



# Social segregation and academic achievement in state-run elementary schools in the municipality of Campinas, Brazil

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## ARTICLE INFO

### Article history:

Received 5 July 2007

Received in revised form 3 June 2009

### Keywords:

Social segregation  
Residential segregation  
Metropolitanization  
Academic achievement  
Campinas city—Brazil

## ABSTRACT

Space not only reflects social inequality, it also reinforces the advantages or disadvantages associated with social class. However, the study of how neighbourhoods affect their residents has only recently entered the debate on urban poverty in Latin America. We use 2000 data from the Brazilian population census, school census, and the state of São Paulo's educational evaluation system to analyze the relationship between school infrastructure, school academic achievement, and the neighbourhoods in which these schools are located. Our analyses indicate that state-run elementary schools located in areas of concentrated poverty have lower academic achievement in mathematics tests and Portuguese than mixed and affluent areas of the city, even though these schools are all administered by the same government body. We end with a discussion of the relationship between Brazilian education policy and its influence on spatial differences in São Paulo State.

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## 1. Introduction

Space not only reflects social inequality, it also reinforces the advantages or disadvantages associated with social class (Massey, 1996). However, the study of how neighbourhoods affect their residents has only recently entered the debate on urban poverty in Latin America. The deleterious effects of residential segregation by social class arguably are multiplied in a context of rapid urbanization; because of a unilateral focus on accumulation and growth, questions related to guaranteeing greater equality among citizens—such as the quality of public education—often go unanswered.

In the Brazilian case, neighbourhood effects on schooling have recently begun to be investigated (e.g., Torres et al., 2005). However, the bulk of these studies focus on the primate cities (São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro), and do not consider whether these results hold true in the smaller, faster growing intermediate size cities. Campinas is one such city.

In the last 20 years this city and its Metropolitan Region, located about 100 km north of the city of São Paulo, has had one of the highest annual demographic growth rates of the state of São Paulo. In 2000, 6.32% of the state's population lived within the region (more than 1 million people). This area can be classified as an

“emergent metropolis”, in that the majority of its growth has occurred within recent decades. As such, the processes and consequences of urban expansion within the region have been largely unexplored (NEPO/NESUR, 2004).

We use 2000 data from the Brazilian population census, school census, and the state of São Paulo's educational evaluation system (SARESP) to analyze the relationship between school infrastructure, mean school academic achievement, and the neighbourhoods in which these schools are located. Our analyses indicate that state-run elementary schools located in areas of concentrated poverty have lower academic achievement in Math tests than mixed areas or more affluent areas of the city, even though these schools are all administered by the same government body. We end with a discussion of how the policy of universal elementary education instituted by the Constitution of 1988 has highlighted spatial differences in the quality of schools administered by the state of São Paulo, and how this policy of universalization presents challenges to addressing spatial inequalities in public schooling.

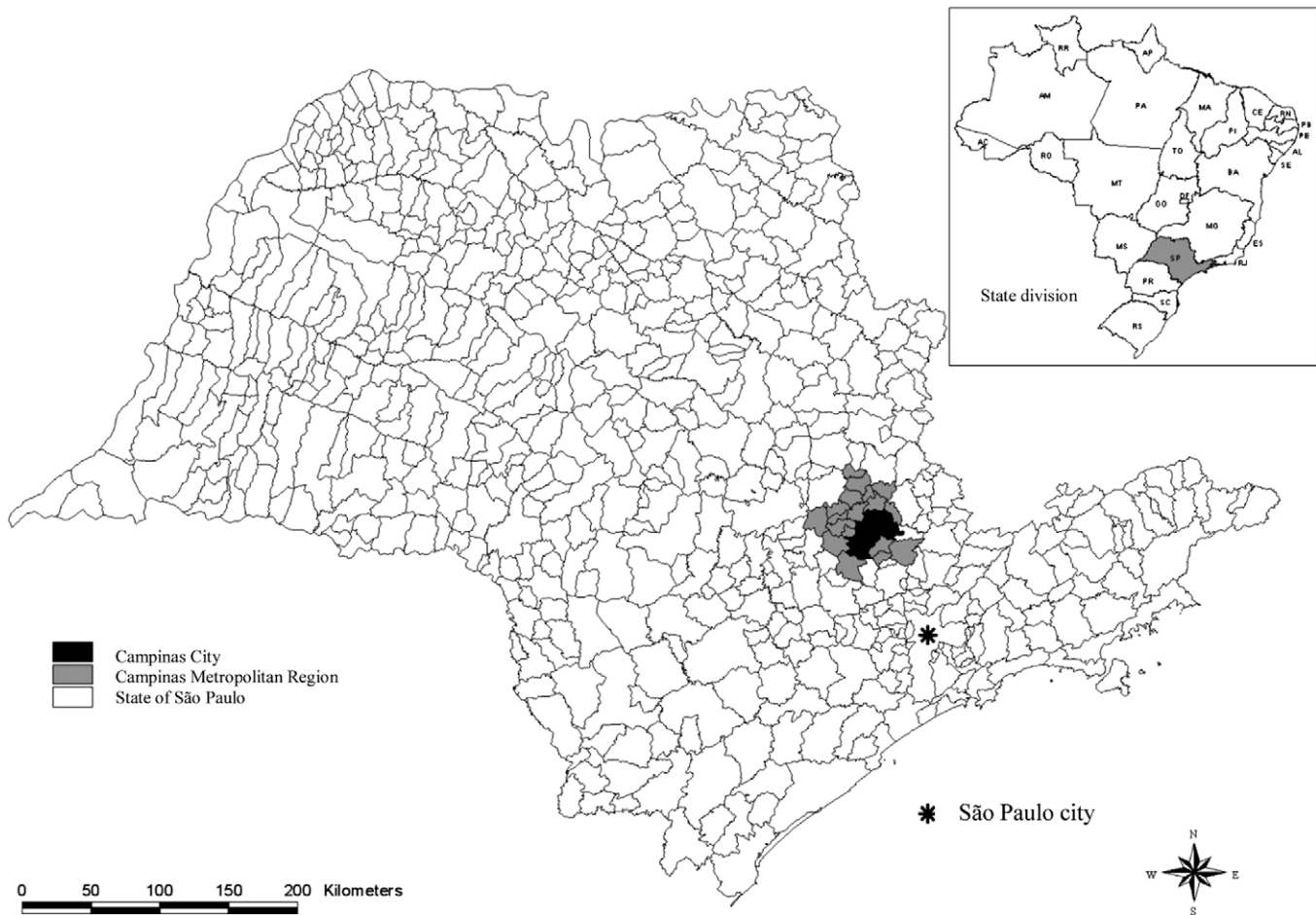
## 2. Background

### 2.1. Campinas: the city and its “emerging” metropolitan area

The municipality of Campinas, Brazil, lies approximately 100 km north of the city of São Paulo. Today Campinas, with its

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**Fig. 1.** Location of the Metropolitan Region of Campinas and the municipality of Campinas, state of São Paulo.

approximately 1.1 million inhabitants, is characterized mainly as an industrial city and a center for technology and services, but it also has a long history of employment based on agriculture. Campinas and its 18 surrounding smaller municipalities comprise the Campinas Metropolitan Region. During the last 30 years time, the Campinas Metropolitan Region has registered one of the highest population growth rates in the country.

Despite this rapid growth, the metropolitan region (see Fig. 1) is now facing population volumes and social problems that can be considered more manageable than those in the even larger urban agglomerations in Brazil, especially São Paulo (17 million inhabitants) and Rio de Janeiro (10 million). In fact, indicators such as the Human Development Index (HDI)<sup>1</sup> show that the living conditions in the Campinas region and, especially, in the municipality itself, are among the highest in the country. This is partially the result of its economic history, since, in the late 19th and the early 20th centuries, it developed as an important coffee-producing region, and was consequently able to accumulate considerable capital. It currently generates wealth through economic activity based not only on traditional industry, but also on advanced technology businesses, attracted both by its strategic geographical position – excellent highways and proximity to the larger centers in the country, like São Pau-

lo city – as well as the presence of important universities and research centers.

As a result, it is hoped that, by taking Campinas as a case study for analyzing the effects of segregation and poverty on academic performance, we will be contributing to the mosaic of studies that have already been published. We thus intend to identify the degree of correspondence among results concerning a number of other social, economic and spatial contexts.

## 2.2. Neighborhood effects on schooling

The effects of socio-spatial segregation on the living conditions of families and individuals in the general population have recently entered the discussion of urban poverty in the Brazilian and Latin American literature. Based on the premise that “space matters” (Flores, 2006; Torres et al., 2005; Torres, 2004), a number of behaviors and outcomes can be investigated to evaluate the effect that socio-spatial segregation – the concentration in space of households of similar socioeconomic status – has on the ability of families and individuals to cope with risks and challenges to their well-being. This type of analysis includes studies examining children’s academic performance (Torres et al., 2005; Flores, 2006), as well as criminality (Sampson et al., 1997) and the living conditions of young people (Galster and Mikelsons, 1995; Jencks and Mayer, 1990).

According to Flores (2006), the mechanisms through which segregation operates to influence the lives of individuals are identified according to the theoretical approach adopted, each of which emphasizes different aspects, ranging from questions related to

<sup>1</sup> According to HDI (Human Development Index) estimates for 2000, conducted by the UNDP (United Nations Development Program), the municipality of Campinas was in 24th place in Brazil (out of 5560 municipalities) with an HDI of 0.852. Considering the indexes calculated for all the metropolitan regions in Brazil, Campinas was ranked fourth (0.835).

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