Sheff v. O’Neill in the Universities: 
Another Impact of Connecticut’s Landmark Case

Sheff v. O’Neill has had a transformative effect on Connecticut education policy, and it has influenced policies at the federal Department of Education and in some of our sister states. But it has also had a significant impact on the way that academic authors in law, social science, and education view the prospects for racial and economic integration. Here is a selection of the growing literature that has reviewed and discussed the implications of the Sheff case:

Articles and Books in Social Science, Education Theory, and Policy


Susan E. Eaton, The Children in Room E4: American Education on Trial, (2006) (Book focused on racial segregation in Hartford through a focus on the Simpson-Waverly Elementary School, an all-minority school in Hartford, CT)


possibility of establishing large regional districts that would address the issues of desegregation and equity in resources and their impact on inner-city schools)

Gloria Grave Holmes and Susan Clarke, To Choose or Not to Choose: Equity in Connecticut in the Wake of Sheff v. O'Neill, 38 Equity and Excellence in Education 3 (February 2005) (Uses focus groups, personal interviews, and a student forum, to present the perspectives of students and parents who are crossing district boundaries and educators from both sides of the district line)

Neil Kraus, Concentrated Poverty and Urban School Reform: "The Choice Is Yours" in Minneapolis, 41 Equity & Excellence in Education 262 (April 2008) (shows how Sheff both influenced and is contrasted by Minneapolis school reform)


Preston Cary Green, III, Can State Constitutional Provisions Eliminate De Facto Segregation in the Public Schools?, 68 Journal of Negro Education 29 (Spring 1999) (analyzes how the Sheff decision may influence litigation in other states and how state courts will vary)

Kathryn A. McDermott, Controlling Public Education: Localism versus Equity (1999) (book using Connecticut as a case study to analyze how local control can be a barrier to desegregation; uses Sheff decision as starting point)

Kathryn A. McDermott, et al. Have Connecticut's Desegregation Policies Produced Desegregation? 35 Equity & Excellence in Education 18 (2002) (examines data on how the new policies have affected the student attendance patterns by racial group; concludes with a discussion of the implications of Connecticut's policies)

Kathryn A. McDermott, “Expanding the Moral Community” or “Blaming the Victim”? The Politics of State Education Accountability Policy, 44 American Educational Research Journal 77 (March 2007) (Uses four states – Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Jersey, and Vermont – to analyze enactment of educational accountability policies)

Monte Piliawsky, Remedies to de facto School Segregation: The Case of Hartford 28 The Black Scholar 29, (Summer 1998) (reviews the immediate government reactions following the Sheff decision and ways to improve the Hartford desegregation efforts)


Bilal Sekou (aka Darryl L. McMiller) 42 “I Support School Integration, But…” Sheff v. O'Neill More than Ten Years Later and No End in Sight, Equity & Excellence in Education, 97 (2009) (Analyzes racial attitudes of white parents as a barrier to school integration)

Jeanne Weiler, Recent changes in school desegregation 133 ERIC Clearinghouse on Urban Education, Institute for Urban and Minority Education (1998) (discusses some of the major trends and changes that took place in school desegregation in the 1990s)
Law Review Articles


Derek W. Black, Middle-Income Peers As Educational Resources and the Constitutional Right to Equal Access, 53 B.C. L. Rev. 373 (2012) (analyzing why Sheff may not be easily transferable to other cases).


John C. Brittain, Direct Democracy by the Majority Can Jeopardize the Civil Rights of Minority or Other Powerless Groups, 1996 Ann. Surv. Am. L. 441, 448 (1996) (hypothesizing that voters would have changed provisions in the Connecticut Constitution if Connecticut were a direct democracy).


clause of the Connecticut Constitution should lie closer to the *Sheff* interpretation than the *Moore* interpretation).


Martin B. Margulies, Sheff, Moore, and Westfarms: A Revised Blueprint, 17 QLR 177 (1997).


