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By **BRUCE MURPHY**
of the Journal Sentinel staff

Last Updated: Jan. 18, 2003

The flaws of the report on segregation in Milwaukee done by the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee's Employment and Training Institute were compounded by the questionable journalism of Bruce Murphy, the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel reporter who broke the story.

First, Murphy never disclosed a clear conflict of interest in reporting on this study: He has collaborated on projects with the study authors. He has written articles with them and, at one point, was listed as co-author for some of their recent work on welfare reform released by the Brookings Institution (Murphy's name was later dropped from the Brookings Web site as co-author).

Second, Murphy's stories read much more like a celebration of the report than objective reporting, as he never examines some obvious questions that have a bearing in assessing the reliability of the study. Unlike all of the social scientists - such as Douglas Massey, Nancy Denton, Edward Glaeser and John Logan - whom Murphy savages in his article, the study authors have never published any of their segregation "research" in peer-reviewed journals or books, which is the accepted bedrock of independent, scholarly research. Nor have they presented their work before audiences of academic

Segregation in Milwaukee



Illustration/KRT

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experts, who might fully evaluate it. Murphy never explores this issue.

Nor does Murphy point out that all of ETI's work is done for clients, such as the City of Milwaukee or the Bader Foundation, who presumably have clear ideas of what they want "proven" in the research they fund. To what extent did the report represent independent research, or an effort to satisfy a funder who sought a study showing that Milwaukee isn't as segregated as commonly thought?

Murphy is incredibly cavalier in throwing around labels such as "racist" and "biased" when discussing some of the most distinguished researchers in the country; yet, he fails to do basic journalistic legwork in at least exploring what biases might be built into ETI's client-driven research.

In short, Murphy has done a major disservice to serious discussion of racial inequality in Milwaukee with his boosterish coverage of this flawed research.

- *Marc Levine, Gregory Squires and John Zipp*

Response: The City of Milwaukee had nothing to do with this study. The Bader Foundation, which commissioned it, has also funded a wide range of research related to minorities in Milwaukee, including studies by Marc Levine and Greg Squires, who take issue with this new study. Levine has done research with more negative views of Milwaukee and has received far more Bader funding than ETI.

Foundation President Dan Bader said the integration study arose out of a general concern that middle-class blacks in Milwaukee are overlooked in all the emphasis on negative indicators for African-Americans. Bader said the foundation was surprised by the study's results, but he did support it, as well as the research that Levine and Squires have done.

I did co-author news articles with John Pawasarat, but the last one was done 17 years ago. I was once asked by ETI to work on a Brookings paper and declined, citing a possible conflict. Levine also inquired whether I was available for hire, and I declined for the same reason.

In doing the study, I spent many hours interviewing seven of the most prominent experts on the traditional segregation index, including Massey, Denton, Logan and Glaeser, as well as Karl Taeuber, the father of the traditional segregation index. Several suggested the 20/20 approach would be an important contribution to the literature on integration.

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When reporting on research, I have never taken the word of "peers" who review the literature, but rather have interviewed experts on all sides of an issue and reported the facts. Prior to writing this series, I believed Milwaukee was a "most segregated" city. The UWM study and interviews with researchers nationally convinced me otherwise.

Finally, the story did not use the terms "racist" or "biased," except when quoting others.

- *Bruce Murphy*

A version of this story appeared in the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel on Jan. 19, 2003.

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