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Self Segregation on College Campuses

Andrew Ezigbo, *University of Central Florida*

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Self-Segregation on College Campuses

Andrew Ezigbo, Lead Scholar
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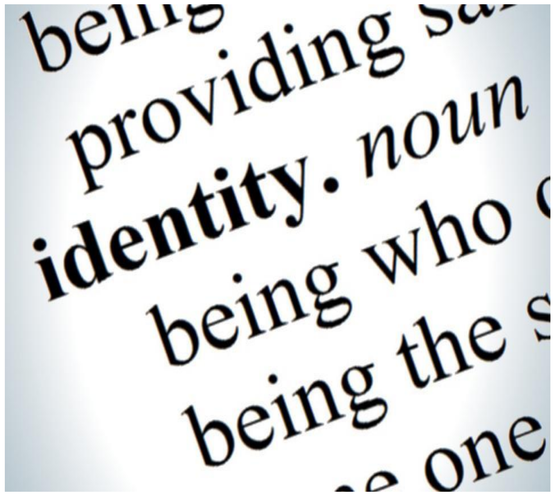
Background/Introduction

- ***SELF-SEGREGATION*** is the voluntary separation or isolation of a race, class, or ethnic group from the rest of society.
- On college and university campuses, self-segregation can occur based on various factors, including ethnicity, race, and cultural identity.
- Understanding how and with whom college students interact has become important in light of contemporary demographic changes (Kim, Park and Koo, 2014).
- Colleges and universities must continue to promote diversity before admission, after acceptance, and during college matriculation. Many recognize that self-segregation is a reality. For example, "the mission of the Office of Diversity and Inclusion is to collaborate with the University of Central Florida community to advocate for and educate about the university's goal of becoming more diverse and inclusive." (See https://diversity.ucf.edu/).

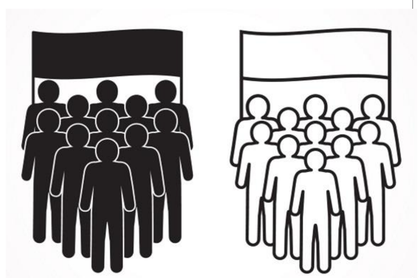


Themes

Many students' social lives are segmented in ways that reaffirm their ethnic, social, and cultural identities (Duster, 1991).

Theme 1:*Students may self-segregate based on ethnic or racial identity.*
Theme 2: *Students may self-segregate based on social identity.*
Theme 3: *Students may self-segregate based on cultural identity.*

Why Does this Research Matter?



Self-segregation is NOT a black and white issue--there are shades of gray. According to Duster (1991), "a common ethnic/cultural identity is often the basis for self-affirmation, with ethnic/racial minorities needing to raw upon the social, cultural, an moral resources of their respective communities. "

Self-segregation may be a temporary bridge to permanent assimilation into a new and different cultural and society. Students who stick close to what and who they know—ethnic, racial, and/or cultural peers are often trying to find their individual identity and common support group to ensure their success in a new environment.

Diverse college campuses can still be segregated based on ethnic, social, and cultural identities, depriving students of invaluable experiences in interacting with others who differ base on ethnicity, race, and culture. While campuses have diversified notably in recent decades, it appears that many students spend significant amounts of time interacting within racially homogeneous student subcultures (Milem et al. 2005).

Colleges and universities may have begun to normalize self-segregation. Even with a call for diversity, many students tend to interact mostly with people who look just like them. This 'normal' practice may both inadvertently or sometimes intentionally support voluntary or self-segregation.

In an increasingly global world and society—brought closer by technology, the Internet and immigrant migration— individuals are choosing to separate within a diverse society based on what is familiar. It is important to remember, though, that professional and personal spaces are generally enhanced by diversity in thought, cultures, and ethnic identities.

Some ethnic, racial and cultural groups may use self-segregation as a form of self-preservation (Villalpano, 2005).

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Conclusion

- Self-segregation, to some extent, may serve as a safe pathway for college students as they figure out their identities and build friendship communities.
- Self-segregation is not a simple construct that can be categorized as good or bad. There are definitely shades of gray, as students need to map out support systems to ensure their successful matriculation, assimilation and graduation from college.

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