Segregation in the United States is something that most urban scholars can claim legitimate expertise in. We know a lot about it and we teach the topic routinely. I cannot imagine a course in urban sociology that does not discuss the pervasiveness or intransigence of segregation, what policy is or is not doing about it, and its consequences—the perpetuation of economic inequality through a prism of race-based spatial imprisonment. Opportunities for quality education, housing, crime, safety, and employment are all ruined or reduced because of segregation. And it is not just a city thing. The racial segregation nexus is reproduced spatially as minorities suburbanize. No, of course it’s not the ghetto—yet.

I grew up with the philosophy that if we learned enough about a problem, we could solve it. If we understood the institutional underpinnings of segregation, we could remove these barriers, destroy the dual housing market and thus, provide the opportunity for authentic, stable integration. With careful empirical scholarship applied in a fair-minded policy environment, we could, to coin a phrase, change the world, rearrange it, and render segregation to the dustbins of history, like polio or chicken pox. But as this book aptly shows, segregation has been relatively impervious to change—certainly relative to what we know about it. And Segregation: The Rising Costs for America shows that we know a lot about segregation. The problem is not our lack of knowledge; it is what we have not done.

Every sociologist should read this book because it highlights almost every important dimension associated with the racial segregation phenomenon. Written by the top scholars in this field who have been at the vanguard of the intellectual and research component that has fought the fair housing fight, each chapter highlights a particular feature associated with segregation’s reach into the dimensions that define our race-based social structure.

Douglas Massey reviews segregation’s historic role in creating race-based economic disparities. Kathleen Engel and Patricia McCoy look at the mortgage lending industry and the continued struggle to use access to credit as a vehicle for supporting minorities by either excluding them or exploiting them. Deborah McKoy and Jeffrey Vincent look at the seemingly intrinsic and almost truism-like link between location, segregation, and quality of education. Marge Turner examines segregation, employment opportunity, and how segregation destroys meaningful access to good jobs for minorities. Ingrid Gould Ellen reviews the myriad of contemporary causes that underlie segregative processes.

A couple of less typical topics are also included. Dolores Acevedo-Garcia and Theresa Osypuk provide a thoughtful analysis of housing, neighborhoods, and health, highlighting some of the recent findings of the Moving to Opportunity experiment which demonstrated that desegregating low-income families can have dramatic health benefits. Rachel Kleit highlights the importance of social networks and social capital and how segregation wreaks havoc with these important mechanisms for leveraging opportunities.

An important and unexpected chapter, by Dean Baker and Heather Boushey, looks at trends in the U.S. economy, its weakening position in the global economy, and the consequences of U.S. economic restructuring for minority life chances and opportunities. It is not a pretty picture. Macroeconomic forces have severely curtailed African American and Hispanic advancement relative to white economic circumstances. The belt tightening that will need to occur as the U.S. deals with its global economic problems will likely widen the economic gaps between minorities and others, in part because minorities already begin at a disadvantaged starting place. When I think about the power of a global economy to dampen already limited achievements in racial social and economic mobility, it is hard to jump up and down about the gains accrued through small demonstrations like Moving to Opportunity. Okay, I need to get a grip. But Segregation, in its entirety, is a pretty old tale with an ending that does not seem to be one of living happily ever after, at least not in the short term.

Segregation’s editors, James Carr and Nandinee Kutty, are seasoned research veter-
ans who take the issue of segregation from one of being unfair to being bad economic policy for cities, regions, states, and the United States as a whole. They are right. But many of you will also recall Nobel Laureate Gary Becker who argued that in the long run it does not pay to discriminate. Where did that get us?

Each chapter contains important policy recommendations. This is particularly emphasized in a chapter by Greg Squires on fair housing enforcement as well as the editors’ closing remarks on attaining a just society. Segregation is the essential synthesis of what we need to know to move this issue forward. That will not be enough but it is what we have. Read it and use it.


RAYMOND SIN-KWOK WONG
University of California, Santa Barbara
wong@soc.ucsb.edu

The availability and demand for higher education has increased tremendously in many advanced industrial societies. The traditional elitist model of restricted growth soon gave way to an alternative model that would permit a larger share of the population to enroll in some kind of postsecondary education. In countries such as France and Great Britain, the stratification systems have been transformed from sponsored to contest mobility. To many high-aspiring parents and students, higher education is no longer viewed as a privilege to a limited few but rather a right or an obligation. This development naturally leads students of stratification to wonder whether the expanded access would lead to greater or lower inequality.

The sixteen chapters collected in this edited volume offer a timely and comprehensive assessment of the inequality of access to postsecondary education. Building on an earlier comparative project on secondary expansion by some of the same contributors, the collected works address issues of whether the role of tertiary education expansion represents the processes of inclusion (enhanced opportunities) or diversion and whether the extent of educational inequality is conditional upon institutional differentiation (unified, diversified, and binary educational systems) and market differentiation (decentralized and unregulated versus centrally regulated systems). The book provides an impressive collection of fifteen in-depth country studies. They include seven countries in Western Europe (Great Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Sweden, and Switzerland), two in Eastern Europe (Czech Republic and Russia), three in East Asia (Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan), and three elsewhere (Australia, Israel, and United States). To facilitate comparison across countries, they adopt a common platform and methodological sophistication and study three educational outcomes: eligibility for higher education, entry into higher education, and entry into first-tier (degree-granting) higher education. In a few cases, the analyses also extend to include completion of higher education as well. All analyses involve over-time comparison, either through the use of cross-sectional/retrospective samples, longitudinal cohorts, or a mix of both data types. They also adopt a similar set of variables, particularly parental education and class using the standard CASMIN categories.

While these countries differ in terms of gross enrollment ratio, rate of expansion, reliance on public/private finance, institutional differentiation, and degree of selectivity, it is perhaps surprising to find, with only a few exceptions, three consistent findings: (1) women generally edge over men in college attendance; (2) the improvement in women’s relative position is largely quantitative rather than qualitative as men continue to dominate in professional and technical fields whereas women dominate in humanities and social sciences; and (3) the effects of parental education and/or class are largely either stable or have increased recently, particularly in the most competitive outcome (first-tier higher education). To contextualize the above findings, the introductory chapter offers not only an overview, but also an interesting synthesis and theorization of the findings. The editors conclude that differences between various educational systems are negligible. While expansion to the point of saturation was associated with declining inequality in eligibility