper or radio station manager when you notice stereotypes in the news or other media programming.
- Shop at a store that is owned and operated by another racial or ethnic group.
- Interrupt a racist joke, and speak up when you hear negative racial comments.
- Volunteer with and/or contribute funds to an organization that confronts racism.
- Initiate a discussion at work or at home about racism.
- Log onto the St. Louis Diversity Awareness Partnership's website (www.makeadifferencestlouis.org) for more action ideas.

*In 1989, Confluence St. Louis, a predecessor organization to FOCUS St. Louis, released a task force study entitled **A New Spirit for St. Louis: Valuing Diversity**. This report was important for the St. Louis region because it clearly acknowledged that racism and racial polarization exist in our community and penetrate its every aspect, from good government to quality education to economic opportunity and more.*

BACKGROUND

In 1989, Confluence St. Louis, a predecessor organization to FOCUS St. Louis, released a task force study entitled *A New Spirit for St. Louis: Valuing Diversity*. This report was important for the St. Louis region because it clearly acknowledged that racism and racial polarization exist in our community and penetrate its every aspect, from good government to quality education to economic opportunity and more.

The 1989 report provided many strong recommendations for change, received many acknowledgements in the community and underscored many of the region's problems of racism and racial polarization. Some of these recommendations were implemented and resulted in significant progress for the St. Louis region.

However, most of the report's recommendations were not implemented as fully or effectively as they were intended. In fact, most of the 1989 report recommendations remain relevant and applicable to the state of racial equality in the St. Louis region today. (For a listing

of the 1989 report recommendations and their progress to date, see the full report)

The FOCUS task force spent time assessing and discussing why some of the 1989 report recommendations fell short and recognized that successful implementation is reliant upon strong leadership and accountability within the community. With this in mind, the 2001 report and its accompanying implementation plans were researched and written to include:

- A focus on three specific areas for change—economics, housing and education;
- The use of data-driven indicators to serve as benchmarks wherever possible so that the St. Louis region can measure its progress over time;
- A series of recommendations and action steps for each primary indicator. The action steps are outlined in one, three, five and ten year increments with implementation accountability identified with specific sectors of the community;

(Adapted from the National Conference for Community and Justice, 2000)

THE GOALS FOR THE TASK FORCE REPORT ARE TO:

- Evaluate the state of racial equality and progress over the past decade in the St. Louis region;
- Assess how the primary racial groups in the St. Louis region are affected by racial inequality;
- Determine the most significant factors that contribute to and perpetuate racial inequality;
- Recommend specific goals and actions to improve racial equality;
- Encourage and promote the willingness of the community to deal constructively with the issue of racial equality; and
- Serve as a catalyst for enhanced cooperation and collaboration among the efforts in the St. Louis region working towards racial equality to effect greater collective impact on the region.

- The commitment on the part of FOCUS St. Louis to establish a standing implementation and advocacy committee that will provide ongoing leadership and monitoring to ensure that the recommendations are implemented over time. This committee will engage citizens from all sectors of the region, develop strategic alliances with key community stakeholders and serve as an advocate for racially just and inclusive community initiatives.

METHODOLOGY

A decade after the release of the 1989 Confluence St. Louis report on racial polarization, FOCUS St. Louis convened a task force of 30 citizens to address where we are today as a region in terms of racial equality. The citizen task force was diverse in terms of race, gender, socioeconomic status, geography and profession. Over the past 18 months, the FOCUS task force spent considerable time identifying and researching the key issues and indicators comprising this report. The task force heard from panels of guest speakers representing a variety of viewpoints on key areas, collected and analyzed significant amounts of data and engaged in extensive dialogue about the issues.

The report includes the most recent data available at

the time the research and data analysis were conducted. The FOCUS task force collected data for many different indicators over several decades. For some indicators, however, 1990 Census data were the most recent information available for use. Upon the release of all of the 2000 Census data, sections of this report will be updated. The FOCUS task force did encounter some limitations in its data collection process including incompleteness of data available, non-uniformity across Missouri and Illinois state lines and difficulty obtaining data disaggregated by race for some indicators.

Overall, the FOCUS task force analyzed the data collected to the best of its abilities and believes that the report findings, conclusions and recommendations are based on factual data and sound analysis. **Findings** represent the collection or compilation of data utilized by the FOCUS task force. These findings are derived from data sets and published materials, reports from resource people and the task force's data analysis. **Conclusions** express the value judgments of the FOCUS task force, based on the findings.

Recommendations are the FOCUS task force's specific suggestions for change based on the findings and conclusions. The full report contains specific action steps and timelines for implementing the recommendations.

SCOPE OF THE REPORT

While there are many important considerations that need to be addressed, the FOCUS task force determined that economics, housing and education are the most critical and comprehensive factors affecting racial equality in our region today. These three issues are integrally connected. For example, where a person lives influences the quality of public schooling available to the children in that household. This in turn affects the future educational readiness and the potential economic well being of these children. It became apparent to the FOCUS task force that these problems feed into one another and become part of an ongoing cycle—one with considerable force and history. Thus, combating racism requires a multi-pronged approach to address disparities in each of the three areas in this report.

Despite the changing demographics in the St. Louis region, the primary divide in our community remains that between African Americans and Whites. Therefore, the report focuses primarily on these two racial groups, while it addresses to a lesser degree the state of Hispanic and Asian American populations.

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TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Race: Race is a concept used to identify groups of people from one another on the basis of their skin color. However, race is not necessarily a fixed concept, as evidenced by the changing racial categorizations and definitions of the U.S. Census over the decades. Race has become a significant way in which American culture has become organized and understood, but it is important to recognize that many of our social and cultural norms are based on racial misunderstandings, stereotypes and misperceptions.

Racism: Racism “is a complex system of beliefs and behaviors, which are both conscious and unconscious; personal and institutional. They result in the oppression of people of color and benefit the dominant groups. It

is a system grounded in the presumed superiority of the White race” (National Conference for Community and Justice, 2001). Racism is commonly thought to be a form of prejudice or discrimination, but it is actually much more. Racism occurs on both individual and institutional levels.

Equality: Equality, as used in this report, refers to equal access to opportunities, rights and privileges for all racial groups.

White Privilege: White privilege is an important concept to understand in the context of this report. When one group is put at a disadvantage, another group generally gains advantage as a result. In the United States, the system of racism advantages Whites and disadvantages people of color. As a result of racism, Whites experience what is sometimes called “White privilege.” In other words, they benefit or experience privilege in

American society simply because they have White skin.

People of color: This report uses the terminology “people of color” to refer to African Americans,

Hispanics, Asian Americans and Native Americans. People of color is the preferred term of the FOCUS task force rather than “minority” or “non-White.” The numbers of people of color are rapidly growing and in many communities they are no longer the minority population. In fact, people of color comprise the majority of the world’s total population.

Other terms: The use of the term “White” throughout this report refers to White, non-Hispanic people, unless otherwise noted. The term “Hispanic” refers to an ethnic group rather than a racial group. However, many Hispanics are also people of color and they too experience racism. For the purposes of this report, the FOCUS task force has included Hispanics in its references to “people of color” and “racial groups.”

Racial Demographics—Changing Demographics in the St. Louis Region

| | 1980 | 1990 | 2000 | % Change 1980-2000 |
|-------------------------|------|-------|-------|-----------------------|
| White | 82% | 81.8% | 77.4% | (5.6%) |
| African American | 17% | 16.9% | 18.2% | 7.1% |
| Hispanic | .6% | 1% | 1.5% | 150% |
| Asian American | .9% | .9% | 1.4% | 56% |

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 1980, 1990, 2000 Redistricting Counts.

Demographics Table 1

THE RACIAL DEMOGRAPHY OF OUR REGION¹

Consistent with national trends, the racial demographics of the St. Louis region are becoming increasingly diverse. Like the U.S. as a whole, the numbers of people of color in the St. Louis region are growing at a rate faster than Whites. The racial demographics of the St. Louis metropolitan area today are approximately:

- 77.4% White,
- 18.2% African American,
- 1.5% Hispanic Origin,
- 1.4% Asian Americans, and
- 0.2% American Indian and Alaska Native (U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 Redistricting Counts).

For the St. Louis region, as seen in Demographics Table 1, the demographic racial changes between 1980

and 1990 were minimal, but between 1990 and 2000, the changes became more significant. Though the Hispanic and Asian American populations in the St. Louis region make up a small percent of the region's total population, these two populations have grown considerably over the last two decades (U.S. Census Bureau, Census 1980, 1990, 2000 Redistricting Counts). The greatest changes in African American racial composition occurred in St. Louis City and St. Louis County. Based on 2000 Census data, one in five St. Louis County residents are African American. There are now more African Americans living in St. Louis County than there are in St. Louis City (Parish, April 18, 2001).

¹The 2000 Census was the first year that individuals were able to classify themselves as belonging to more than one racial group. In the past, only one racial category could be chosen. However, in the St. Louis region only 1.2% of the population indicated belonging to more than one race.

ECONOMICS

Though we live in a country of great wealth, no other single factor contributes more to our nation and our region's racial divide than economic inequality. For many African Americans, economic parity is the number one civil rights issue facing our region (Parish, January 15, 2001).

The economic impact of racism is significant on the St. Louis region as well as on the nation. Each year, communities across the country experience the loss of real estate equity, tax revenue and worker productivity because of individual and institutional forms of racism that prevent equal access to housing, employment and educational opportunities for people of color (Tatum, 1997, p. 14).

Based on the FOCUS task force's study of racial equality in the St. Louis region today, the task force believes unequivocally that the economic playing field is still not a level one for people of color, particularly African Americans. Though individual attitudes have changed significantly over the past decade, action has not followed as closely behind (R. Farley, 1996). Individual and institutional racism continue to create significant barriers to equal access and opportunity for people of color. Overall, economic gains have been made by all racial and ethnic groups in the St. Louis

region. However, significant disparities between Whites and people of color remain. In many cases, these relative disparities have grown wider rather than decreased.

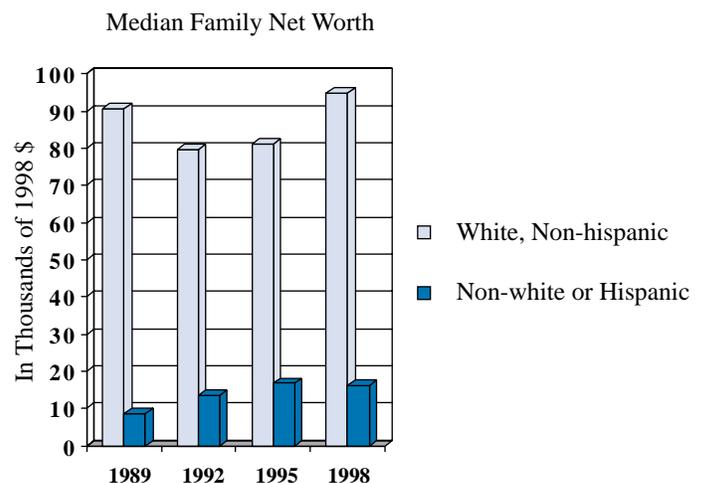
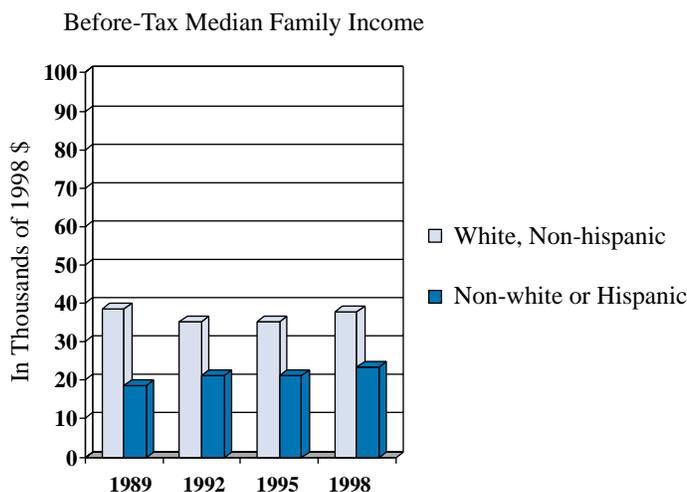
The Economics section focuses on the following four factors: wealth, income, poverty and employment.

WEALTH FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

1. If asset accumulation is increased for people of color, many of the racial inequalities that face our region and our nation today will decrease.

The creation of wealth is a cornerstone of racial inequality and a key driver of social mobility in the United States. Wealth inequality generates a cycle of inequalities. Assets lead to homeownership and where one lives affects educational opportunities, which, in turn, lead to social mobility and earning potential. As a result of social mobility and earnings, the cycle circles back to increased asset accumulation or more individual wealth. Wealth can be leveraged to produce more wealth. The racial disparities in wealth between African Americans, Hispanics and Whites are far greater than those of income, as seen in Economics Table 1 (Kennickell, Starr-McCluer & Surette, January 2000).

Income and Wealth Disparities—United States



Source: Kennickell, A., Starr-McCluer, M., & Surette, B. (2000, January). Recent changes in U.S. family finances: Results from the 1998 survey of consumer finances. Federal Reserve Bulletin. Online: www.federalreserve.gov/pubs/bulletin/2000/00bulletin.htm#jan.

Economics Table 1

2. The benefits derived by wealth accumulation are fewer for African Americans and Hispanics than for Whites. There are fewer opportunities for wealth accumulation by African Americans and Hispanics because of lower homeownership and home appreciation rates, loan denials, lower paying jobs, lack of intergenerational transfer of wealth, income inequality, employment discrimination and other forms of inequality (Oliver & Shapiro, 1998).

3. Homeownership is a significant source of wealth accumulation. As the FOCUS task force found, housing segregation greatly impacts asset disparity, precluding people of color from the economic opportunities of homeownership, home appreciation and wealth accumulation. The national homeownership rate for African Americans and Hispanics is estimated to be two-thirds of the rate for Whites (United for a Fair Economy, September 30, 1999). When assessing only financial wealth (net worth minus equity in owner-occupied housing), the economic disparities between African Americans, Hispanics and Whites are more stark. As can be seen in Economics Table 2, Hispanics and African Americans have less than 1% of the financial wealth of Whites (Collins, September-October 1999). See Housing Section for more information.

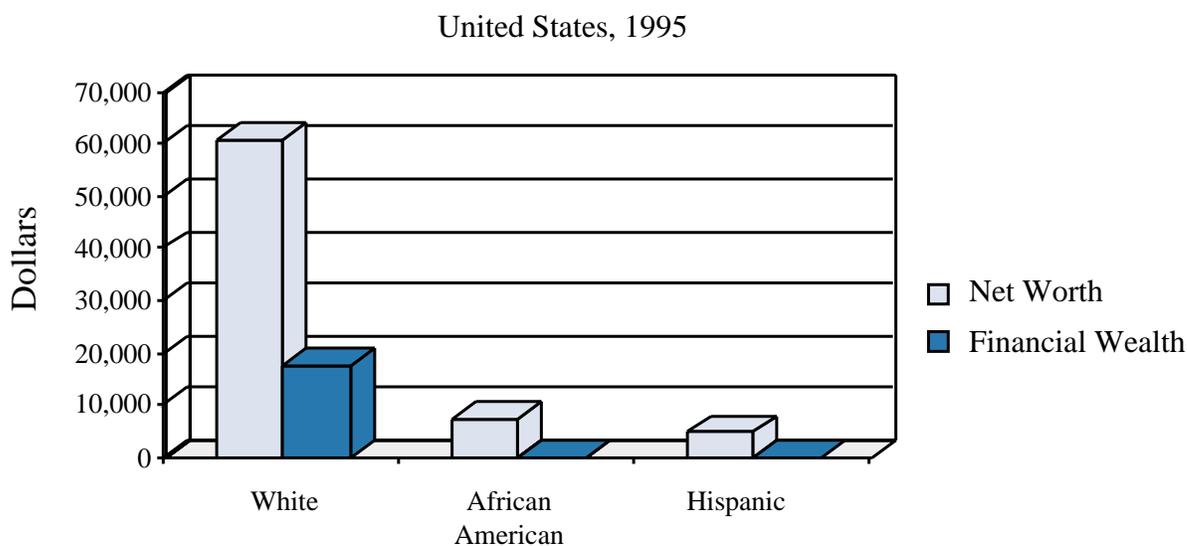
4. Asset possession encourages the full engagement of citizens in their community. The possession of wealth in the form of assets is not only important for obvious financial benefits, but also because those who have an economic ownership in the community, e.g. a home or business, are more apt to positively engage in the community as citizens simply because they have a tangible stake in society (Sherraden, 1991).

INCOME FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

1. There continues to be racial disparity in income levels, even when educational attainment remains the same. In 1998, African American male high school graduates earned 80 cents for every dollar earned by White male high school graduates. African American male college graduates earned an average of 72 cents for every dollar earned by White male college graduates. For females, the racial gap is slightly narrower (Cantave & Harrison, August 1999).

2. Income disparity results in fewer opportunities available to African Americans to generate wealth. Nationally, African Americans earn about 60% of the median household income of Whites (U.S. Census

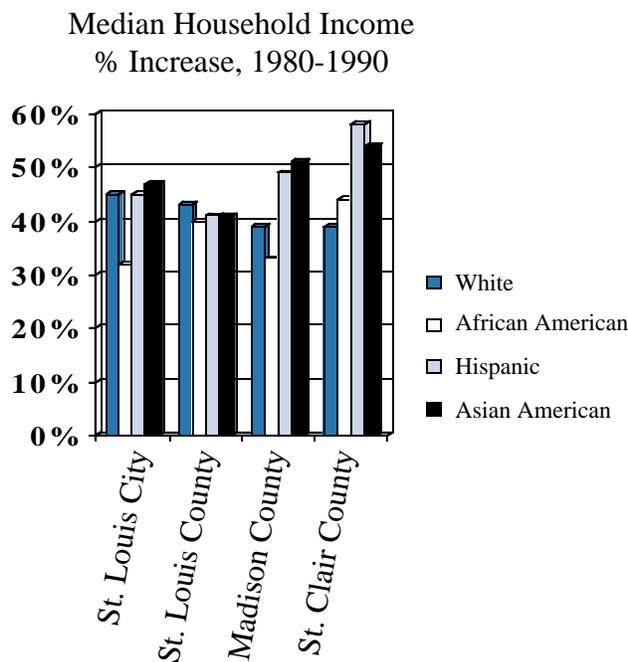
Net Worth Vs. Financial Wealth



Financial Wealth is defined as net worth minus equity in owner-occupied housing.
 Source: Collins, C. (1999, September-October). The wealth gap widens. *Dollars and Sense*, 225. Online: www.dollarsandsense.org.

Economics Table 2

Trends in Median Household Income—St. Louis Region



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 1980, 1990.

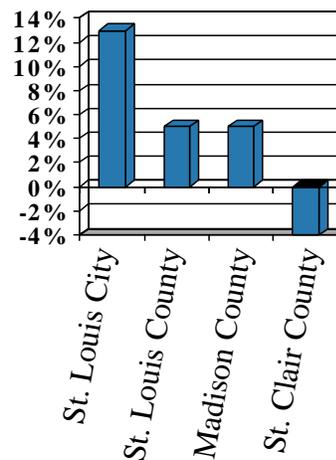
Economics Table 3

Bureau, Current Population Reports, September 1999). This disparity means that African Americans have less opportunity to benefit from investment earnings, home equity and other contributors of wealth accumulation. Between 1980 and 1990 in the St. Louis region, median household income increased for all racial groups, but the gap between African Americans and Whites also widened significantly during this time. See Economics Tables 3 and 4 (U.S. Census Bureau, Census 1980, and 1990).

POVERTY FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

1. Poverty is often cyclical in nature and thus self-perpetuating. If a child is poor, he or she will most likely live in a low-income, segregated neighborhood which limits access to good schooling, social mobility and economic opportunity. Furthermore, parents or grandparents who have no wealth cannot pass financial well-being on to their children, so their children have a much higher probability of staying

% Increase in African American/White Income Disparity by County, 1980-1990



The income disparity between African Americans and Whites increased in all but St. Clair County, where the disparity decreased by 4%.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 1980, 1990.

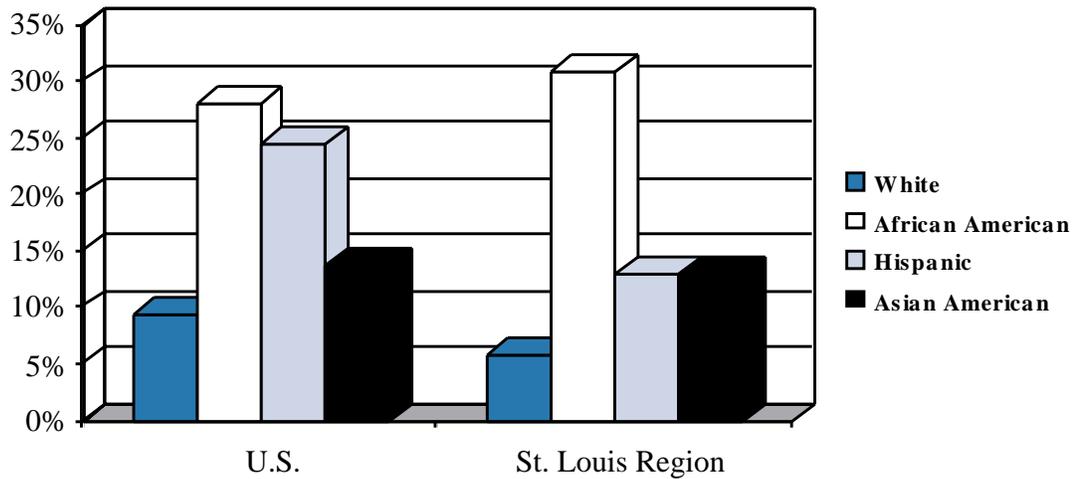
Economics Table 4

poor. Poverty is also perpetuated by housing segregation particularly as segregation is maintained over generations.

- 2. While poverty rates decreased for Whites and African Americans between 1980 and 1990, the relative disparity between them remained virtually unchanged.** Between 1980 and 1990, both poverty rates as well as the African American to White poverty ratio for the different counties in the St. Louis metropolitan area remained virtually unchanged or increased slightly. African Americans as a whole are poorer than Whites both locally and nationally. While the poverty rate for African Americans is three times that of Whites in the United States, 1990 Census data reveal the poverty rate for African Americans in the St. Louis region was five times the rate of Whites, as seen in Economics Table 5 (U.S. Census Bureau, Census 1980, 1990).
- 3. The issue of underemployment is as significant a problem as that of unemployment. Though many formerly unemployed welfare recipients are now**

Percent Below Poverty

United States and St. Louis Region, 1990



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 1990.

Poverty rates are for 1989. In 1989, the poverty threshold for a family of four was \$12,674.

Economics Table 5

working in low-wage jobs, they are not earning enough money to raise them out of poverty. They have gone from being unemployed and poor to working and poor. Nationwide, 72% of those who have left or been cut from the welfare system work for poverty wages (National Priorities Project, January 2000).

EMPLOYMENT FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

Unemployment Findings and Conclusions

1. Industry has moved from the urban core to the surrounding suburban communities, taking higher-paying blue-collar positions with it and leaving unemployment in the urban core very high for people of color. The migration outward of middle-class families from the inner city to suburban communities has had a significant impact on where companies and services are locating their businesses and where new development is taking place. Increasingly, companies are choosing to locate in the outlying suburban communities of the region which creates a significant employment challenge for low-income people who live in the urban core. This growing “spatial mismatch” between the residences

of job seekers and the location of jobs is a root cause of structural unemployment and poverty (Lambing & Gilbertson, July 2000, pp. 138-146; Wilson, 1998, p. 93).

2. To increase access to employment opportunities, enhanced public transportation planning and job training must be addressed. Over the last two decades, the State of Missouri has lost \$6.7 billion and Illinois has lost \$18.4 billion for job training and mass transit programs due to federal government cuts (National Priorities Project, December 1998). In the City of St. Louis, approximately 41.6% of African Americans were without a vehicle in 1990 and 29.8% of the region-wide African American population was without a vehicle (U.S. Census Bureau, Census 1990). For those without vehicles, public transportation is the only way to get to and from work. However, in the St. Louis region, public transportation is limited in terms of routes, schedules and accessibility, further reducing the employment opportunities available to those who rely upon it. While there are good job-training and reverse-commute programs available in the St. Louis region, they are not widely accessible and only serve a limited number of those in need (Lambing & Gilbertson, July 2000).

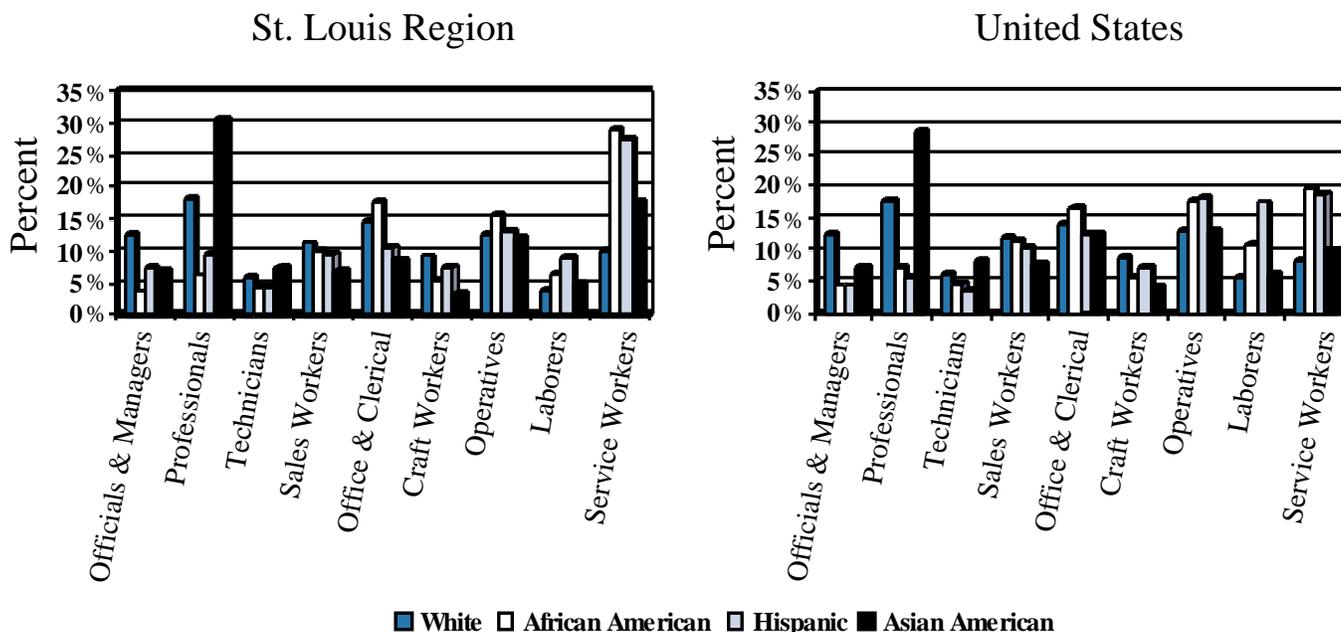
Labor Force Findings and Conclusions

- 1. If workforce development opportunities are not provided for those people currently working in manufacturing and service jobs, our region will not have the local labor supply to support its economy.** Historically, the St. Louis region's economy has relied on a high manufacturing base of industry. In the past decade, the manufacturing economy has shifted to an economy more reliant upon technology. The workforce of the future will have to be technologically savvy as well. The FOCUS task force believes that new and innovative workforce development opportunities are critical to the region's success in the technology and knowledge-based economy of the 21st century.
- 2. Given local labor force demographics and current job trends, the St. Louis region is on its way to a fully developed two-tiered workforce. Unless this trend is reversed, African Americans and Hispanics will continue to occupy mostly service positions while Whites and Asian Americans will continue to hold professional positions. This**

workforce polarization limits the region's ability to attract people of color or businesses that actively support and desire a more diverse workforce.

In the St. Louis region, managerial and professional positions (as defined by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission) are disproportionately held by Whites and Asian Americans, while service, clerical and operative positions are held disproportionately by African Americans and Hispanics (Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 1998a). Job trends indicate that service, technical and professional jobs will continue to grow and will provide almost 51% of all job growth in the region over the next five years (Missouri Department of Economic Development, Division of Workforce Development, September 1999, pp. 17-23). Hispanics, though a relatively small percent of the St. Louis region's total population, are better represented in managerial and professional jobs than they are nationally. However, the St. Louis region has a higher percentage of both African Americans and Hispanics in service positions than the nation. See Economics Table 6 (Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 1998a, 1998b).

Labor Force Occupational Distribution, 1998



Source: Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 1998a, 1998b.

Economics Table 6

3. The consumer base in the United States is increasingly becoming people of color as demographics continue to change.

The broader business community in the St. Louis region has recently begun to recognize the economic opportunities and competitive advantage of workforce and supplier diversity, particularly as people of color comprise more of the labor force and continue to gain increased spending power (Tatum, 1997, p. 14).

4. The more education acquired by a person, the greater the economic opportunities availed to him or her.

Workers with higher levels of education and training generally have better prospects for higher earnings. In 1996, a full-time worker with a high school degree earned an average of \$28,121 per year. This compares to a full-time worker with a bachelor's degree who earned an average of \$45,856 per year. Typically, most managerial and professional positions require a bachelor's degree, while most service, clerical and operative positions require only on-the-job training (Missouri Department of Economic Development, Division of Workforce Development, Research & Analysis Section, September 1999, pp. 17-23).

5. Based on labor force projections, a large number of future jobs will require educational credentials and/or vocational/technical training.

According to the Missouri Department of Economic Development, those jobs requiring an associate's degree or higher "are projected to grow faster than the 12.2% average for all occupations" (Missouri Department of Economic Development, Division of Workforce Development, Research & Analysis Section, September 1999, p. v).

6. More job opportunities need to be developed by increasing business in our region's urban areas.

People of color will become a majority of the work force within this century. Many people of color continue to live in the urban core of metropolitan areas. However, the urban core in most metropolitan areas tends to be mired in high unemployment and underemployment. This situation is mirrored locally (Initiative for a Competitive Inner City, September 2000).

Minority Business Development Findings And Conclusions

1. Generally, access to capital and wealth preparation for business start-ups in the St. Louis region is limited.

Minority-owned businesses face many obstacles in the St. Louis metropolitan area most specifically related to lack of seed, venture, working and expansion capital, and the need for training and technical assistance for minority entrepreneurs (Confluence St. Louis, October 1994).

2. Social networks in the St. Louis region are integral to social and economic mobility.

Establishing relationships is critical to obtaining capital and opportunities to bid on jobs.

The effect of networking and relationship-building in the corporate community is significant in terms of developing business opportunities for minority business enterprises. Business deals often occur through relationships between minority business entrepreneurs and White business CEO's or high-level managers. For many people of color, social access to corporate leadership is limited because their social networks often do not overlap (Fleming Communications, November 30, 2000).

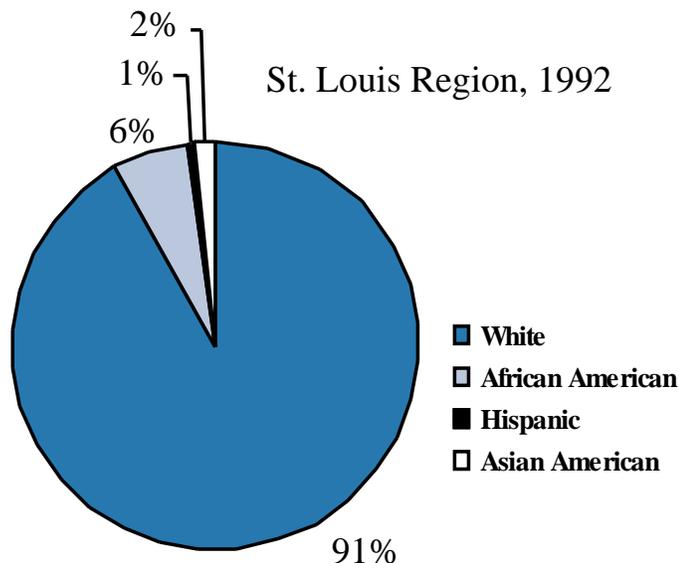
3. Minority-owned businesses are perceived to have a higher risk profile than White-owned businesses.

Based on a 1995 survey of the Federal Reserve Board's National Survey of Small Business Financing, 51% of White-owned businesses obtained bank loans compared to 41% of minority-owned businesses. This survey also found that minority-owned businesses were more frequently turned down for loans than White-owned businesses (Lowry and Associates, October 7, 1999, p. 13). The St. Louis region is perceived to be a generally risk-adverse community, making it more challenging for minority business entrepreneurship.

4. Small and minority-owned firms are a fast growing segment of the economy.

Nationally, minority-owned firms have grown at twice the rate of all companies in the past decade (Lowry & Associates, October 7, 1999). Today, small- and medium-sized firms in emerging industries are increasingly becoming the employers of the 21st century economy. Even so, minority-owned businesses account for a little less than 9% of all businesses in the St. Louis region as seen in Economics Table 7 (U.S. Census Bureau, 1992 Economic Census).

Minority-Owned Businesses



Source: U.S. Census Bureau. (1992). Economic Census. Survey of Minority-Owned Business Enterprises, U.S. Department of Commerce. Complete 1997 Economic Census Data on Minority-Owned Businesses were not yet available at the time of this printing.

Economics Table 7

Employment Discrimination Finding And Conclusion

1. Employment discrimination continues to occur in hiring, promotion and purchasing practices. This discrimination maintains income and wealth inequalities. According to a local poll conducted in 2000, 41% of African Americans reported that they experienced being denied a job or promotion because of their race, while 9% of Whites reported an experience of such discrimination (RegionWise, May 2001). Equal Employment Opportunity Commission data also demonstrate that the glass ceiling continues to exist for people of color in the St. Louis metropolitan region. In 1998, 91.7% of private industry officials and managers in the total St. Louis metropolitan area labor force were White, while 6.1% were

African American, 1% were Hispanic and 0.9% were Asian American. Furthermore, Whites comprise 89% of all professionals in the labor force, while people of color comprise 42% of service workers in the region (Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 1998a).

Employment and Access to Health Care Findings and Conclusions

1. Access to health care is significantly reduced for those living in poverty. The St. Louis Post-Dispatch reported that African Americans in the City of St. Louis “fare worse than Whites by nearly every health indicator” (Shelton, March 22, 2001). Much of the racial disparity between the health of African Americans and Whites can be attributed to poverty, segregation and lack of information and access to quality health care (St. Louis Post-Dispatch, August 13, 2000).

...the glass ceiling continues to exist for people of color in the St. Louis metropolitan region.

2. The greatest source of health care coverage for citizens is through their local employers. Lack of access to adequate health care leads to larger economic and educational costs such as lost productivity at work and decreased academic performance. For Americans under age 65, health care coverage most often results from being fully employed with comprehensive benefits for the worker and his or her dependents. Many uninsured people are employed in jobs without health benefits. Overall, African Americans are nearly twice as likely as Whites to lack health insurance; and Hispanics have the highest risk of being uninsured in the United States as they are nearly three times as likely as Whites to be without health insurance (U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Reports, September 2000). There are approximately 272,000 uninsured people in the St. Louis region each year including 31,000 children (Lewin Group, September 2000).

ECONOMICS RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations of the Economics section seek to encourage more opportunities for economic growth and the creation of wealth among the African American population and other people of color in the St. Louis region. The FOCUS task force hopes that in implementing these recommendations, the community can make significant and measurable movement toward the ultimate goal of economic parity for people of color in the areas of wealth, income and employment. Detailed action steps for implementing these recommendations are contained in the full report.

- Increase access to employment opportunities for people of color, particularly low-income people of color, in the St. Louis region. It is urgent for the St. Louis region to address the growing geographic disconnect between employers who are increasingly locating in suburban communities and the available labor force in the urban core by:
 - Expanding job-training and educational opportunities for low-income populations.
 - Enhancing public transportation planning.
 - Combating residential segregation and housing discrimination throughout the region.
 - Increase labor force development and employment opportunities for people of color in the St. Louis region.
 - Expand opportunities for minority business enterprises to enhance economic inclusion and development in the St. Louis region.
 - Address employment discrimination at every level, including hiring, promotion and purchasing practices. Business, civic and governmental leadership must be held accountable for their own workforce and supplier diversity efforts.
 - Expand access to health care through education and outreach efforts in low-income neighborhoods that include public information and enrollment programs. Efforts already underway to do this should be fully supported by the community.
- Expand opportunities for homeownership and asset accumulation for people of color in the St. Louis region. Utilize and support asset-building programs, such as Individual Development Accounts (IDAs), where feasible to facilitate asset accumulation for low-income populations.
- Increase earnings for minimum-wage positions throughout the St. Louis region. Ultimately, implement a viable living wage policy throughout the region. A living wage policy provides workers with basic health benefits and wages high enough to raise an individual's or family's standard of living above the federal poverty level.

HOUSING

Owning a home has been touted as an achievement of the “American Dream” and the freedom to choose how and where to live impacts our access to social, educational and economic opportunities. For many, the choice of where to live is impeded only by budgetary constraints. But for many others, particularly people of color, the freedom of choosing where to live is limited not only because of cost, but also because of discriminatory housing practices and policies. The St. Louis region is still far from achieving racial equality in housing and remains one of the most racially-segregated metropolitan areas in the country.

The Housing section is divided into the following subcategories: Housing Segregation and Discrimination, Homeownership and Affordable Housing, and Mortgage and Subprime Lending.

HOUSING SEGREGATION AND DISCRIMINATION FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

1. Residential segregation is detrimental to the whole St. Louis region. Integration is beneficial to Whites as well as people of color because it promotes racial equality and good race relations.

Residential segregation separates and divides us from one another, preventing us from interacting across racial lines. It also leads to other forms of segregation—particularly school segregation—and racial inequality in the St. Louis region and in the nation.

Racial segregation sustains racial inequality as it serves to concentrate people of color in pockets of poverty, limiting their access to social mobility and positive life outcomes. With this scenario, the St. Louis region is prevented from achieving its true potential in terms of growth, quality of life and human relations.

The St. Louis region is still far from achieving racial equality in housing and remains one of the most racially-segregated metropolitan areas in the country.

2. The St. Louis region remains more segregated than the typical metropolitan area. According to an analysis of 2000 Census data of the 50 largest metropolitan areas in the nation, the St. Louis region is the ninth most racially segregated. The segregation index² for the St. Louis region was higher than the national average of all other metropolitan areas in 2000, as well as 1990 (J.E. Farley, November 1993; Lewis Mumford Center, April 3, 2001). See Housing Table 1.

3. Since 1980, segregation in the St. Louis region has decreased marginally. As seen in Housing Table 2, from 1940 to 1980 the segregation index in the St. Louis region hovered around 85. From 1980 on, the index has decreased slightly and was at 74 in 2000. Though our region’s decline in housing segregation overall has been modest, we are moving in the right direction (J.E. Farley, November 1993, 2001).

4. Housing segregation is primarily a racial rather than an economic issue. Overall, increases in income for people of color have not deterred segregated housing patterns. Indeed, middle-income Whites and African Americans are as likely to live separately from each other, as are low-income Whites and African Americans. As seen in Housing Table 3, at every income level, African Americans and Whites

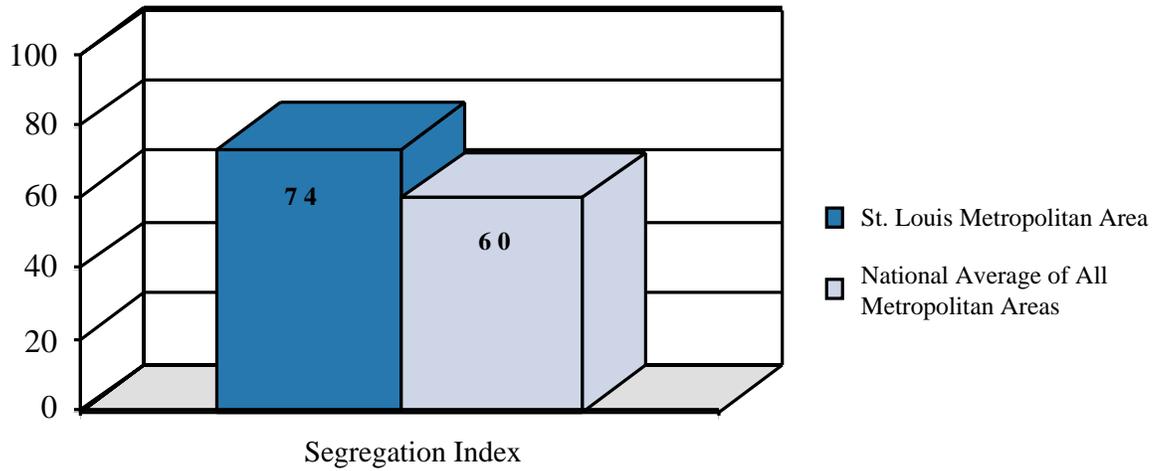
in 1990 were about as segregated from one another as African Americans and Whites in the St. Louis region’s overall population (J.E. Farley, November 1993, and November 1995, 2000).

5. The governmental fragmentation and increasing “sprawl” in the St. Louis region contribute to residential segregation. The St. Louis region has over 750 units of government and is ranked 5th out of 35 comparable metropolitan areas for governmen-

² The segregation index is the most commonly used measure of segregation. It ranges from 0 to 100 and can be computed for any two groups (African American and White in this case). An index of zero means NO segregation, or that every neighborhood is made up of a racially-mixed population representative of the total metropolitan area. An index of 100 means TOTAL segregation, or that the neighborhood is composed of all Whites or all African Americans. The segregation index represents the percent of either racial group that would need to move to a different neighborhood in order for all neighborhoods to have a racial mix that is representative of the region.

African American-White Segregation Indices, 2000

St. Louis Region vs. The United States

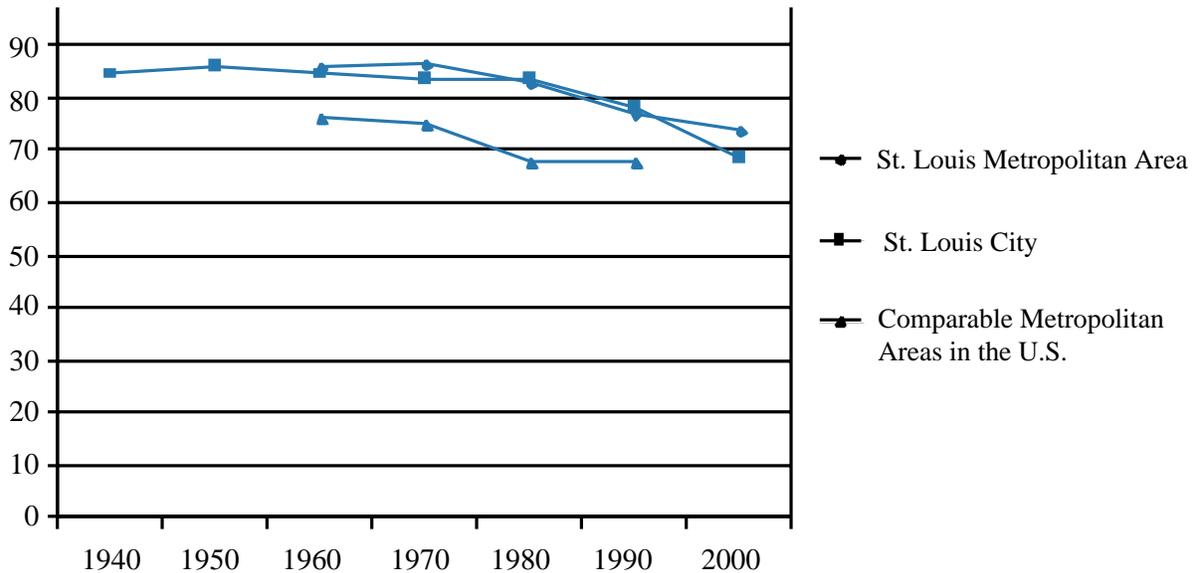


The 2000 segregation index for the national average of comparable metropolitan areas is not yet available.

Source: Lewis Mumford Center. (2001, April 3). Ethnic diversity grows, neighborhood integration is at a standstill. Report by the Lewis Mumford Center for Comparative and Regional Research. State University of New York at Albany. Online: www.albany.edu/mumford/census.

Housing Table 1

African American-White Segregation Indices Over Time



The 2000 segregation index for comparable metropolitan areas in the U.S. is not yet available.

Source: Data for 1940-1990 are from Farley, J.E. (1993, November). Racial housing segregation in the St. Louis metropolitan area: Comparing trends at the tract and block levels. Journal of Urban Affairs, 15 (6), 515-27. Data for 2000 were computed from the 2000 Census Redistricting Data.

Housing Table 2

African American-White Segregation by Income Level

St. Louis Region, 1990

| Income Level | Segregation Index |
|--------------------|-------------------|
| All Income Levels | 75.6 |
| \$5,000-9,999 | 76.5 |
| \$10,000-14,999 | 76.8 |
| \$15,000-24,999 | 74.9 |
| \$25,000-34,999 | 72.9 |
| \$35,000-49,999 | 74.6 |
| \$50,000-74,999 | 73.8 |
| \$75,000-99,999 | 72.2 |
| \$100,000 and over | 74.2 |

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 1990; Farley, J.E. (1993, November). Racial housing segregation in the St. Louis metropolitan area: Comparing trends at the tract and block levels. *Journal of Urban Affairs*, 15 (6), 515-27.

Housing Table 3

tal fragmentation (East-West Gateway Coordinating Council, 1999, p. 29). Multiple suburban governments offer residents tighter control over zoning ordinances, protecting some people's investments to the detriment of others (Judd & Swanstrom, 1998, p. 308).

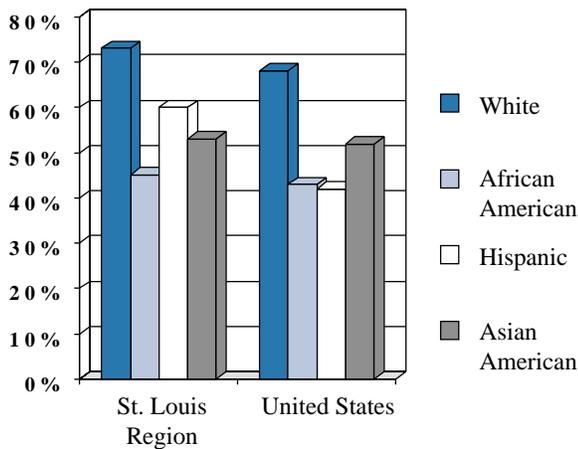
6. Housing segregation contributes to educational and economic racial inequalities. It is also a significant factor in wealth disparity. The over representation of African Americans living in the urban core of the region separates them from areas of increasing job growth in the surrounding suburban communities, a factor that contributes to racial disparity in unemployment rates and the ability to accumulate wealth. Housing segregation also leads to other forms of segregation, particularly school segregation. Poor African Americans are more likely to live in resource-deficient neighborhoods of concentrated poverty than poor Whites. Thus, racial housing segregation contributes to a situation where African Americans are much more likely than Whites to live in areas where they are surrounded by poverty (Wilson, 1987).

7. There are neighborhoods in the St. Louis region that have become more integrated. Most notably, these include the Central West End, University City, Skinker-Debaliviere, South Grand, Shaw, Lafayette Square, LaSalle Park and Soulard in the Missouri part of the region. In Illinois, these communities include Belleville, Fairview Heights and Edwardsville. These neighborhoods can serve as models for the rest of the region. One of the reasons that they have been more successful at integrating is because public and private resources were invested in them to assist their economic viability. However, though these neighborhoods have become more integrated, they still struggle with their own challenges of racial polarization.

HOMEOWNERSHIP AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

1. There continues to be a large racial gap in home ownership in the St. Louis region. In 1990, 73% of Whites were homeowners in the St. Louis region compared to 45% of African Americans, 53% of

Homeownership Rates—St. Louis Region vs. the United States, 1990



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 1990.

Housing Table 4

Asian Americans and 60% of Hispanics, as illustrated in Housing Table 4 (U.S. Census Bureau, Census 1990).

2. The African American-White gap in homeownership widened between 1980 and 1990. Between 1980 and 1990, the racial disparity in homeownership rates remained constant nationally while it worsened locally. Overall, the St. Louis region saw little growth in homeownership by race between 1980 and 1990 (U.S. Census Bureau, Census 1980, 1990).

3. Home equity resulting from homeownership is the most significant source of wealth accumulation for people of color. Homeownership is a critical component of asset accumulation. Home equity typically accounts for a higher percent of the net worth of households of color than it does for White households (Joint Center for Housing Studies of Harvard University, 2000, p. 9).

4. There is a lack of affordable housing in the St. Louis region for low-income populations. Affordable rental housing for low-income populations is generally obtained through government-owned public housing or through government subsidized Section 8 housing. Yet in the St. Louis region over the last several years, public housing has declined significantly. Many public housing units, particularly in the City of St. Louis, have been demolished and are being replaced by mixed-income

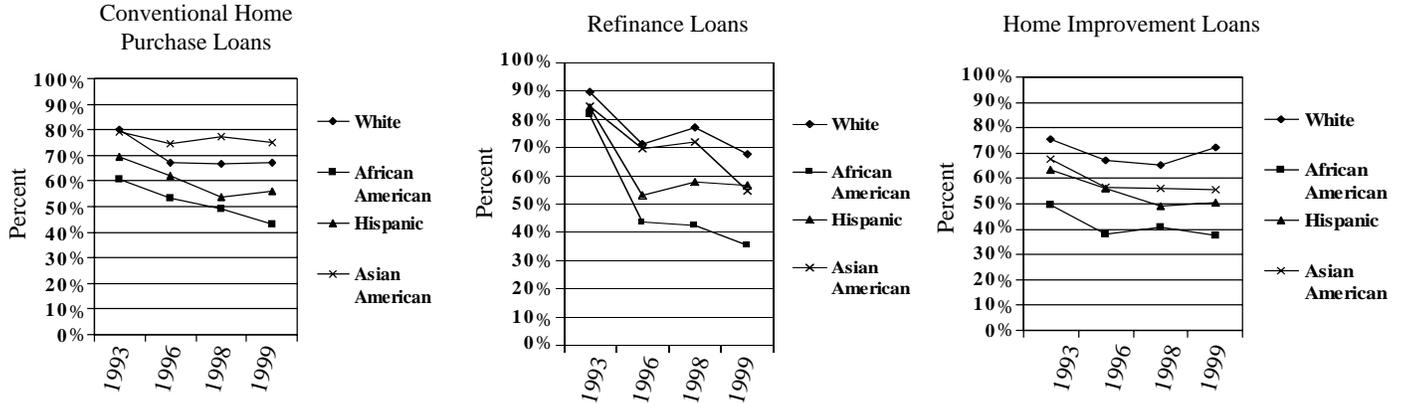
housing. As a result, low-income individuals and families who either lived in or were waiting to get into public housing now have fewer options.

MORTGAGE AND SUBPRIME LENDING FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

1. Mortgage and subprime lending disparities prevent equal access to homeownership and further racial economic inequality. Much of the inequality in homeownership rates results from continuing racial disparity in obtaining the necessary financing to purchase a home. These disparities remain even when income rates are comparable (ACORN, September 2000, p.1). Furthermore, many Whites with comparable income levels to African Americans and Hispanics have greater wealth through asset accumulation and intergenerational transfer, which increases their likelihood of being approved for a loan as well as receiving lower interest rates (Oliver & Shapiro, 1998, pp. 25-26).

2. Racial inequalities in loan acceptance and rejection rates perpetuate racial inequalities in wealth accumulation. At the same time, economic inequality, particularly wealth disparity, impedes the ability for people of color to access home loans and thus homeownership. Homeownership is almost always determined by whether or not a mortgage loan can be obtained by the potential homebuyer, and homeownership is a major contributor to wealth accumulation as well as an important entryway to economic and social mobility. In the St. Louis region, a White loan applicant is 1-1/2 times more likely to get a home purchase loan than an African American applicant. In addition, African Americans are rejected almost 2-1/2 times more often than Whites for refinancing loans and rejected over three times more often than Whites for home improvement loans. Across all three loan categories, the gap between the number of mortgage loans received by Whites and African Americans widened between 1993 and 1999 with the number of loans obtained by African Americans significantly lower than for any other racial group. With respect to loan denial rates, the disparity between Whites and African Americans on home purchase loans decreased between 1993 and 1999, yet it increased on refinance and home improvement loans during the

Percent of Applications Resulting In Loans Received*—St. Louis Region

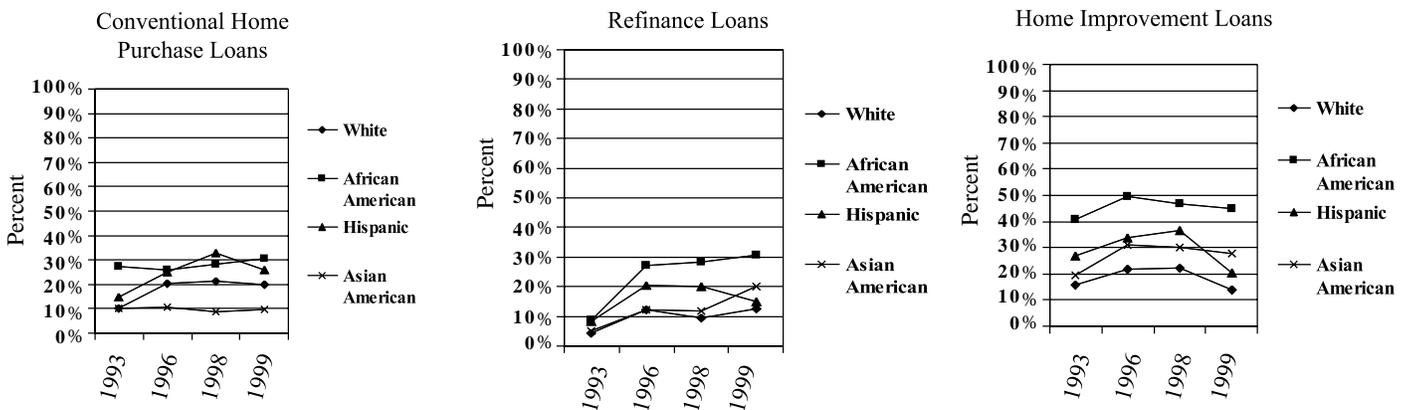


*Based on all applications received.

Source: Federal Financial Institutions Examination Council (FFIEC). Home Mortgage Disclosure Act (HMDA). (1993a, 1996a, 1998a, 1999a). Aggregate reports for St. Louis, MO-IL.

Housing Table 5

Percent of Applications Denied*—St. Louis Region



*Based on all applications received.

Source: Federal Financial Institutions Examination Council (FFIEC). Home Mortgage Disclosure Act (HMDA). (1993a, 1996a, 1998a, 1999a). Aggregate reports for St. Louis, MO-IL.

Housing Table 6

same period of time. See Housing Tables 5 and 6 (Federal Financial Institutions Examination Council [FFIEC], Home Mortgage Disclosure Act [HMDA], 1993a, 1996a, 1998a, 1999a)³. With access to financing as a gatekeeper, homeownership and wealth accumulation are more difficult for people of color to obtain than they are for Whites.

3. The St. Louis region is faring better than the nation in racial disparity of both home loan acceptance and denial rates, but there is still a

significant racial gap in the St. Louis region. St. Louis may be doing somewhat better than the nation in mortgage lending disparity in part because of the 1995 changes to the Community Reinvestment Act. However, significant challenges remain. In 1999, African American loan applicants in the St. Louis region with an income of over 120% of the median were rejected more than four times as often as White applicants at the same income level (ACORN, September 2000, p. 16, FFIEC, HMDA, 1998a/b, 1999a/b).

HOUSING RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations of the Housing section seek to promote equal opportunity for homeownership by breaking down discriminatory institutional forces such as steering, redlining and tipping and to develop a more stable integrated housing pattern. Detailed action steps for implementing these recommendations are contained in the full report.

- Reduce housing segregation in the St. Louis region through increased comprehensive awareness and education of its causes and effects.
- Develop and implement strategies to promote integration in our region.
- Enforce fair housing laws through housing discrimination testing. Provide financial and political support for efforts to enforce fair housing laws. Prosecute offenders of illegal practices such as racial steering and lending discrimination.
- Establish a regional housing agency to serve as a one-stop-shop for homeownership.
- Increase access to homeownership for all citizens in the St. Louis region. Target efforts to increase home ownership particularly to African Americans, who are much less likely than Whites to be homeowners in the St. Louis region.
- Develop a regional strategy for affordable housing.
- Continue to develop and sustain strong, economically viable neighborhoods in all parts of the metropolitan area.
- Enforce fair lending practices in the St. Louis region through effective monitoring, accountability measures and prosecution of offenders.

³Though Home Mortgage Disclosure Act data alone cannot be used to conclusively determine that racial discrimination is actively occurring by mortgage lenders, a study published by The Urban Institute determined that “racial disparities in loan denial rates cannot be ‘explained away’ by differences in credit worthiness or by technical factors affecting the analyses” (U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development [HUD], September 15, 1999). According to The Urban Institute report, “although it is conceivable that these disparities are attributable to legitimate underwriting standards, the Boston Fed analysis establishes a strong presumption that discrimination exists, shifting the ‘burden of proof’ to those who would argue that these differences are entirely due to legitimate underwriting criteria that reflect an applicant’s credit worthiness and therefore serve a business necessity” (Turner & Skidmore, September 1999, p. 5).

EDUCATION

Again, the FOCUS task force found that the areas of economics, housing and education are intricately connected in a continuing cycle of racial inequality. Education is perhaps the most crucial and challenging aspect of racial equality in the United States today precisely because of this dependent relationship.

Education has long been deemed the “great equalizer,” where all students-African American and White, rich and poor, have the opportunity to achieve and excel. Yet, the FOCUS task force has concluded through its research and analysis that students of color generally tend to receive an inferior and more socially-isolated education than White students. The racial disparities that continue to exist in education today are both a cause and a consequence of the limited social, residential and economic mobility of vast numbers of students of color in our region.

The Education section begins with a series of overall findings and conclusions, provides an overview of school desegregation in the St. Louis region and addresses the following key indicators: High School Graduates and Dropouts, Expulsions, Standardized Test Scores and Post-Secondary Enrollment and Graduation. The section then provides many of the proposed theories on why racial disparities in education continue at such significant levels today and concludes with a brief discussion of the challenges of educational data collection as experienced by the FOCUS task force.

The racial disparities that continue to exist in education today are both a cause and a consequence of the limited social, residential and economic mobility of vast numbers of students of color in our region.

OVERALL EDUCATION FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

1. The schooling experiences of African American and Hispanic students remain substandard to those of White students. A national study of 12 public school districts from across the country found that on every key indicator addressed, students of color were at a significant disadvantage to White students. Conducted by the Expose Racism & Advance School Excellence (ERASE) Initiative of

the Applied Research Center, this study found that “the public schools consistently fail to provide the same quality of education for students of color as for White students” (ERASE 2000, p. 1). ERASE found this racial disparity to be true in school districts of all kinds, in small towns and big cities, the North and the South, and in schools where students of color were the majority and where they were the minority.

2. Institutional and systemic racism pervade our country’s educational structures and systems. The ERASE study established that educational discrimination by “its persistence and pervasiveness, as measured by actual statistical impacts, amounts to a deep pattern of institutional racism in U.S. public schools” (ERASE, 2000, p. 3).

3. Racial disparities in academic achievement begin early and remain throughout high school.

According to researchers, disparities in academic achievement have already begun by the time a child reaches kindergarten. By kindergarten, students of color often lag behind their White classmates in early reading and math skills. These gaps increase in elementary school and continue through high school (Johnston & Viadero, March 15, 2000).

4. Ensuring equal educational opportunities for all students is a regional issue, and it is the responsibility of all citizens and leaders in the St. Louis metropolitan area. Locally, for the St. Louis region to be an economically viable and desirable place to live, the FOCUS task force believes that the region must have a strong public education system in place to educate and graduate our region’s children. If we continue to provide separate and unequal schools for White children and children of color, particularly African American children, the ability for the St. Louis region to reach its full potential will falter and we will remain at a significant disadvantage to other regions across the country.

SCHOOL DESEGREGATION FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

- 1. Overall, schools in the St. Louis region remain largely unequal and segregated, despite the participation of a number of school districts in the Voluntary Interdistrict Transfer Program.** Today, the St. Louis region is the tenth most segregated of the top 50 metropolitan areas in the country for African American and White children (Schmitt, May 6, 2001). With the approaching end of the court-mandated Voluntary Interdistrict Transfer Program, the public education system in the St. Louis region is at considerable risk of further segregating along racial lines. In the last several years, school districts in other parts of the country that have been released from desegregation court orders have ended up once more with segregated school systems. In these districts, students have typically returned to their neighborhood schools once school desegregation programs have been phased out (Orfield, Eaton, & the Harvard Project on School Desegregation, 1996). If neighborhoods are segregated because of polarized housing patterns, the neighborhood schools will also be segregated.
- 2. African American students participating in the Voluntary Interdistrict Transfer Program are more likely to graduate from high school than students who stay in the St. Louis Public Schools. These transfer students also plan to attend college at a rate of nearly three times the national average for African American high school graduates.** Amy Stuart Wells and Robert Crain (1997), authors of *Stepping Over the Color Line: African American Students in White Suburban Schools*, conducted a five-year case study of the Voluntary Interdistrict Transfer Program⁴. They found that although many African American students withdrew from the transfer program, many students who participated in the program were positively affected by the experience, both academically and attitudinally (pp. 185, 198 and 223; FOCUS St. Louis & League of Women Voters Information Service, 1999).
- 3. Integrated education benefits White students as well as students of color.** Both White students and

students of color who attend desegregated schools have the opportunity to enhance their learning through interactions with students of other racial backgrounds, thus preparing them for future experiences in integrated workplaces and communities (Institute on Race & Poverty, May 2000). In a study of law students conducted by the Civil Rights Project at Harvard University, White students in particular reported that their education was enriched through their interactions with other racial and ethnic groups (DiversityInc.com, August 3, 1999).

- 4. To truly effect racial equality, school integration must be tied to efforts to eliminate housing segregation and to promote economic empowerment for all racial groups.** Racial inequalities in education, housing and economics are integrally linked and must be addressed in tandem. For example, the circumstances under which a child arrives at the school door are dependent upon economic and housing issues. At the same time, the educational experience and attainment of a child impacts his or her future access to economic advancement.

HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES AND DROPOUTS FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

- 1. A well-educated population is necessary for a prepared workforce and a competitive local economy.** As the economy continues to shift away from a manufacturing base to one more reliant upon technology and knowledge, unskilled workers are at a growing disadvantage. According to Stanford Professor Linda Darling-Hammond, “Because the economy can no longer absorb many unskilled workers at decent wages, lack of education is increasingly linked to crime and welfare dependency” (1998, pp. 111-112).
- 2. Overall, high school graduation rates have increased for students of color over the last decade and the disparity between White and African American high school graduates has decreased.** Nationally, the gap between African American and White high school graduates has continued to decrease, and today 79% of African Americans aged 25 and over are high school graduates. This is more

⁴ Wells and Crain used a variety of research methods including interviews, observation of classrooms and meetings and assessment of other documentation, data and studies relevant to the program.

⁵ High school graduate percentages were not available for Hispanics or Asian Americans in the St. Louis region through the U.S. Census, Current Population Survey, March 2000 data.

than double the percent of African American high school graduates in 1970 (U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, March 2000a).

- 3. The Hispanic population has the lowest graduation rate of any racial or ethnic group. White and Asian American students continue to have the highest high school graduation rates in the country.** Nationally, as seen in Education Table 1, Whites aged 25 and over have the highest percent of high school graduates today with Asian Americans following closely behind. African American high school graduates trail behind Whites by 9.5 percent age points and the Hispanic population has the lowest percent of high school graduates of all racial and ethnic groups. In the St. Louis region⁵, 88.1% of Whites aged 25 and over were high school graduates in 2000 compared to 77.6% of African Americans.

This represents a gap of 10.5 percentage points locally-one percentage higher than the national average, as seen in Education Table 2 (U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, March 2000a, 2000b).

Racial inequalities in education, housing and economics are integrally linked and must be addressed in tandem. For example, the circumstances under which a child arrives at the school door are dependent upon economic and housing issues. At the same time, the educational experience and attainment of a child impacts his or her future access to economic advancement.

- 4. Missouri school districts with larger student populations of color have a significantly higher mobility rate (students moving into and out of the district) than those with student populations composed of less than 10% students of color.** The St. Louis Public Schools have the highest mobility rate of any other district in the St. Louis region. Children with high mobility rates have a greater likelihood of being low achievers in both reading and math and are more likely to drop out of school (Office of Social and Economic Data Analysis, July 1998).

- 5. Dropping out of school limits access to economic and social mobility. The economic consequences of dropping out are generally higher for students of color, particularly African Americans and Hispanics, than they are for White students.** The economic costs of dropping out of high school are significant in terms of employment and income

opportunities. Generally, high school dropouts are approximately three times more likely to enter poverty than high school graduates (Office of Social and Economic Data Analysis, January 1996). In 1995, African American high school dropouts between the ages of 20-24 “were more than twice as likely to be unemployed as White dropouts” (Applied Research Center, 1998, p. 62).

- 6. White and Asian American students generally have the lowest dropout rates, while African American and Hispanic students have higher dropout rates.** The dropout percentages of Whites, African Americans and Hispanics have decreased over the past decade. However, the relative gap between Hispanic and African American students and their White peers has narrowed only slightly. Asian Americans, as an overall group, have the lowest percentage of dropouts (National Center for Education Statistics, 2000).

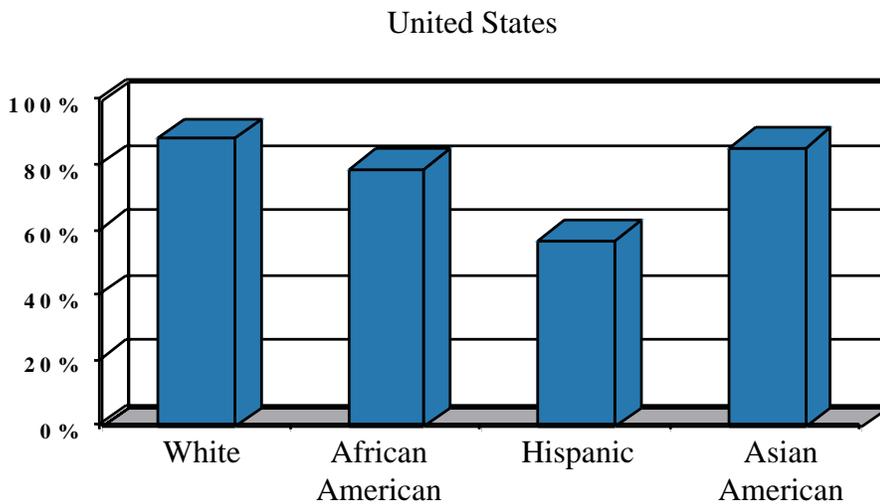
- 7. Urban core schools face the most severe dropout problems, particularly with African American and Hispanic students.** According to a recent Harvard

University study, the dropout crisis is most severe in urban core schools (Hayward, January 14, 2001). Based on 1999 Current Population Survey data, the dropout rate for 16-19 year olds living in central cities is twice that for teens living in the suburbs (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2000). Given the racial disparities that exist between people of color and Whites in terms of economics, housing and education, the students most likely to be at risk of dropping out are students of color who continue to reside in central cities.

EXPULSIONS FINDING AND CONCLUSION

- 1. African American students are over represented in expulsion rates both locally and nationally.** Nationally, African American and Hispanic students are expelled at significantly higher rates than White

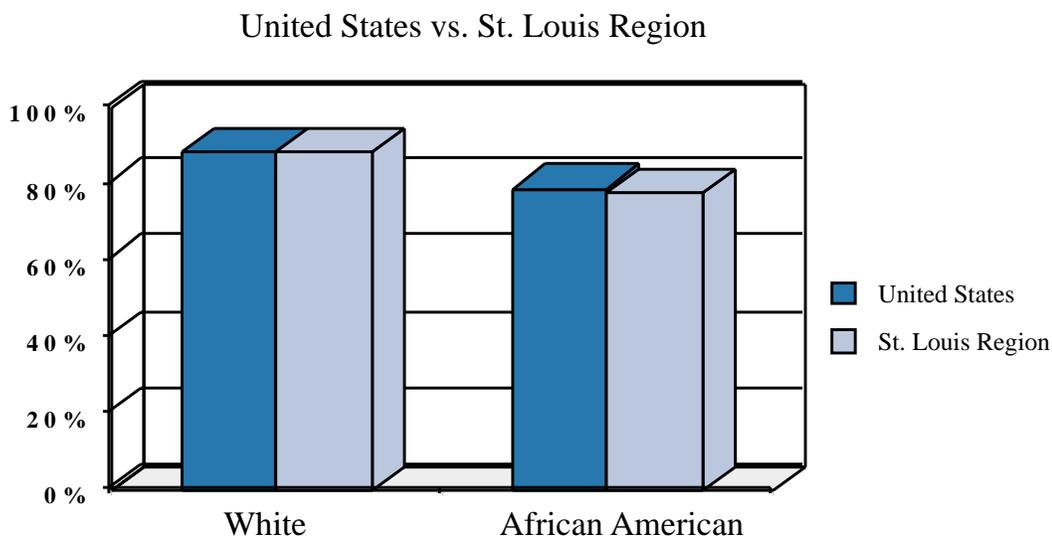
Percent of High School Graduates or Higher, March 2000—Aged 25+



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey. March 2000a, March 2000b.

Education Table 1

Percent of High School Graduates or Higher, March 2000—Aged 25+



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey. March 2000a, March 2000b.

Education Table 2

students (ERASE, 2000, p. 2). According to a study of Illinois public school districts by the St. Louis Post-Dispatch, expulsion rates of African American students during the 1998-1999 school year were twice as high as the overall African American student population. Looked at another way, one in every 1000 White students was expelled from Illinois public schools compared to three of every 1000 African American students (McDermott, January 19, 2000). Comparable data for Missouri public school districts were not available to the FOCUS task force.

August 25, 2000). Locally, Asian Americans and Whites perform highest on Missouri standardized tests, while African American students perform the poorest (Hacker, December 8, 1999).

POST-SECONDARY ENROLLMENT AND GRADUATION FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

STANDARDIZED TEST SCORES FINDING AND CONCLUSION

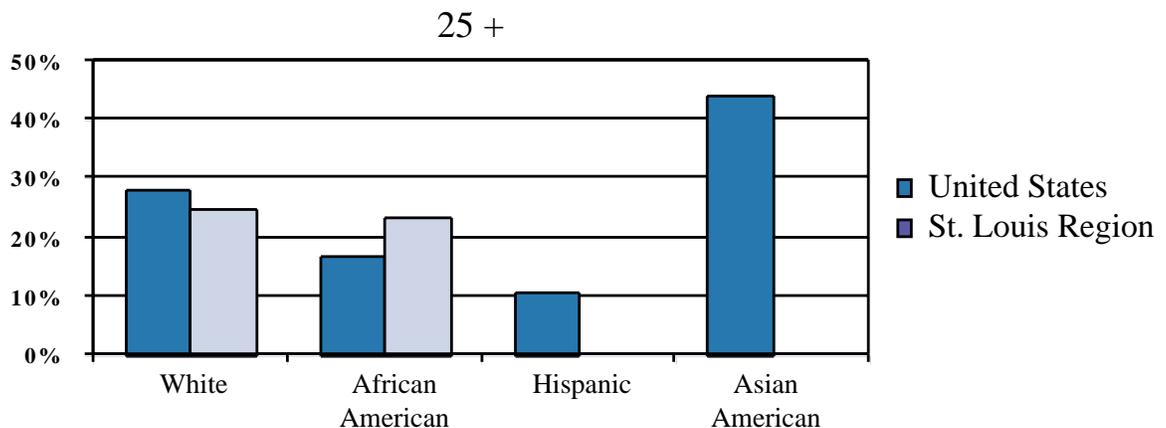
1. Racial disparities in standardized test scores have increased in the last decade rather than decreased.

Between 1970 and approximately 1988, African American and Hispanic students made significant gains in their overall achievement based on national standardized tests. During this time, the racial disparity in achievement scores decreased by almost half. However, since 1988, this progress has halted (St. Louis Regional Professional Development Center and Cooperating School Districts, February 1, 2001; Viadero, March 22, 2000). Today, African American and Hispanic 12th graders are scoring on average at the same level as White 8th graders in math and reading (New York Times News Service,

1. **Nationally, there remains a substantial gap between White and African American college graduates.** This is the case despite the fact that college enrollment and graduation rates for African Americans have increased significantly over the past two decades. Since 1970, the disparity between White and African American college graduates has somewhat decreased but a substantial gap remains. In 1970, African Americans had approximately 42% of the college graduation rate of Whites compared to 61% in 2000 (Branch-Brioso & Parish, February 22, 2001; U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, March 2000a).

2. **The St. Louis region continues to fare better than the country as a whole in terms of African American college graduation rates, and the disparity between White and African American college graduates is narrower locally than it is nationwide.** As illustrated in Education Table 3,

% with Bachelor's Degree or More U.S. vs. St. Louis Region, 2000



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey. March 2000a, March 2000b.
Data not available for Hispanic and Asian American college graduates in the St. Louis region.

Education Table 3

locally African Americans are earning bachelor's degrees or higher at a greater rate than they are nationwide, and the disparity between White and African American degree holders in the St. Louis region is narrower than it is nationally (U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, March 2000a, March 2000b).

3. Today, a college education is more important than ever in terms of providing access to economic and social opportunities. The labor market of today's knowledge-based economy requires higher levels of education and skills than ever before. Jobs requiring an associate's degree or higher are growing at a faster rate than all other occupations (Missouri Department of Economic Development, Division of Workforce Development, Research & Analysis Section, September 1999, p. v). As high paid factory jobs continue to disappear, the economic value of a college education has increased significantly. In terms of earnings in the last two decades, only college graduates have seen significant increases in income levels (Population Reference Bureau, September 1999).

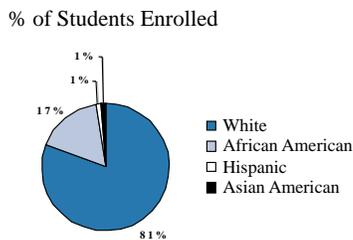
4. The recruitment and retention of students of color at the post-secondary level is more critical than ever in the face of diminishing affirmative action policies for admissions. Much of the student diversity at the post-secondary level has been fostered through affirmative action efforts. Those students of color that graduate from post-secondary programs are better able to contribute fully to the economic and civic infrastructure of the community as a whole. If the disparities between White students and students of color persist, particularly at the elementary and secondary levels, access to institutions of higher education and to future economic mobility will be significantly limited if affirmative action policies are no longer in place (Viadero, March 22, 2000).

WHY THE EDUCATIONAL DISPARITY REMAINS: DIFFERENT VIEWPOINTS

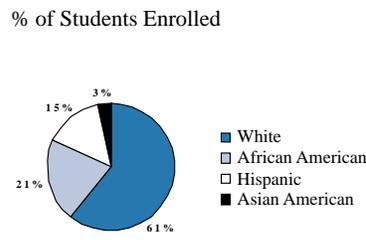
While there are a number of viewpoints and opinions as to the primary forces that result in racial disparity across all areas of education, only some of these varied explanations are highlighted below. These include:

Proportion of Public School Students in Gifted Programs

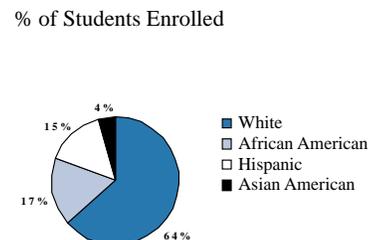
State of Missouri
1998-1999



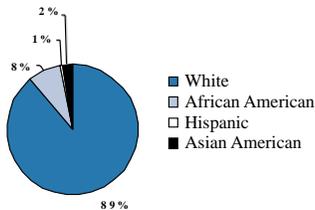
State of Illinois
1999-2000



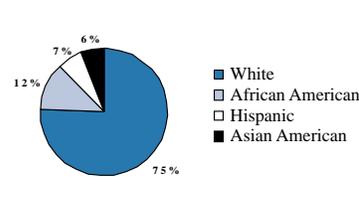
United States
1998-1999



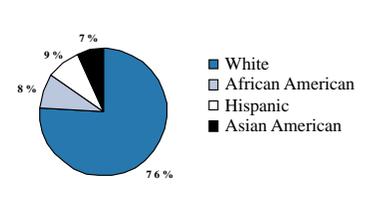
% in Gifted Programs



% in Gifted Programs



% in Gifted Programs



Source: Bower, C., & Hacker, H. (2000, December 3). Some minority gifted students miss out, experts say. *St. Louis Sunday Post-Dispatch*, p. 1.

Education Table 4

poverty; limited access of students of color to advanced placement classes coupled with their over representation in lower level classes; funding disparities and the impact of parents and teachers on students' achievement levels.

POVERTY FINDING AND CONCLUSION

1. Poverty is a key contributor to educational disparity. The intersection of race and socioeconomic status is very powerful in its impact on student academic achievement. Growing up in a poor household takes its toll on a child arriving to school “ready to learn.” Often problems at home, family mobility, poor nutrition and limited access to health care make it significantly more difficult for a poor child to advance academically (Viadero, March 22, 2000). Poor children generally perform worse on standardized tests than others. According to the St. Louis Post-Dispatch, family income explains approximately 70% of the differences in reading and math scores at the elementary school level (Sultan & Hacker, November 1, 2000).

TRACKING, SPECIAL EDUCATION AND GIFTED PROGRAMS FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

1. Locally and nationally, students of color are under represented in gifted education programs and over represented in special education classes. As shown in Education Table 4, the under representation of students of color in gifted programs is evident for the nation as well as for the states of Illinois and Missouri. This is also true for many school districts in the St. Louis region. At the same time, a Harvard University study found that African American “public school students were three times as likely as whites to be identified as ‘mentally retarded’ and in need of special education services” (Associated Press, March 3, 2001). In both Missouri and Illinois, African American public school students were “1^{1/2} times more likely to be placed in special education classes” (Associated Press, March 3, 2001).

2. Students in gifted and advanced placement classes have access to higher-quality curriculum and instruction that prepares them for college and beyond, while those in lower-track classes general-

ly receive an inferior education that limits their future education and career options. For example, special education students are generally taught separately from other students and often receive inadequate curriculum and instruction (Associated Press, March 3, 2001). Students placed in advanced classes, on the other hand, are more likely to receive the benefits of smaller class sizes and teachers with higher qualifications than other students. One of the most significant predictors of a student's graduation from college is a high quality, strong curriculum in high school (Darling-Hammond, 1998; Viadero, March 22, 2000).

3. Tracking assignments are often subjective in nature, which can result in inaccurate ‘labeling’ of students’ abilities based on perceptions rather than merit. Although testing is usually the final criteria for placement in gifted and special education programs, classroom teachers often take the first step toward this placement. Generally, teachers refer students with exceptional abilities for testing for gifted programs. However, teachers are not always adequately trained to identify characteristic behaviors of gifted children from diverse backgrounds (Bower & Hacker, December 3, 2000). Racial bias may also play a role in limiting the access of students of color to advanced classes (Oakes in ERASE, 2000, pp. 16-17).

SCHOOL FUNDING FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

1. Wide financial discrepancies exist between school district budgets and the amount of money that districts spend per pupil in the St. Louis region. Where a family lives largely determines the quality of education available to its children. In both Missouri and Illinois, approximately 80% of money available for education is obtained from local tax sources. This funding system results in wide variances between per-pupil expenditures from one district to another. This is apparent in the St. Louis region where clusters of high-value property have resulted in large local tax revenue for certain, smaller school districts. Meanwhile, neighboring districts that do not have a similar concentration of wealth may be forced to educate residents with much less. Clayton, with its booming commercial center and high residential values supporting a relatively small

number of public school children, spent more than \$11,000 per student in 1998-1999. That was more than any other district in the region and almost \$5,000 more per student than the University City school district adjacent to the north (Franck & Hacker, October 22, 2000). Furthermore, wealthier communities with high concentrations of businesses and valuable residential properties are able to generate more local school revenue with lower tax rates than most of their nearby counterparts.

- 2. The financial support of public education based largely on local property taxes is inherently inequitable.** Generally, children in schools with greater financial resources tend to do better than those in schools lacking resources. The lack of adequate financial resources also makes it more difficult for schools to attract qualified teachers and to provide students with up-to-date equipment and higher levels of personalized guidance and instruction (Darling-Hammond, 1998, pp.116-122).
- 3. School districts in the urban core face significantly greater educational and resource challenges than most rural and suburban districts.** The St. Louis Public School District faces significant issues that many suburban and rural districts do not have to generally face. These challenges include teaching a comparatively high population of homeless students and students living in poverty with special needs, maintaining an aged school building stock and providing a large amount of mandated special education programs to students (FOCUS St. Louis, 2000).

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT AND EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

- 1. The educational attainment level of parents has been found to significantly impact a child's academic achievement.** The importance of early childhood education in the home has been found to positively impact children's future academic achievement. For example, reading to a child in the home "increases sharply with parents' educational attainment" (Council of Economic Advisors for the President's Initiative on Race, September 1998, p. 13). Yet, African American and Hispanic children have a greater likelihood of being poor and having parents with lower education levels than White children. As a result, they are often less likely to be read to by a family member.

- 2. Increased family involvement in the educational process has been found to improve academic achievement for all students.** Family involvement in children's schooling has many benefits including higher test scores, better attendance, higher levels of completing homework, higher graduation rates and greater enrollment in higher education (North Central Regional Educational Laboratory, 1998).
- 3. Parental involvement in schooling can be particularly challenging for low-income and working parents because of considerable time constraints, childcare issues and a sense of alienation from the school.** Low-income parents are less likely to have high levels of educational attainment themselves which makes them less likely to be actively engaged with their children's schooling and homework (Beck & Muia, 1980). Many working parents face time constraints and childcare issues that may limit their ability to engage in school activities. In addition, some parents do not feel welcome in their children's schools or feel intimidated because of their own lack of education, skills or ability to speak English (North Central Regional Educational Laboratory, 1996).

TEACHERS AND STUDENTS FINDING AND CONCLUSION

- 1. The racial diversity of students is not generally well represented in district teaching and administrative staffs.** There also remains a lack of substantial multicultural curricula and diversity awareness training for educators. Often, the proportion of a school district's African American and Hispanic student population is twice that of the African American and Hispanic teaching staffs (ERASE, 2000, pp. 3, 19-20). Increasing the racial diversity of teaching staffs provides students of color with important benefits that include: role models of success in the school setting; teachers with high expectations for students of color and teachers with the ability to understand and share their students' cultural backgrounds (ERASE, 2000, p. 20).

EDUCATIONAL DATA COLLECTION: THE CHALLENGES

The data collection limitations faced by the FOCUS task force were particularly challenging for the education section of this report.

DATA COLLECTION FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

1. Consistent and accurate data on school achievement and attainment disaggregated by race is not easily accessible or available. This is indicative of the deeply entrenched problem of racial inequality in education. The FOCUS task force had a diffi-

cult time determining how students of color are faring in the St. Louis region because of significant data limitations including: non-uniformity of data across school districts and the states of Missouri and Illinois; incompleteness of the data collected and a reluctance on the part of school districts to provide data disaggregated by race on key indicators such as dropout and graduation rates.

2. Student achievement and attainment data is not collected consistently by federal, state or local entities. This data is now not comparable due to differences in collection and calculation methods between school districts and governmental entities.

EDUCATION RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations in the Education section seek to work towards equal educational outcomes by addressing racism in education and advancing educational opportunities and outcomes for all. Detailed action steps for implementing the recommendations are contained in the full report.

- Develop a strategic public awareness campaign to engage the community in an effort to establish equal educational outcomes for all students in the St. Louis region as an urgent, regional priority. In conjunction with this awareness campaign, communicate examples of actions that individuals and community members can take to make a difference. The importance of integrated education should also be a component of this effort.
- Strengthen and further develop collaboration and cooperation among all school districts in the region.
- Identify best practices in exemplary schools/districts locally and nationally with comparable demographics to discover potential, replicable strategies for change.
- Inspire and engage the broader community (citizens, business leaders, government officials, parents, etc.) to take ownership of and accountability for creating culturally and racially inclusive, high-quality schools for all children.
- Work to ensure that all children in the St. Louis region are assured of a quality pre-school experience, so that they are better able to begin kindergarten “ready to learn.” Assess the current status of local Head Start programs and other publicly-funded programs. Engage Parents as Teachers and other local organizations to develop alternative strategies for providing pre-kindergarten schooling for low-income children.
- Engage the broader community, in addition to educators, in the development of specific action strategies to ensure that all students in the St. Louis region have access to culturally inclusive, high-quality education, regardless of the future of the desegregation program.
- Encourage and support the continuation of participating school districts in the current desegregation program beyond the three years required of them through the 1999 Settlement Agreement.
- Develop cooperative learning partnership programs within and among school districts and universities to ensure that all students have the opportunity to learn with students of different racial and ethnic backgrounds.

-
- Strengthen academic and social support systems for students of all ability levels and backgrounds in schools.
 - Advocate for the equitable and fair administration of student discipline and for expected school conduct to be exemplified by all school staff.
 - Research and assess the effectiveness and viability of alternative forms of student discipline outside of expulsion through the study of local and national best practices in this area.
 - Research and assess the effectiveness and viability of alternative forms of student assessment in addition to standardized test scores. Implement multiple forms of student assessment.
 - Increase college-bound course offerings and guidance to all students. This is particularly important for students of color in urban core schools.
 - Support affirmative action programs for college and university admissions. This is critical to the goal of further diversifying the talent pool in the St. Louis region. Identify and support institutions that have affirmative action policies in place and work to ensure their enforcement.
 - Promote equal access and opportunity to gifted and advanced placement education classes for African American and Hispanic students.
 - Assess and develop alternative school funding possibilities that would provide a more equitable distribution of financial resources to all public school districts in the St. Louis region. Research best practices in other communities.
 - Reconstitute Missouri and Illinois state funding formulas to provide an equitable funding strategy that is not based on local property taxes for all school districts in the St. Louis region. This will require collaboration between regional leaders and legislators.
 - Develop parent outreach strategies to further engage parents in school activities and to inform parents of student concerns, activities and academic and social progress.
 - Foster teaching and administrative staffs that are reflective of the racial and ethnic diversity of the region and/or of the local community. Work to ensure that all faculty and staff members model inclusive and cooperative leadership strategies.
 - Encourage and develop broad-based regional support for and respect of the fields of public education and teaching to encourage more people of color to pursue education as a career.
 - Expand diversity awareness and anti-bias training for teachers and educational administrators. Utilize an inclusive, multicultural curriculum in classrooms.
 - Develop and mandate standards for regional uniform data collection and monitoring of student achievement and attainment disaggregated by race/ethnicity and socioeconomic status.
 - Develop and pass legislation that mandates all school district disaggregated data be available and accessible to the public. This requires the involvement of legislators, school district officials and state education officials.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Special thanks to Adelaide Schlafly for her generous support and strong belief in the importance of this work.

Copies of the full report of “Racial Equality in the St. Louis Region: A Community Call to Action” are available for \$5.00. Please call 314-622-1250 or visit www.focus-stl.org.

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***Our Mission:** To create a cooperative, thriving region by engaging citizens in active leadership roles to influence positive community change.*

About FOCUS St. Louis

FOCUS St. Louis is a nonprofit organization whose members share a vision and a commitment to work together to improve the St. Louis region as a place to live and work. The organization pursues a wide range of leadership development programs, citizen engagement activities and community policy initiatives as part of its mission.

Any individual, organization or company that has an interest in the welfare and progress of the greater St. Louis region is encouraged to become a member of FOCUS St. Louis. For more information on any of our programs or activities, please visit our website at www.focus-stl.org or call the FOCUS St. Louis office at 314/622-1250.

Our Highest Priorities in the Region

Good Government
Racial Equality and Social Justice
Quality Educational Opportunities
Sustainable Infrastructure

Our Major Roles in the Region

Developing Leaders
Influencing Community Policy
Engaging Citizens

Our Values

Regional Perspective
Citizen Involvement
Quality Leadership
Diversity
Community Consensus
Focused Outcomes



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