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A study of school-choice students in the Southgate Community School District

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A STUDY OF SCHOOL-CHOICE STUDENTS

IN THE SOUTHGATE COMMUNITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

by

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Dissertation

Submitted to the Department of Leadership and Counseling

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DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to describe and explain the experiences of school-choice students at Southgate Anderson High School (SAHS). Qualitative methods were utilized to complete this interpretive study. The conceptual framework combined socialization theory with organizational theory. The researcher worked as a participant observer who conducted interviews, recorded observation data, and studied archival documents. Conceptually-driven sequential sampling was used to identify participants for initial interviews. Data collected through the initial round were analyzed and led to the use of purposive sampling for the remaining interviews. Interview transcripts, archival data, and observation logs were analyzed until a point of data saturation was reached.

Southgate Community School District (SCSD) is located approximately 5 miles south of Detroit in Southeast Michigan's Wayne County. The community that SCSD serves was incorporated in 1958 and grew rapidly during the exodus of Caucasian residents from Detroit in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s. The State of Michigan began a statewide interdistrict public schools-of-choice program in 1996. As of the 2004–2005 school year, 687 school-choice students were enrolled in SCSD from nearby school districts.

The history of Southeast Michigan and of Michigan school funding shaped the experiences of school-choice students. The experience of school-choice students at SAHS was a cultural experience, and the adaptive socialization response chosen by the students fell along the lines of racial and socio-cultural congruence. The relationship between school-choice students and the culture of

SAHS shaped the experiences of school-choice students. Schools-of-choice, Proposal A, and the culture of the community combined to create conflict between organizational rationalities. This conflict framed the experiences of school-choice students at SAHS.

Michigan's school funding system and schools-of-choice policy was intended to create a market-driven system that would result in increased effectiveness of schools. Schools-of-choice, in this case, was a competition between communities and not a competition between schools. Perceptions related to socio-cultural characteristics of communities shaped the experiences of school-choice students.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Historically, American educational policy has been formulated to address conflicts among the guiding values of efficiency, equity, quality, and choice/democracy (Marshall & Gerstl-Pepin, 2005). It is this conflict of values that forces policy makers to redirect the focus of the educational system by making temporary compromises between the dominant values, only to be revisited when another conflict arises. Such is the case of school choice.

After policy makers addressed issues of equity in the 1960s and 1970s with mandates of desegregation and special education legislation, the focus moved to quality (Marshall & Gerstl-Pepin, 2005). During the 1980s and early 1990s, quality was the new key value that dominated educational policy through focusing on changes within the school system to improve "excellence." However, excellence and quality soon began to conflict with individuals' rights within a democracy, especially the right to choose (Marshall & Gerstl-Pepin). Hence, the movement towards educational choice was born.

Currently, choice is one of the dominant values framing educational policy. Choice has been introduced as a vehicle to improve excellence/effectiveness. In order to address individual concerns related to the right to choose within a democratic system, school choice has been created in several forms such as public and private school tuition vouchers, interdistrict choice, intradistrict choice, and charter schools. In turn, school choice variations have been governmentally mandated, legally challenged, and systematically implemented in a variety of educational settings with mixed results (Hess, 2002).

Proponents of school choice have three major contentions. First, choice provides an opportunity for students from failing districts to attend better schools regardless of their family income. Second, choice introduces market competition and market discipline into the education system, forcing schools to improve their performance and guide their design toward the wants and needs of their consumers (i.e., parents and students); (Chubb & Moe, 1990). In other words, choice leads to increased effectiveness. Last, choice leads to increased efficiency within the educational system because schools will be forced to streamline their efforts as a means of survival.

The growing body of research suggests that these contentions have not proven themselves true. Specifically, studies have shown that school choice has failed to stimulate school improvement (Liepa, 2001; Hess, 2002). In addition, research conducted by Conte (2002) showed that race played an important role in the parents' choice of a new school for their child. In particular, parents chose a school for their child that was composed of the lowest proportion of minority students, regardless of the choice student's race. Students were more likely to leave a district with a high concentration of African American students than a district with a more mixed or predominantly Caucasian population (Arsen, Plank, & Sykes, 1999). Combined with a disproportionate number of failing districts with large minority populations, choice may have provided opportunities to a small group of students while the remaining students suffered (Hughes, 2003).

In the case of Michigan's schools-of-choice program, school districts can decide on an individual basis whether they wish to accept school-choice students. In addition, individual districts can decide how many students they wish to enroll. Such stipulations have provided districts with the option of participating in school choice in order to fill empty seats and, in turn, receive additional funding from the state of Michigan since the current funding system allows funds to follow the students. One example of this practice was considered by the Plymouth-Canton school district. While planning to build a new high school, the district considered accepting 100 students through Michigan's schools-of-choice program to increase their funding while opening the new school. However, after weighing community concerns, the district decided not to participate in schools-of-choice (Liepa, 2001).

Scenarios like the Plymouth-Canton situation are easy to replicate across the state of Michigan under the schools-of-choice program. Arsen, Plank, and Sykes (1999) reported that high-income suburban communities are less likely to accept non-resident students than their lower-income counterparts. In addition, as district family income and home values rise, the probability of a district participating in school choice decreases (Arsen, Plank, & Sykes). The same study also identified that districts with declining enrollments are likely to feel financial stress, and as a result, will choose to participate in school choice (Arsen, Plank & Sykes).

Nevertheless, with the focus of districts to use schools choice for financial benefit, the interests of the children who enter that district as school-choice

students may be lost. The bulk of the research on school choice is centered around the principles of market competition and the economic impact of choice policies on the state and individual districts. Hence, the gap in the research appears to lie with the impact of school choice on the students who participate in the program. Specifically, this is true in the case of interdistrict choice where a school-choice student enrolls in a school outside of his neighborhood district. Various studies have shown that student grade-point averages (GPAs) decreased during transition periods from middle school to high school (Isakson & Jarvis, 1999). Yet studies focused on transition issues did not specifically study the issues faced by out-of-district public school-choice students under a statewide, public school, interdistrict choice program. Hence, what is the impact of school-choice policies to the students who choose to participate?

Statement of the Problem

One key question that educators must address lies distinctly outside of the theories of market competition and equal access to education. Educators must also concern themselves with the impact of public school-choice initiatives on the students whom they serve. Hence, the question that must inevitably be answered is: What are the experiences of school-choice students in their new educational setting?

This particular phenomenon, the experiences of the students, is important and complex. Specifically, the relationship between school-choice students and their new school is essential to the evaluation of the effectiveness of such a

program. The socialization and assimilation of these students to a district outside of their own inherently brings difficulty. Educators and legislators cannot simply assume that a student, as a child, can step into a completely different environment and organization from his or her home district and experience immediate academic and social achievement. This is especially problematic considering that the Michigan schools-of-choice program was intended for students to choose a new district considered superior to their home district.

Under Michigan's schools-of-choice program, parents can choose to send their students to a school within their district of residence, to a charter school, or to schools outside their district of residence through interdistrict choice (Arsen, Plank, & Sykes, 1999). In the case of interdistrict choice, school districts can choose whether they will enroll out-of-district students. In addition, districts can specify an exact number of students they wish to enroll at each grade level. These numbers can fluctuate from year-to-year for any given district. Therefore, a district can participate one year and not the next. Once a student enrolls in a new district, the district receives approximately $6,700 per student. This rate varies from district to district, depending on their state foundation allowance.

If a student enrolls into a school district that has a foundation allowance of $6,700 from a school district with a higher foundation allowance of $8,000, the receiving district is given $6,700 from the state for that student. On the other hand, if a student enrolls in the $8,000 district from the $6,700 district, the receiving district is still given only $6,700. Since the state of Michigan allocates

the lesser of the two amounts to the school district receiving students, higher funded districts have less incentive to participate.

Nevertheless, the intent of such a program is to allow educational opportunities to all students regardless of socio-economic status (SES). Yet, for obvious financial reasons, very affluent districts tend not to participate in such a program. Before schools-of-choice, parents wishing to enroll a child in a well-funded suburban school had to first reside within the boundaries of the suburban school district. However, families can now change the public schools their children attend without changing their residence. This is perhaps most valuable to poor families who now wish to send their children to schools in areas where they cannot afford to live (Arsen, Plank, & Sykes, 1999).

Purpose of the Study

Market competition in the public education system as a result of increasing access for all students and increased effectiveness are the primary goals of school-choice policies. Yet issues related to the actual quality of education for the students who participate in school choice have been largely ignored throughout the research. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to describe and explain the experiences of school-choice students from two distinct perspectives. First, the students' experiences were explained in terms of socialization and transition. Second, the organization's motivations and adaptation mechanisms were also important to developing a thorough understanding of the experiences of school-choice students. It was the intention

of the researcher to provide a detailed description and explanation of the experiences of school-choice students such that the impact of school-choice policies and practices can be viewed through the eyes of the students whom the policies are designed to serve.

Significance of the Study

School-choice proponents claim that market competition in public education will force schools to increase effectiveness, efficiency, and quality in order to survive (Chubb & Moe, 1990). However, the growing body of research has repeatedly shown that parents do not select schools based solely upon their effectiveness and test scores (Levin, 1990; Arsen, Plank, & Sykes, 1999). On the contrary, parents choose schools based upon criteria such as race (Kluver & Rosenstock, 2003), geography, accessibility, and safety. These factors are not the primary measurements of overall effectiveness that proponents of market competition contend. Instead, proponents of school choice focus on increased efficiency and test scores.

The research on school choice has consistently focused on evaluating the program based on popularity, increased efficiency, and the change in test scores. Nonetheless, DeFrance (2001) contended that it is important to determine if interdistrict school choice is effective for participating school districts, but it is equally important to determine the effectiveness of school choice on the students who participate. Although little research has been completed on the experiences of those students who choose to participate in interdistrict school choice, much

work has been done in the area of student transition from school to school under traditional programs and scenarios.

In a qualitative study of minority student transition from middle to high schools, it was shown that the quality of the students' relationship with their teachers was a focal aspect of change in the transition to ninth grade (Newman, Lohman, Newman, Myers, & Smith, 2000). In a similar study, Isakson and Jarvis (1999) found that the sense of school membership, grade point averages, and attendance decreased during the transition from middle to high school. However, in the case of interdistrict, school-choice students, very little, if any, research has been conducted to describe and explain their experiences. It is this lack of understanding that could prove troubling for the actual success of school-choice programs, specifically those programs similar to Michigan's that may be more widely used by minority students who wish to attend suburban school districts.

Concerns over the academic and social achievement of school-choice students during the initial transition period was a focus in a study in St. Louis and San Antonio that concluded

> The experience of minority students who moved to predominantly Caucasian schools in suburban St. Louis, as well as the experiences of students in San Antonio's multilingual program, indicates that choice schools must work hard to integrate students into the initial choice decision and then to ensure that they have sufficient academic and nonacademic support services to prevent them from dropping out. (Godwin & Kemerer, 2002, p. 41)

Accordingly, it is important to study the experiences of interdistrict, school-choice students in order to assure that they receive the appropriate academic and nonacademic support services suggested by Godwin and Kemerer (2002).

After all, if schools are meant to operate like businesses, then the only way to improve their profit margins is to keep students from dropping out. If this is achieved, then the market principles outlining school choice will have proven true for improving student achievement. When students choose not to attend school, they cannot be taught. Providing an avenue for these students to find a comfortable or acceptable environment for learning should prove itself as a worthwhile endeavor for student achievement regardless of the market competition, economics, and teacher perceptions that researchers have been so enthusiastic to explore. In turn, concern for the actual students who participate in school choice and their experiences in such a program remains a primary research consideration.

Research Design

The research was conducted using qualitative methods based upon studies designed by a variety of researchers from various disciplines, ranging from organizational theorists (Etzioni, 1975) to anthropology (Chapple & Koon, 1942). The use of an interpretive methodology combined with the theoretical perspective known as symbolic interaction was chosen to describe and explain student experiences within the particular social context.

The choice of an interpretive methodology required the researcher to work as a participant observer who conducted interviews, recorded observation data, and studied archival documents. The use of conceptually-driven sequential sampling identified participants for the initial round of interviews. Data collected through the initial round of unstructured interviews were analyzed and led to the use of purposive sampling for the remaining interviews. Interview transcripts and observation logs were analyzed along with archival documents until a point of data saturation was reached.

The experiences of school-choice students at Southgate Anderson High School could not be described without first understanding the context in which the students were being studied. This context included the culture and organizational behaviors associated with SCSD, the City of Southgate, and the greater Detroit metropolitan area. Furthermore, this context framed and gave meaning to the experiences of school-choice students.

Definition of Terminology

Capitalist class—Subdivided into national and locals, whose income is derived largely from return on assets (Gilbert, 1999, p. 284).

Culture—A pattern of basic assumptions, invented, discovered, or developed by a given group, as it learns to cope with its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, which has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, is to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to these problems (Schein, 1990, p. 111).

Effective—Causing a result, especially the desired or intended result (Encarta World English Dictionary, 1999).

Experience—The sum total of the things that have happened to an individual and of his or her past thoughts and feelings (Encarta World English Dictionary, 1999).

Interdistrict school choice—Students may attend school in another school district. Tuition for enrollment (state funding) follows the students to the receiving district (White, 2001). Under Michigan law, the students must attend a school district within their county or, in some exceptions, a contiguous district regardless of county.

Middle class—Members have significant skills and perform varied tasks at work, under loose supervision. They earn enough to afford a comfortable, mainstream lifestyle. Most wear collars, but some wear blue (Gilbert, 1999, p. 284).

School-choice student—A student who transfers to a school outside the district of residence through interdistrict choice (Arsen, Plank, & Sykes, 1999).

Socialization—The formal and informal practices of bringing new members into a group and the efforts of the newcomer to make sense of the experience (Pepper, 1995).

Transition—The psychological process through which individuals proceed while coming to terms with a new situation (Bridges, 1991).

Underclass—Members have limited participation in the labor force and do not have wealth to fall back on. Many depend on government transfers (Gilbert, 1999, p. 285).

Upper middle class—College-trained professionals and managers (a few of whom ascend to such heights of bureaucratic dominance or accumulated wealth that they become part of the capitalist class); (Gilbert, 1999, p. 284).

Working class—People who are less skilled than members of the middle class and work at highly routinized, closely supervised manual and clerical jobs. Their work provides them with a relatively stable income sufficient to maintain a living standard just below the mainstream (Gilbert, 1999, p. 285).

Working poor—People employed in low-skill jobs, often at marginal firms. The members of this class are typically laborers, service workers, or low-paid operators. Their incomes leave them well below mainstream living standards. Moreover, they cannot depend on steady employment (Gilbert, 1999, p. 285).

Chapter 2: Review of Research and Literature

In an organizational study of the experiences of school-choice students at Southgate Anderson High School (SAHS), I needed to consider three distinct areas in the review of literature. Understanding student experiences required knowledge of three things: organizational theory, the individual, and a summary of relevant research related to school choice as an educational policy. The organizational theory necessary to understand student experiences was a combination of concepts that helped to create a broader understanding of schools, schools-of-choice, and the relationship between schools and schools-of-choice as a policy. In particular, I became familiar with the organizational theories of resource dependency, organizational boundaries, partial inclusion of participants, environmental constraints, and organizational consequences. To comprehend the effects of these organizational issues on the students, an understanding of organizational socialization was also necessary. I chose to begin by providing background information on school choice and the variety of programs that have been initiated in many forms.

A General Overview of Public School-Choice Programs

Public school-choice programs have been implemented worldwide over the past 20 years. Large-scale initiatives have been put into practice in countries such as Chile, Great Britain, New Zealand, and the United States (Liepa, 2001). In the United States, Arizona, Minnesota, California, Missouri, Wisconsin,

Michigan, and New York have been some of the front-runners for choice implementation to varying degrees.

One of the earliest choice programs, implemented in 1983, was in the St. Louis metropolitan area. The program addressed parental and societal concerns with poorly achieving inner-city schools. Under the program, students who attended the St. Louis Public Schools could apply to one of 120 suburban schools in the county. There were 13,500 students who participated in this program (Fuller & Elmore, 1996). Unlike many of the more recent choice programs, students were provided transportation to the new school (Fuller & Elmore).

In 1988, Minnesota adopted a program of interdistrict choice that now is commonly referred to as open enrollment. The open enrollment program permits K–12 students to move across district lines as long as the receiving district has available space and the movement does not disrupt desegregation efforts (Nathan & Boyd, 2003). In Minnesota, 90% of school-choice students transfer to a neighboring or contiguous school district (DeFrance, 2001). The primary reason that Minnesota students cite for participating in school choice is convenience due to geographic proximity, parent's work location, or plans to move in or out of a district (DeFrance).

Hess (2002) considered Milwaukee the epicenter of the school-choice debate. The Milwaukee program began as a pilot program limiting choice to 1% of the Milwaukee Public Schools population with an expansion to 15% of the students receiving vouchers to attend either public (including charter schools) or private (including religious) schools (Hess). The program, according to Hess, was

a response to a bill that almost passed through the senate allowing an "all-black" district in northern Milwaukee to exist.

Regardless of the program's impetus, there were two positive results of the Milwaukee program. First, there was an increased ability provided to the district by the teachers' union to implement innovative programs such as magnet schools. Second, the program resulted in moderate academic increases. Peterson (2003) reported that research completed by Harvard economist Caroline Hoxby found that the Milwaukee voucher program had a positive impact on public school test scores; specifically, this impact was apparent in the low-income areas that were most affected by vouchers. In a quantitative study, Rouse (1998) concluded that voucher students in Milwaukee gained between 1.5 and 2.3 percentile points more per year in math than traditional public school students. However, neither the public nor the private schools had a consistent advantage in reading scores (Rouse).

Almost simultaneously to the Milwaukee initiatives, Cleveland Public Schools were being affected by a proposed voucher system that allowed only the lowest of low-income students to attend private schools through tuition vouchers provided by the state. The vouchers were only for a maximum of $2,500 but required the Cleveland Public Schools to provide transportation for participating students. In an attempt to avoid excessive bussing costs, the Cleveland Public Schools permitted parents to be reimbursed for transportation costs. The majority of parents chose taxicabs as the primary form of transportation. In turn,

the district paid the excessive amount of $3.5 million from 1996–1998 in overall transportation cost (Hess, 2002).

Based upon the Milwaukee school-of-choice program, Wisconsin adopted a school-choice program at the state level in 1998 (DeFrance, 2001). The program, entitled the Public School Open Enrollment Plan, was available to every public school in the state. Similar to the Minnesota program, students were able to participate in interdistrict public school choice. During the 2002–2003 academic year, a total of more than 12,000 Wisconsin students chose to participate in the Open Enrollment Plan (Cleaver & Eagleburger, 2004). Since the program allows for transportation reimbursement of low-income students, Wisconsin was able to record the number of low-income students, classified by applying for this transportation reimbursement. In the same 2002–2003 academic year, 768 students were paid for transportation reimbursement (Cleaver & Eagleburger).

After considering the various statewide, interdistrict choice programs, states like Michigan have attempted to address a majority of issues related to the inequities between public schools as well as the access to effective public schools. Hence, "with the changes in education finance brought about by Proposal A and the introduction of charter schools and interdistrict choice, Michigan has moved further than any other state toward the creation of a competitive market for schooling" (Arsen, Plank, & Sykes, 2002, p. 2).

In 1996, Michigan legislators passed Section 105, Public Act 300. This law introduced interdistrict schools-of-choice in a controlled and geographic manner for public schools (DeFrance, 2001). Schools-of-choice policies in Michigan have

created the option for parents to send their children to schools outside of their immediate neighborhood. In fact, students can attend either traditional public schools or schools that are "chartered" by agents of the state (Arsen, Plank, & Sykes, 1999).

In the case of interdistrict choice, students may enroll in any public school within their local Intermediate School District (ISD) or in contiguous school districts outside their ISD that announce openings. In addition, school districts are permitted to decide whether or not to open themselves to non-resident students. However, districts may not prevent students who reside in their district from attending school in another district (Arsen, Plank, & Sykes, 1999).

The Michigan Schools-of-Choice Interdistrict Choice Program

Under Michigan's schools-of-choice program, parents can choose to send their students to a school within their district of residence, to a charter school, or to schools outside their district of residence through interdistrict choice (Arsen, Plank, & Sykes, 1999). In the case of interdistrict choice, school districts can choose whether or not they will enroll out-of-district students. In addition, they can specify an exact number of students they wish to enroll at each grade level. These numbers can fluctuate from year to year for any given district. Moreover, a district can choose to participate one year and not the next. Finally, once a student enrolls in a new district, the district receives roughly $6,700 per student. This rate varies from district to district, depending on their state foundation allowance.

The choice district receives the lower of the two foundation amounts; that is, if a student enrolls into a school district that has a foundation allowance of $6700 from a school district with a higher foundation allowance of $8,000, the receiving district is given $6,700 from the state for that student. On the other hand, if a student enrolls in the $8,000 district from the $6700 district, the receiving district is still compensated only $6,700. Hence, the higher funded districts have less incentive to participate under the funding guidelines.

The intent of such a program is to allow educational opportunities to all students regardless of socio-economic status (SES). Yet, for obvious financial reasons, very affluent districts tend not to participate in such a program. Before schools-of-choice, parents wishing to enroll a child in a school located within a wealthier suburban school district had to live within the boundaries of the suburban school district. Now, families can change the public schools their children attend without changing their residences. This is perhaps most valuable to poor families who now wish to send their children to schools in areas where they cannot afford to live (Arsen, Plank, & Sykes, 1999).

DeFrance (2001) utilized quantitative methods to study the economic impact of Michigan's schools-of-choice policy. As a result of the analysis, DeFrance found that students in nonparticipating districts generally performed better on state of Michigan competency tests than students in participating districts at all three levels—elementary, middle school, and high school. In addition, school districts that were more willing to participate in the interdistrict, schools-of-choice program were more likely to have lower student achievement,

lower per pupil revenue, and lower pupil/teacher ratios (DeFrance). School districts that receive higher state foundation allowances, on average, do not participate. The achievement scores in those non-participating districts were higher than those in schools that were trying to attract students (DeFrance).

Many older suburban districts choose to participate in interdistrict choice because of falling enrollments. The additional students gained through choice participation helps these districts maintain personnel and established programs (Arsen, Plank, & Sykes, 1999). Within metropolitan areas, central cities are more likely to accept non-resident students than suburban districts; high-income suburban communities are least likely to accept non-resident students from other suburban districts (Arsen, Plank, & Sykes). These most affluent communities generally do not participate in school choice because of community concerns over maintaining the accustomed quality of their schools, financial concerns of out-of-district students capitalizing on facilities provided by high local property tax dollars, and fears of changing school racial balance (Liepa, 2001). Arsen, Plank, and Sykes found that as district family income and home values rise, the probability of participating in open enrollment declines.

However, even moderate-income communities have struggled with participation in school choice. For example, Michigan districts such as Redford Union and Ferndale have struggled with the threatened loss of students and/or parental support if the districts choose to participate in school choice (Arsen, Plank, & Sykes, 2002). On the other hand, there are regions in the Detroit metropolitan area, including Downriver communities, where participation in

choice is more widespread than elsewhere (Arsen, Plank, & Sykes). Arsen, Plank and Sykes stated that "school districts with high concentrations of low-income households including Detroit, Inkster, and Ecorse have lost students to more prosperous districts including Dearborn Heights #7, Riverview, and Southgate" (p. 22).

Therefore, "rather than leading to innovation or general improvement in the performance of Michigan schools, school-choice policies have served to reinforce the prestige hierarchy among schools and school districts" (Arsen, Plank, & Sykes, 2002, p. 37). Hence, Michigan's schools-of-choice policies have given some families an educational advantage while disadvantaging other families by feeding the urban flight trend (Arsen, Plank, & Sykes).

Market Competition

School choice proponents look to choice as a catalyst forcing schools to improve the quality of their programs in order to compete for students, especially schools in the inner city. Plank and Sykes (1999) believed that educational choice is an example of a broader effort to shift the responsibility for addressing deeply-rooted social and economic problems out of the public sphere. Godwin and Kemerer (2002) stated, "Among the reasons that increasing school choice emerged as a policy option is the failure of other policies to integrate schools and to achieve acceptable educational outcomes for inner-city students" (p. 5).

Furthermore, Godwin and Kemerer (2002) reported that every year these students stay in their neighborhood public schools, they fall further behind their suburban counterparts. Inner-city students are unfortunately assigned to less effective schools that "more affluent Caucasian and minority families have long since abandoned and where learning and positive socialization experiences are minimal" (Godwin & Kemerer, p. 127). Due to the inability to afford other schools, many of these students have little choice but to remain where they are until they graduate or drop out. "Many poor families are unable to choose better schools for their children because they cannot afford to purchase homes in the communities where these schools are usually located" (Arsen, Plank, & Sykes, 1999, p. 2). In fact, more than 50% of urban high school students in America drop out of high school (Godwin & Kemerer). In St. Louis and Indianapolis, the dropout rates are as high as 75% (Godwin & Kemerer).

These inefficiencies of the American education system are one of the catalysts pushing the school-choice movement. Merrifield (2001) stated that the "contrast between competitive markets and other delivery systems is overwhelming evidence that market systems—though not perfect—are superior to politically driven delivery systems" (p. 6). One way to assure the existence of a market system in education is to tie school funding directly to student enrollment. In states like Michigan, school districts receive their funding based solely on the number of students enrolled in the district. Hence, school choice forces many schools to compete in order to survive. However, research on school

choice has indicated several flaws in the theory of market competition as it is related to public schools.

For example, in a qualitative study of Michigan school districts and their reasons to participate or not participate in school choice, Liepa (2001) found that schools participating in choice tend not to improve the level of education offered but instead utilize their strengths to attract students such that the added revenue can result in profit for the district (Liepa). Thus, choice does not really change what districts are doing, but instead allows districts to promote their current programs (Leipa). This remains consistent with the business perspective that companies are in business not to give the consumer the best product but to improve their profit margins.

Since schools that opted to participate in Michigan's schools-of-choice program merely attempted to fill open seats instead of offering better school programs to attract students, school choice caused only a slight shift in the student body, with students moving to the more affluent communities (Liepa, 2001). With students leaving the inner city to attend schools in the suburbs through choice, much research has been done to analyze choice's effect on the districts that lose students.

Using longitudinal data, Hess (2002) concluded that in Milwaukee's choice program, the district felt very little competition as a result of student losses because the district was so desperate for additional classroom space. Even though the district lost approximately 2,000 students, they still needed to hire 900 new teachers in 1998–1999 because of the district's high rate of teacher turnover

(Hess). In short, Hess proclaimed that the minute scale of the Milwaukee program provided little competition to the existing school district.

In the case of Cleveland, the district faced an annual loss of approximately 10% of its teaching staff. Hence, a loss of 2 to 3% of its students due to choice was almost a blessing for the district because they were able to avoid filling the vacant teaching positions (Hess, 2002). Therefore, Hess proclaimed that competition among schools requires that either new schools open or existing schools expand. Short of this, the public school system risks only losing a few students initially and even fewer thereafter (Hess). However, Fuller and Elmore (1996) reported that in a 1992 survey, 23% of all parents would leave their child's neighborhood school if granted the freedom to do so.

Although the impact of choice on Cleveland and Milwaukee appeared to be minimal due to low participation, some areas of the country experienced numbers closer to the findings of Fuller and Elmore (1996). In particular, Nathan and Boyd (2003) reported that more than 100,000 students participated in some form of school choice in Minnesota during the 2000–2001 academic year. Furthermore, from 1988 to 2000, K–12 enrollment increased 17% in Minnesota, but the number of students participating in school choice grew 1,300% in the state (Nathan & Boyd). In 2002, over half of Michigan's 524 school districts participated in interdistrict choice with roughly 85,000 of Michigan's public school students being classified as "choice" students (Arsen, Plank, & Sykes, 2002).

The most recent studies showed that the number of students involved in student-choice participation is increasing, but not necessarily because of a better product being offered in another district. In fact, Godwin and Kemerer (2002) reported that recent research concerning residential choice and schools indicated that the primary reason many families sent their children to private schools or moved to the suburbs was to avoid schools with large numbers of African American students. According to Arsen, Plank, & Sykes (1999), students moved to districts where the average share of African American students was 10% lower than in their home districts. Hence, interdistrict choice merely reinforced already existing patterns that originated in the residential housing market; that is, students left their home district for districts with higher family income and lower concentrations of African American students (Arsen, Plank, & Sykes).

The Students Left Behind

Choice programs skim higher socio-economic status families and more active and involved parents from attendance zone schools (Godwin & Kemerer, 2002). In a program in San Antonio, Texas, students in choice programs had higher achievement test scores before entering the program than did non-choosing students. Hence, the choice program did skim the better students from their neighborhood schools (Godwin & Kemerer). However, these findings have not been confirmed in other areas of the country or under other school-choice programs.

Nevertheless, much of the research on school choice has outlined the reasons parents choose or do not choose to participate. For example, in a study of Colorado's Boulder Valley School District, researchers found that the lack of transportation and program information effectively reduced the opportunities to participate in school choice (Howe, Eisenhart & Betebenner, 2002). While surveys that asked choosing parents why they decided to participate in school choice showed that the primary reasons were expected academic effectiveness and safety (Martinez, Godwin, Kemerer & Perna, 1995), other studies indicated very different reasons based upon socio-economic status (SES). Levin (1990) found that lower SES parents chose schools that emphasize traditional values and the memorization of basic skills while higher SES parents chose schools that emphasized abstract thinking and the development of problem-solving skills.

Parent preferences are not strictly related to school quality and responsiveness (Arsen, Plank, & Sykes, 1999). For example, Godwin and Kemerer (2002) stated that, "regardless of the country, Caucasians tend to avoid schools populated predominantly by people of color" (p. 29). As a result of school-choice participation based solely on race, one could assume that school choice will lead to increased segregation. On the contrary, a study of open enrollment programs in Massachusetts found that the percent minority in both the sending and receiving districts slightly increased (Godwin & Kemerer). With school-choice programs only in their infancy in the United States, it is still too early to determine their total impact on cultural issues within schools and school districts. Since 1973, "the segregation in public schools has increased and most

states and school districts have been ineffective in achieving equity in school funding" (Godwin & Kemerer, p. 4). It is the hope of many school-choice advocates that choice will help alleviate these inequities in the public school system.

On the other hand, research has been completed identifying the impact of school-choice policies on students with special needs. Howe and Welner (2002) found that school-choice policies have added to the exclusion of students with special needs. Howe and Welner focused primarily on charter school enrollments, citing that charter schools enrolled a much lower percentage of special-needs students than traditional public schools.

Perhaps the relative youth of choice programs and the complexity of the types of school-choice options can be blamed for the difficulty in finding school-choice research that actually relates to its impact on students. All too often, the research on school choice focused on why parents chose to have their children participate and how the system changed as a result of choice policies. The research efforts have even gone into the direction of teachers' perceptions on choice. For example, in a study of Arizona and Nevada teachers, it was found that Arizona teachers were particularly hostile to choice, but teachers who had close contact with charter schools were more supportive (Ferraiolo, Hess, Maranto, & Milliman, 2004). While teachers have a tremendous impact on student achievement, it seems to be an obvious oversight that school choice is, in its truest form, about students and increasing individual student achievement.

This unfortunate trend of forgetting that school choice impacts people's children is repeated throughout the literature.

Organizational Socialization

Pepper (1995) stated that "socialization involves the formal and informal practices of bringing new members into a group and the efforts of the newcomer to make sense of the experience" (p. 118). Therefore, upon entrance into a new organization, newcomers are taught the rules, norms, values, roles, changes, and relationships that are conducted within the new environment (Pepper). Hence, Pepper defined these rules, norms, values, roles, changes, and relationships as the lifestyle of the organization. It is this presentation of lifestyle that can be referred to as organizational socialization. Even though the presentation of lifestyle can take several forms, its intention is always the same. The result is "intended to be the construction of an organizational citizen capable of functioning within the confines and culture of the organization" (Pepper, p. 118).

As individuals enter a new environment, the newcomers respond differently to the socialization efforts of the organization (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979). Schein (1990) hypothesized that individuals can respond to the new environment and the socialization attempts with one of three distinct outcomes. Schein referred to these three outcomes as custodial orientation, creative individualism, and rebellion.

Custodial orientation refers to a complete conformity to all of the norms and a complete learning of the assumptions of the organization (Schein, 1990). In

the case of school-choice students, this outcome will usually be evidenced by students fitting what may be considered a "success" of the program because of the individual student's ability to fit seamlessly into the dominant culture.

Likewise, some students who can also be considered "successful" in the new environment may also demonstrate creative individualism. Creative individualism implies that the newcomer "learns all of the central and pivotal assumptions of the culture but rejects all peripheral ones, thus permitting the individual to be creative both with respect to the organization's tasks and in how the organization performs them" (Schein, 1990, p. 116). Hence, school-choice students who demonstrate occasional minor discipline issues, slight academic difficulties, and a delay in ability to quietly assimilate into the existing culture may be demonstrating creative individualism.

Rebellion refers to the total rejection of all assumptions of the culture and, in turn, the individual will subvert, sabotage, or cause revolution within the organization (Schein, 1990). School-choice students who demonstrate rebellion will usually not be considered "successful" in their transition because of their apparent inability to work positively within the organizational culture. In turn, these students will display serious discipline issues, attendance issues, lack of academic participation, departure from school either through a voluntary or involuntary transfer, or simply quit school.

Schein (1990) described three outcomes that newcomers can choose as responses to a new organization. These three responses were generalized to fit any newcomer to an organization. Carlson (1964) explained socialization choices

specific to students. According to Carlson, students adapt in three primary ways: receptive adaptation, dropout adaptation, and "in-between" forms of adaptation.

Receptive adaptation and dropout adaptation are the easiest to identify because they are explicit. For example, under receptive adaptation, a student simply complies with the expectations of the organization. This form of adaptation is what Schein (1990) referred to as custodial orientation. On the other hand, students may choose to reject the expectations of the organization and withdraw from participation. This is what Carlson (1964) referred to as dropout adaptation. According to Schein's three outcomes, the student would be exercising rebellion.

However, the most interesting types of adaptation are those that fall "in-between" receptive adaptation and dropout adaptation. Schein (1990) referred to these as role innovation. According to Carlson (1964), there are three primary forms of this type of adaptation. The first is referred to as situational retirement. This is best seen in students who exhibit acceptable behavior in class but do not perform academically because of a lack of effort. Carlson stated that these students generally do not drop out of school. In some cases, these students may be considered to have adopted Schein's custodial orientation, while others would consider such behavior as creative individualism. Either way, students were successfully socialized into the new culture if they chose to adopt a form of situational retirement because they have, in some ways, adopted the assumptions of the new environment in such a way as to ensure their survival in the environment.

The second form of "in-between" adaptation is rebellious adjustment. Here, the student constantly pushes the envelope as to what is acceptable while trying to redefine the expectations held of the student. This is very close to Carlson's (1964) dropout adaptation and Schein's (1990) rebellion. In the end, the student finds that the chances of maintaining this form of adaptation over a long period of time are very slim (Carlson).

Finally, students may choose to employ side-payment adaptation. This occurs when the student finds a benefit outside of academics that serves as a motivator to performing at an acceptable academic level. Side-payment adaptation may take the form of defining school as a place where one can compete in team sports. This participation requires students to keep their academic grades, as well as their behavior, at an acceptable level. In addition, a student may exercise side-payment adaptation through the fact that school is a place that provides extensive contact with members of the opposite sex. Therefore, the purpose of school becomes primarily social, and schoolwork is a necessary evil. Finally, a student may practice side-payment adaptation if they define school as a place to pursue some activity other than learning, such as drama or computers (Carlson, 1964). Again, the purpose of school changes, and schoolwork becomes merely a necessary requirement to reap the other rewards provided by the organization.

Socialization is an active process that involves both the behaviors of the newcomer and the organization (Pepper, 1995). The organization wants a cooperative citizen who identifies with its values and goals, while the newcomer

wants to be an individual. Therefore, the newcomer's experience is paramount to the socialization process.

Even so, a more simplistic model (represented in Figure 1) involving stages of organizational socialization can be effective for understanding this process. Feldman (1981) and Jablin (1987) identified three stages of socialization into a new organization. Although the names of each stage differed, they can be categorized as anticipatory socialization period, the encounter period, and metamorphosis.
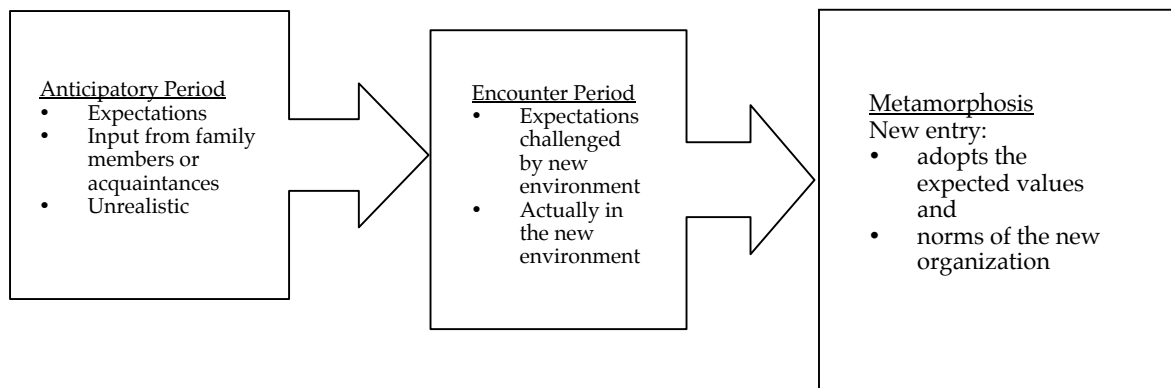
Figure 1. Stage Model Describing Socialization Process

During anticipatory socialization, an individual forms expectations about what the new organization will be like, before the actual entry experience. The expectations evolve from many sources such as family and acquaintances. However, the sources tend to create inflated expectations about what life in the new organization is really like (Jablin, 1987). During the encounter period, the newcomer's expectations are actually challenged by the new environment. This encounter period coincides with Schein's (1990) ideas of the newcomer learning

the assumptions of the new culture and choosing one of the three outcomes (custodial orientation, creative individualism, rebellion). Finally, through the metamorphosis stage, the new entry adopts the expected values and norms of the new organization or adapts to them. When the individual chooses to take a passive approach and simply adopt the expected values and norms, he/she is employing what Schein referred to as a custodial orientation. However, newcomers may choose to take a more active approach and adapt to the expected norms and values. In this case, such action would fall into Schein's concepts of creative individualism or rebellion. Nevertheless, newcomers tend to enter their new environments with unrealistically high expectations, making the challenges of the encounter period more difficult (Pepper, 1995).

Since, according to Louis (1980), a newcomer's dissatisfaction with the new environment is primarily the result of unmet expectations accumulated during anticipatory socialization, the result is often voluntary turnover or withdrawal from the experience. Louis criticized this "turnover model" because of its failure to take into account the impact of cultural content, that is, the value and belief systems that newcomers must understand in order to fully integrate into the organization.

Consequently, Louis (1980) developed a model of the newcomer experience that argued that newcomers initially experience change, contrast, and surprise as key features of the entry experience. The entire model is broken down into areas of key activities such as detection, diagnosis, and interpretation. The stages that Louis identified to describe a newcomer's experience can be used to

also describe the experiences of school-choice students as they enter a new school and school district.
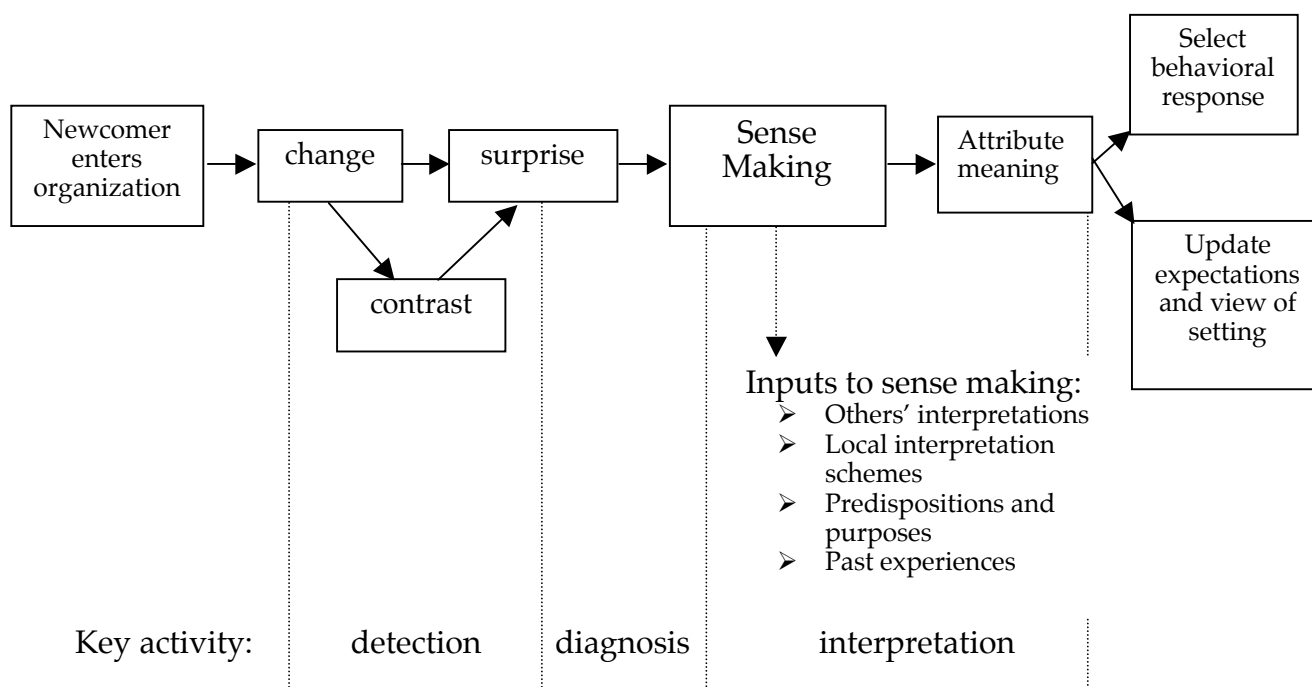
Figure 2. Describing Louis' Model (1980)

Under Louis' model (Figure 2), change is understood as "an objective difference in a major feature between the new and old settings" (Louis, 1980, p. 235). In the case of school-choice students, this change can take the form of urban to suburban, racial congruence, expectations of parents or teachers, or simply physical differences between the two environments. During this change, the newcomer must adjust to the new situation, not through passive absorption, but through active identification of elements of the new environment. The elements

must be understood in order for the newcomer to lower the amount of uncertainty inherent with changing environments (Pepper, 1995). Nevertheless, the difficulty of this adjustment varies, depending on the degree of difference between the old and new environments (Louis).

As the individual experiences change, newcomers begin to identify contrasts between the old environment and the new setting. These identified contrasts are specific to each individual based upon his or her personal values. A newcomer cannot predict the contrasts prior to arriving in the new organization. In turn, the individual chooses elements from the new environment that are different enough from the old environment to facilitate adjustment to the new setting (Louis, 1980).

After addressing changes and contrasts during the initial detection period, a newcomer moves into the diagnosis stage. This stage is composed of what Louis (1980) identified as surprise. Surprise may be positive or negative and refers to any difference between the individual's anticipations and subsequent experiences in the new environment. These differences can take the form of unmet conscious or subconscious expectations about the job or its features, unanticipated feelings about the work, or the magnitude of cultural differences between the old and new environments. Nevertheless, surprise requires adaptation after the individual begins to make sense of surprise (Louis).

In order to adapt to the new environment, the individual must move into the interpretation stage. During this stage, individuals experience a period of sense-making while attributing meaning to their experiences. Since the entry

experience is filled with uncertainty and unpredictability, the individual must rely on four distinct types of input (Pepper, 1995). These inputs include others' interpretations, local interpretation schemes, predispositions and purposes, and, finally, past experiences (Louis, 1980).

Consequently, once sense is made and meaning is attributed, the newcomer selects a behavioral response (Louis, 1980). That is, the individual determines how to act in relation to the meaning that was developed based upon past experience. The newcomer also needs to update expectations and view of the setting if the meaning assigned calls for a re-evaluation of initial expectations. In the case of school-choice students, the behavioral responses varied from rebellion, to identification with peer groups, to joining athletic teams or clubs, to discipline issues. In other words, students could have demonstrated what Schein (1990) referred to as custodial orientation, creative individualism, or rebellion.

Fortunately, this model does not overemphasize the role of "baggage" brought to the experience by the newcomer (Pepper, 1995). "Baggage" refers to the past experiences brought by the individual to a new setting. This "baggage" is a product of anticipatory socialization. Hence, "baggage" is an important consideration for understanding the socialization process. However, "baggage" cannot solely explain why a newcomer survives or does not survive the entry experience (Pepper).

With this in mind, the model represents an active newcomer who shapes the experience rather than someone who simply responds and absorbs. This sense-making is the active construction of the entry process (Louis, 1980). After

all, "newcomers do not just assimilate the new organization framework; rather, they negotiate meanings with other newcomers as well as with experienced members" (Pepper, 1995, p. 129).

Resource Dependence, Organizational Boundaries, and Partial Inclusion

The issue of school choice, from a district perspective, is an organizational concern. Organizations must engage in exchanges with the environment as a condition of their survival. According to Thompson (1967), an organization is dependent on its environment in proportion to the organization's need for resources to perform the task its environment requests of it. The decision to participate in school choice is a result of this dependence on resources. Resource dependence assumes that no organization is self-sufficient (Pfeffer & Salancik, 2003).

The need to acquire resources creates dependencies between the organization and external units. Therefore, the importance and scarcity of resources determines the nature and extent of organizational dependence (Scott, 2003). Since all organizations are dependent on suppliers and consumers, the organization partly determines which specific exchange partners are selected and what terms of exchange are negotiated (Scott). The resource dependence model views organizations as responsive to their environment. These responses are evident in the organization's tactics towards buffering and bridging their environment. However, before an organization can employ tactics towards buffering and bridging with its environment, boundaries must first be defined.

Scott (2003) identified three possible approaches to defining the boundaries of an organization. The first approach is to focus on the actors. This refers to membership rights within the organization. Actors are those individuals regarded as members within an organization. Historically, only residents of the City of Southgate could attend the Southgate Community School District (SCSD). Prior to schools-of-choice, the possible pool of actors within the organization was limited to these residents of the City of Southgate. School-choice students were admitted into SCSD as the result of resource dependence. Therefore, school-choice students were able to cross a boundary and enter SCSD as actors. However, this is only a symbolic boundary crossing into the organization.

A second approach, according to Scott (2003), is to note which actors are involved in social relations within the organization. Laumann and Knoke (1987) stated that "the social distance between actors is measured by 'paths,' the smallest number of directed communication links necessary to connect a pair" (p. 218). Members of an organization are likely to share attributes such as interests, age, ethnicity, or goals (Scott). In terms of a local school district such as SCSD, the community members who had the deepest ties to the local community had the shortest path. According to this second approach, boundaries are defined by the members with historical ties within the community. Members of an organization have participation rights. That is, they are allowed to participate in the activities deemed important by the organization.

Last, Scott (2003) stated that the third possibility for defining boundaries is to focus on the nature of these activities performed. Such activities may involve

courses, extra-curricular activities, and other social events. In the case of SCSD, the school system was responsible for educating students and socializing them into the local culture. This was the task of the technical core of the organization. School-choice students were admitted as a result of resource dependence, crossing the first boundary of becoming actors within SCSD and, if included in activities within SCSD, crossing a second boundary. The nature of these activities further defined their participation within SCSD.

Scott (2003) described buffering as the tactic considered protective of the technical core. Organizations, including schools, have boundaries that are designed to protect the technical core. Scott contended "there is expected to be a concern with the careful selection of means to pursue ends and an attempt to reduce to a minimum the extraneous forces that can upset these connections" (p. 200). In the case of modern public schools, their core technology is to socialize, educate, and produce graduates. As organizations, schools must protect, through buffering, their technical core from disruptions that could jeopardize the survival and effectiveness of the organization.

School districts are increasingly expected to produce quality graduates who possess specific academic skills. To do so, school districts must maintain a certain level of inputs (students), enabling them to maintain funding levels necessary to provide the pre-determined set of activities required to create a predictable output (graduates). For this very reason, some school districts decide to opt into Michigan's schools-of-choice program. The additional students provide an increase in funding. The additional funding allows school districts to

continue their current programs at the current levels. However, the school-choice students who provide these additional resources may or may not benefit from a school's programs as much as their new in-district counterparts because of organizational boundaries.

Pfeffer and Salancik (2003) and Thompson (1967) claimed that, conceptually, it is possible to define the extent to which any given person is or is not a member of an organization. In the case of school-choice students who have been admitted due to resource dependency, their membership status may be questionable in the overall organization. In other words, the district is partially dependent on these students as a means of survival. The additional funding generated from the extra students allows the district to continue to "produce" a product (graduate) that is representative of its current environment. Yet the school-choice students may or may not participate in activities at an equal level to their in-district counterparts. For example, the in-district students are given the opportunity to participate fully in the existing culture of the high school while the school-choice students may not have the same opportunities to participate fully through what Scott (2003) referred to as coding. Coding, according to Scott, occurs when organizations "classify inputs before inserting them into the technical core" (p. 200).

Pfeffer and Salancik (2003) contended that organizational participants enter a new organization when they perceive some advantage to be gained, but they leave the organization once there is no longer any perceived advantage. For this reason, the study of the experiences of school-choice students is important. If

school-choice students are enrolled in a school because of a district's dependence on resources and the students choose to stay enrolled, they must perceive advantage to remaining at that school, specifically to this study, Southgate Anderson High School.

Environmental Constraints and Organizational Consequences

Pfeffer and Salancik (2003) referred to participants remaining within an organization only while an advantage is to be gained and leaving once there is little benefit to them. This theory was mirrored in concepts related to environmental constraints and organizational consequences presented by Carlson (1964). Carlson defined public schools as "domesticated" organizations in which the clients or students have little control over their participation in the organization and the schools have little control over admission of the clients to the organization. That is, the school, even under Michigan's schools-of-choice legislation, cannot completely control which students attend their schools while the students also cannot completely control which schools they attend because of residency restrictions or parental decisions. Nevertheless, according to Carlson, these "domesticated" organizations are guaranteed to exist because of public support that relies on organizations such as schools to maintain the current social system.

Since schools have little control over the clients they are to serve, they must adapt. Carlson (1964) suggested that schools adapt in two primary ways. The first, segregation, refers to the practices of schools to select or unselect clients

in such a way as to separate their treatments in school. In other words, schools regularly place some students into what are referred to as "dumping grounds" while other students are selected to take more difficult coursework. However, Carlson is clear that the practice of segregation in schools is merely an adaptive response that is inherent of "domesticated" organizations because of goal displacement.

Goal displacement refers to the process by which the original goal is abandoned, completely or partially, and another goal is substituted. Most schools have a mission statement that refers to preparing all students. However, under the conditions of goal displacement, students must be segregated according to ability in order to provide said experiences to each student. This requires teachers to, according to Carlson (1964), consider education as a primary goal of schooling for middle- and upper-class students while substituting discipline as a goal for lower-class students. Hence, schools employ segregation as an adaptive response.

The second adaptive mechanism is one of preferential treatment. According to Carlson (1964), school systems do not typically treat all students alike. Instead, they practice preferential treatment in matters such as grades, withdrawal from school, discipline, punishment, and curricula. Often this preferential treatment is easiest to classify according to socio-economic class. In the case of school-choice students at Southgate Anderson High School, the majority of school-choice students reside in cities whose residents are of considerably lower socio-economic status than those of the city of Southgate.

Therefore, preferential treatment is a possible adaptive mechanism that may have been used by the school system in order to adapt to the lack of control over client selection.

After identifying pertinent organizational socialization models and organizational concepts such as resource dependency, organizational boundaries, partial inclusion of participants, environmental constraints, and organizational consequences, a broad base of knowledge was viewed to help describe and explain the experiences of school-choice students. Specifically, it was easier to understand and classify the students' experiences according to these socialization theories and organizational concepts. The organizational and socialization concepts helped to add clarity to the descriptions provided by individual students of their experiences.

Chapter 3: Research Methods

As a researcher, I intended to describe and explain the experiences of school-choice students in their new educational setting. Thus, the use of qualitative methods proved most appropriate for providing this explanation of individual student experiences as seen through the students' eyes. In particular, the use of an interpretive approach where the researcher worked as both an interviewer and a participant observer seemed most appropriate to gaining the necessary understanding of the experiences of school-choice students at Southgate Anderson High School.

Assumptions and Rationale for a Qualitative Design

Studies of organizational socialization processes have been conducted by a variety of researchers from various disciplines ranging from anthropology (Chapple & Koon, 1942) to organizational theorists (Etzioni, 1975). This type of research dates back over a century in the disciplines of anthropology and sociology but has been categorized as qualitative research only since the 1960s (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). Nevertheless, qualitative research is identified with a broad spectrum of terminology such as participant observation, in-depth interviewing, symbolic interaction, inner perspective, the Chicago School, phenomenological, case study, interpretive, ethnography, ecological, and descriptive (Bogdan & Biklen).

In the case of studying the experiences of school-choice students at Southgate Anderson High School, it seemed most appropriate to employ

interpretive methods originating from the work of philosophers Edmund

Husserl and Alfred Schutz (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). The use of interpretive

methods was combined with the theoretical perspective known as symbolic

interaction that holds its roots in the Chicago School and theorists such as John

Dewey (1922), Charles Horton Cooley (1909), Robert Plank (1968), Florian

Znaniecki (1918), George Herbert Mead (1934), Herbert Blumer (1969) and

Everett Hughes (1958).

Symbolic interaction is compatible with the interpretive perspective

because of the common assumption that "to understand behavior, we must

understand definitions and the process by which they are manufactured"

(Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, p. 36). It is the assumption that people act based on their

interpretations, definitions, and symbols they form of a situation. In order to

understand these actions, I worked as a participant observer who required the

researcher to act as the primary instrument. Thus, I first needed to make explicit

my ontological, epistemological, and methodological assumptions as they relate

to the experiences of school-choice students.

My ontological assumptions centered around nominalism. Everyone's

experiences guide his/her interpretations of reality. In essence, individual

perception and experiences guide one's sense of reality. It is this belief that led

me into a constructivist paradigm. According to Guba and Lincoln (1994),

constructivists have ontological assumptions that define reality as

"apprehendable in the form of multiple, intangible mental constructions, socially

and experientially based, local and specific in nature" (p. 110). To clarify, reality is constructed as a result of the meanings individuals attribute to situations.

As a result, humans are actively engaged in construction of their own reality (Gerth & Mills, 1953). In isolation, objects, people, situations, and events fail to possess their own meaning. Instead, meaning is conferred onto them (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). That is, everyone interprets and implies a unique meaning to every object, person, situation, and event. Accordingly, reality is socially constructed and then shared by individuals as a result of interactions. This allows individual experiences to be shaped by the meanings they create during interaction with others. Individuals are actively engaged in creating their world. People do not act according to the rules others wish them to follow; instead, they act according to how they see the world. The way individuals define the world and the meanings they create for specific objects and situations determines their actions. Rules developed by others may set boundaries for their behaviors; however, individual interpretations and meanings drive actions and, through social interaction with others, shape experiences. It is these experiences that shaped the reality of the school-choice students at Southgate Anderson High School.

Using this ontological assumption, it became apparent to lead into the epistemological assumption of anti-positivism. In short, all knowledge is constructed. Thus, knowledge consists of those constructions of which there is consensus among individuals to interpret the substance of the construction (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). This knowledge accumulates as a result of the socially-

constructed interaction between and among investigator and respondents (Guba & Lincoln). The knowledge is socially constructed and individually held. Furthermore, under a constructivist paradigm, epistemological assumptions lie in the nature of knowledge as developing throughout the study. In essence, the findings of the study were developed and created as the study progressed (Guba & Lincoln). Therefore, it appeared appropriate to take an interpretive approach to the research.

The Type of Design Used

The use of an interpretive approach required the research to be a process starting with a grand tour (Spradley, 1979), allowing the research to discover meaning through time. Hence, this approach fits closely into a constructivist paradigm. Guba & Lincoln (1994) described that methodologically under the constructivist paradigm, "the variable and personal nature of social constructions suggests that individual constructions can be elicited and refined only through interaction between and among investigator and respondents" (p. 111). Hence, this use of an interpretive approach required a set of assumptions that differed from those used by researchers searching for facts and causes.

Instead, as Greene (1978) stated, multiple ways of interpreting experiences are available to each of us through interacting with others. The meaning of our experiences constitutes reality (Greene). In this particular case, I wanted to understand the experiences of school-choice students at Southgate Anderson High School. My inquiry began with silence because reality is socially

constructed (Berger & Luckmann, 1990). Berger and Luckmann contended that people make sense of the world around them through "socially constructed" categories. These categories determine what information is processed, how events are evaluated, and what reactions they use in response. In short, people see things in different ways, and these differences are important. Individuals create meanings for situations and, through interaction with others, these meanings help to shape experiences. In the case of school-choice students, individual student experiences were not as individually unique but were culturally determined. By allowing students to talk about their unique experiences, socially constructed categories were created that were shared among the group of school-choice students.

Jacob (1987) described symbolic interactionists as those who assume that individuals' experiences are mediated by their own interpretations of experience. Humans act based upon the meanings individual objects have attributed to them (Blumer, 1969). These meanings are a symbolic phenomena, thus providing the rationale that humans live in both a symbolic and physical environment; in turn, they act in response to symbols as well as to physical stimuli (Rose, 1962). Therefore, behavior is caused by a reflective and socially derived interpretation of the internal and external stimuli that are present (Jacob). Hence, symbolic interactionists are concerned with covert behavior or, in other words, the participants' points of view (Ritzer, 1980).

However, they are not only concerned with merely knowing the participants' points of view but want to understand the processes by which these

points of view develop (Blumer, 1969). For symbolic interactionists, the research design is emergent with data analysis and data collection done sequentially with preliminary data analysis informing future data collection (Becker, 1970).

In short, I was concerned with the students' experiences from their perspective, combined with understanding how these points of view developed. Thus, I utilized the interpretive approach in order to collect data that described and explained the symbolic interactions. This was done through the use of unstructured interviews, participant observation, analysis of archival documents, and dedication to allowing the students' voices to guide the process. Through this approach, I was able to develop an understanding of their experiences as school-choice students.

Conceptual Framework

Designing a study on the experiences of school-choice students began with a conceptual framework. Miles and Huberman (1994) stated that a conceptual framework explains the main areas to be studied. These areas include key factors and variables and the relationship between them. Therefore, my analysis of the study's data was based upon the conceptual framework represented in Figure 3.

Elements of this conceptual framework worked as heuristic devices to help frame my thinking and pursuit of explaining the experiences of school-choice students. I selected models that I felt would help guide me through the research. These models combined socialization theories with organizational

theory. The combination of models helped me compare the data with the models and the models with the data while analyzing the research. The conceptual framework combines these heuristic devices in a format that was generic enough for application to a variety of settings. Upon completion of the research, a much different and less generalized contextual model was created to only describe and explain the experiences of school-choice students at Southgate Anderson High School.

In Chapter 2, I reviewed the research on organizational theory, school choice, and socialization that helped to construct the conceptual framework. The conceptual framework was constructed in a manner to identify the relationship between the students' experiences and the organizations' responses. Yet these students' experiences and the responses of the organization occurred within a greater social context. Understanding the experiences of school-choice students at SAHS meant first understanding the culture of SCSD, the culture of Southgate, the creation of the community within the greater Detroit metropolitan area, school funding in Michigan, and the relationships each held with the schools.

Context/Culture

Organizational Environment and Consequences
- Segregation
- Goal Displacement
- Preferential Treatment
- Structural and Perception Changes
- Organizational Rationalities

Pre-Entry Period
- Sending district characteristics vs. New district characteristics
- Racial congruence assumptions
- SES Perceptions
- Student characteristics
- Reason for changing districts
- Perceptions of sending and new district

Encounter Period
- Relationship between SAHS and schools-of-choice students
- Differences in New Setting
- Louis' detection, diagnosis, interpretation, and surprise
- Perceptions related to culture and race
- Involvement
- Effect of racial/cultural congruence

Outcomes
- Custodial orientation
- "In-Between" adaptation
- Rebellion
- Inclusion/Exclusion
- Friendships and success

Meaning

Resource Dependency

Organizational Boundaries

Figure 3. Conceptual Framework

As a result of resource dependence, the organization chose to participate in Michigan's schools-of-choice program. This allowed school-choice students to consider the option of changing school districts and, in turn, began the pre-entry period. After entering the new educational environment, the students moved

into the encounter period where the process of socialization required the students to learn the norms and assumptions of the new organization. However, during this encounter period, the organization needed to adapt through changes in the organizational environment. Simultaneously, students would need to function within the organizations boundaries as they attempted to gain membership rights into the activities within the organization. In some cases, students may have been subjected to partial inclusion into the organizational activities. Nevertheless, the socialization research shows that students then moved to the outcomes period where they chose their form of social adaptation.

Using this conceptual framework that combined the organizational theory with the individual socialization theory helped me to describe and explain the experiences of the school-choice students within the new environment. It was the combination of these two distinct areas with several research theories that allowed me to move from the descriptions provided by the students to the explanation of their experiences.

Research Questions

In order to answer the primary research question—What are the experiences of school-choice students in their new educational setting? —many other questions needed to be answered. The following questions, along with the conceptual framework presented in Figure 3, bound and focused my study:

1. What pattern(s), if any, existed to describe the flow of school-choice students in terms of enrollment trends? If patterns existed, how did

Southgate's geographical location and/or characteristics relate to these enrollment patterns?

2. How did SCSD change, as an organization, as a result of schools-of-choice?

3. What was the relationship between the history of the Detroit metropolitan area and the experiences of school-choice students? How did perceptions of individual cities in the Downriver area shape experiences of school-choice students? How did the existing culture of Southgate and southeast Michigan influence the experiences of school-choice students?

4. How well did the existing organization accept or adapt to these new students?

5. What were the characteristics of school-choice students?

6. Why did school-choice students leave their previous school(s)?

7. Why did school-choice students choose SAHS?

8. What were the experiences of school-choice students upon entry into SAHS?

9. How did the relationship between SAHS and school-choice students shape the experience?

10. What factor(s) shaped the encounter period?

11. What outcome did school-choice students choose (i.e., custodial orientation, "in-between" adaptation or rebellion)? What factor(s) led to custodianship? "In-between" adaptation? Rebellion?

12. How did student characteristics such as race and SES influence the
overall experience of school-choice students?

The Role of the Researcher

As an observer, I worked as a participant observer. Gay and Airasian
(2003) defined a participant observer as a researcher who engages fully in the
activities being studied but is known to the participants as a researcher. As a
teacher in the building, the role of participant observer was ideal. However, I
needed to remember that, according to Bogdan and Biklen (1992), becoming a
researcher meant internalizing the research goal during the data collection
process in the field. That is, I needed to always keep in mind that the reason
behind the research was to understand the experiences of school-choice students.

Data Collection and Instrumentation

According to Miles and Huberman (1994), samples in qualitative studies
are not usually completely prespecified. Therefore, my initial choices of
informants led me to similar and different ones. Consequently, I used
conceptually-driven sequential sampling (Miles & Huberman). I started by
choosing a few students based upon my knowledge of the setting and the basic
criteria that the students must be out-of-district, school-choice students who
attended Southgate Anderson High School. I began my interviews using
purposive sampling.

Purposive sampling requires the researcher to select a sample based on personal experience and knowledge of the group to be studied (Gay & Airasian, 2003). However, there is a distinct difference between convenience samples, in which participants who happen to be available are chosen, and purposive sampling. Purposive sampling requires that the researcher use personal experience and prior knowledge to create criteria for selecting the sample. The clear criteria provided a basis for describing and defending the use of purposive sampling. Nevertheless, much of the sampling in qualitative research is purposive (Gay & Airasian).

According to Gay and Airasian (2003), when conducting qualitative research studies, the sample size is very difficult to predetermine. In turn, two guidelines were used to determine when the number of participants was sufficient. First, I considered the extent to which the selected participants represented the range of potential participants in the setting. Second, I realized the point at which data saturation was reached. That is, the sample size was large enough that, as a researcher, I began to hear the same thoughts, perspectives, and responses from most or all of the participants (Gay & Airasian).

I conducted interviews with participants. The interviews permitted me to acquire data that I could not collect through observations. In particular, I was able to learn about the students' thoughts, feelings, and perceptions as they related to the school-choice setting. The initial interviews were unstructured in nature. Unstructured interviews, according to Gay and Airasian (2003), are exploratory sessions in which the interviewer "follows his/her nose" in

developing and ordering the questions. These interviews took place during the casual conversations that occurred during the observational period.

However, I did have one question that I asked students during these unstructured interviews. I started by asking students, "What has been your experience as a school-choice student?" Once the students began to answer this question, I followed up statements with "Can you give me an example?" Because this type of exploratory interviewing was information-rich, I audio-recorded the sessions and transcribed them verbatim.

After speaking with the first student, I employed a snowball selection strategy to identify additional participants (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993). In other words, I identified cases of interest from students who, based upon their own experiences, were aware of other students who were information-rich (Patton, 1990). From there, I continued to speak with school-choice students until I no longer received new information. In order to provide for triangulation of data, I also spoke with teachers, non-school-choice students, administrators, and community members. Through this variety of subjects, I was able to identify common themes that helped me tell the story of the experiences of school-choice students from all directions. I continued this process until I no longer received new information.

Once I reached this level of saturation, I interviewed at least one more student in order to be assured that I obtained an understanding of the students' experiences. Thus, my sample size was actually n + 1. That is, I started with a basic conceptual framework while expanding or choosing samples as data

emerged (Miles & Huberman, 1994). In total, I conducted extensive interviews with 15 students, 4 teachers, and 6 administrators. The interview transcripts and observation notes combined to slightly more than 300 pages of typed data and reflections.

While conducting the interviews and logging observation data, I also studied the overall setting. In other words, the culture of Southgate Anderson High School (SAHS) was reflective of the culture of Southgate Community School District (SCSD) and of the City of Southgate. This culture was created within southeast Michigan and the greater Detroit metropolitan area. Developing an understanding of the context in which this study took place added clarity to understanding the school-choice students' experiences.

Through conducting research of the experiences of school-choice students, or any type of study involving fieldwork, it was anticipated that numerous conflicts between values and ethical issues could arise (Lofland & Lofland, 1995). Since the study involved human subjects, specifically staff members and students between 14 and 18 years of age and, I complied with the policies and procedures set forth by Eastern Michigan University on the use of human subjects in student research. That is, I followed the necessary process regarding informed consent from the parents, the students, and the staff members in order to protect the rights and well being of the research participants.

Thus, informed consent requirements were met using a letter outlining the purpose of the research, procedures used, rights of the students, rights of the parents, rights of participants (in general), and methods for confidentiality. In

turn, I filed a request for approval of student research involving human subjects with the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Eastern Michigan University. I was approved to speak with parents, students, staff members, and administrators. In addition, I intended to report any unanticipated changes, of which there were none, in research protocol to the IRB.

The study of the experiences of school-choice students at Southgate Anderson High School was meant only to add to the body of knowledge relating to school choice and student transition. The study was not intended to evaluate the school-choice program or any existing programs at Southgate Anderson High School. Therefore, a teleological ethic (Deyhle, Hess & LeCompte, 1992) was used.

The use of a teleological ethic appeared most appropriate for a study of student experiences. A teleological ethic requires a mindset that the end justifies the means. In this particular study, I sought to describe and explain the experiences of school-choice students at Southgate Anderson High School from the perspective of the students' themselves. The "end" was to explain the experiences of these students through the use of appropriate "means." I used only a sample of school-choice students to describe and explain their experiences as school-choice students. These students all attended one particular school during one particular time frame. Thus, the findings should not be used to evaluate the effectiveness of school choice as a program. In this case, the research findings should not be generalized to the effectiveness of school choice as an option for educational opportunity. Instead, the results of the study only describe

and explain the experiences of school-choice students at Southgate Anderson

High School.

In order to reach the desired end, it was necessary to identify the most

appropriate method for obtaining an understanding of the students' experiences.

Describing an experience cannot be quantified or done in a quick and easy

manner. Experiences are unique to each individual. No two individuals live

identical lives. In turn, no two individuals share every experience. When

beginning the research, I believed that each student who participated in school

choice had a unique experience. However, using qualitative methods allowed me

to see that the experiences were not unique to individuals, but to groups of

students. If I had attempted to use quantitative methods for the collection of

data, these unanticipated group experiences would not have been discovered.

Attempting to fit each student's experience into an easily described and

organized format contradicted the purpose of this particular study. Hence,

discovering a general knowledge of the experiences of school-choice students fell

within the attainment of individual student descriptions. It was these

descriptions that were important in this study. Thus, the use of a teleological

ethic was most appropriate because the end result of this study was to better

understand the experiences of these school-choice students through the use of

appropriate means.

In addition to the use of a teleological ethic, I exercised beneficence

(Sieber, 1992) and nonmanipulation (House, 1990). Sieber defined beneficence as

maximizing positive outcomes for the sake of humanity, science, and the

individual research participants while minimizing or avoiding harm or risk to these participants. Since the subjects of the study were students ages 14 to 18 years old, I believed potentially harming these students to be morally wrong. Therefore, proper precautions were taken in order to assure that no harm would come to the participating students in this study. These precautions assured that all students, parents, and staff members were aware of their rights to participate or leave the study at any time. In addition, students, parents, and staff members were guaranteed confidentiality and given an opportunity to receive a copy of the findings at the conclusion of the study.

In short, the research was conducted to discover truth as an end in itself (May, 1980; Deyhle, Hess & LeCompte, 1992). Through this discovery of truth, priority was placed on maximizing good outcomes for individual research participants while minimizing and attempting to avoid unnecessary harm or risk to participants.

Overall, I used a combination of archival data, participant responses, emic categories, and etic categories. The archival data generally involved background data that was necessary to describe the setting as well as information pertaining to the students such as courses enrolled in, previous courses taken, involvement of school-choice students in extra-curricular activities, enrollment data, special education records, board minutes, grades, and discipline records.

In terms of participant responses, I allowed the students to tell their stories as they saw them while allowing broad trends and concepts to take shape. This data was collected through both structured and unstructured interviews

with school-choice students, non-school-choice students, teachers, administrators, and community members. The goal of the interviews was to collect data that helped me learn about the students' thoughts, feelings, and perceptions as they relate to the school choice setting. Finally, I worked as a participant observer. As a participant observer, I used field notes to record what I observed. These field notes contained both literal descriptions of the events witnessed (emic data) as well as personal reactions (etic data) to these events (Gay & Airasian, 2003).

Data Analysis

Although the unstructured interviews were early in the study, it was important for me to analyze the data at such an early stage. Miles and Huberman (1994) stated that early data analysis allows field-workers to cycle back and forth between their thoughts on the existing data and how to collect newer and better data. It was this dedication to constant analysis that allowed me to move into the next stage of interviews.

During the second stage of interviews, I conducted partially structured interviews with the participants. The questions were chosen prior to the interview, but the order and exact delivery of the questions varied from participant to participant based upon the themes that need to be pursued. Questions were open-ended in nature so that I could elicit the participants' responses without leading them or forcing them to conform to a strict structure

or list of possible answers. Again, the sessions were audio-recorded and transcribed in their entirety after the interview.

According to Miles and Huberman (1994), under the interpretive approach, questions evolved. In turn, I worked with interview transcripts while taking extreme care to not condense the material. Instead of using traditional coding, I continually read the source materials and through this vigilance over my presuppositions, I reached the "lebenswelt" of the informant (Miles & Huberman). Specifically, I gained a practical understanding of the meanings and actions of these individuals. As Bogdan and Biklen (1992) stated, interpretive studies emphasize Weberian "verstchen" or the interpretive understanding of human interaction. In order to avoid misinterpretations, I was extremely cautious to maintain the original words and behaviors of participants through the use of symbolic interactionism.

In addition, I used field notes to record what I observed. These field notes contained both literal descriptions of the events witnessed (emic data) as well as personal reactions (etic data) to these events (Gay & Airasian, 2003). Through analysis of the field notes, I was able to provide the description and understanding of the research setting and participants. However, Miles and Huberman (1994) suggested that after a field contact, researchers should pause and ponder over the main concepts, themes, and issues encountered during the contact. As a result, I used a contact summary sheet to create a habit of constant reflection of data during the data collection period. In particular, this contact summary sheet allowed me to better plan my next contact, reorient myself to the

contact when returning to the field study write-up, and helped with further data

analysis (Miles & Huberman).

Contact Summary Sheet

Contact Type: _____

Contact Date: _____

Observation _____

Today's Date: _____

Interview _____

(with whom)

1. What were the main issues or themes that struck me in this contact?

2. Summarize the information I got (or failed to get) on each of the target areas:
   Note: These areas will evolve over time.

   Area   Information

   Socialization

   Org issues

3. Additional information that struck me as interesting, illuminating, or important in this contact?

4. What new (or remaining) target areas do I have to consider during the next contact?

Methods for Verification

There were two primary threats to the validity of a study using observation and interviews. The first, observer bias, referred to invalid information that results from the perspective the researcher brought to the study. This inevitable subjectivity both weakened and strengthened participant observation (Gay & Airasian, 2003). The opportunity for a more in-depth understanding of the phenomena was created as a result of the researcher becoming more involved. Then again, the greater the involvement of a researcher, the more likely degree of subjectivity in the research was to increase over time (Gay & Airasian).

Therefore, Gay and Airasian (2003) warned that qualitative researchers must stay balanced between becoming involved and remaining fairly unbiased. Bias was reduced through my commitment to consciously record my thoughts, feelings, and reactions about what I observed. For this very reason, I designated one section of my field research journal specifically for my reaction to the observation. I also used the contact summary sheet to give me an opportunity to reflect upon the data as they related to the theoretical and conceptual frameworks. In the end, bias was not eliminated, but strategies were in place to minimize it.

The second threat to validity of qualitative studies was observer effect. Gay and Airasian (2003) described observer effect as the impact of the observer's participation on the setting or participants being studied. That is, the greater the researcher's participation, the greater the observer effect. Gay and Airasian

contended that qualitative researchers are aware that they cannot completely eliminate observer effects. However, they do make "every effort to recognize, minimize, record, and report them" (Gay & Airasian, p. 214).

It was best to address observer bias and effect as a limitation of this study. As a teacher at Southgate Anderson High School, the nature of my position was initially believed to have potential to affect the actions of the school-choice students. In particular, if the students were finding themselves disconnected with the environment, they began to turn towards me for connection. In my role of teacher, I formed a positive and nurturing relationship with these students. When studying their experiences as school-choice students, I initially believed that I may, in some circumstances, have unintentionally influenced their experiences by aiding them toward the outcomes phase. Due to a potential familiarity with the researcher that was outside of my control, I initially believed that I may have unintentionally impacted the results of the study. However, making this possible effect explicit at the beginning of the study helped me strive to reduce and recognize the effect I possibly had on the findings. After the study was completed and the findings were discussed, I realized that my initial concern over affecting the students' ability to move into the outcomes phase was no longer a concern. Familiarity with these students and the setting only improved my ability to describe and explain the experiences of school-choice students and had very little impact on the results.

Due to the scope and scale of the study, I was unable to track school-choice students who had left Southgate Anderson High School prior to their

graduation. As the research process evolved, it became very difficult to find students who enrolled in Southgate Anderson High School as school-choice students and withdrew from Southgate Anderson High School soon after. In most cases a student's records had not yet arrived from the previous district and a request for records to be sent to their new district did not arrive in a timely manner. This delay in locating students forced the research to focus on those students who stayed at Southgate Anderson High School.

Sensitivity to working with minors as participants also was a limitation to the study. The research protocol that was approved by the Eastern Michigan University Human Subjects Institutional Review Board (IRB) outlined protections for the participants that required both a parental signature and the student signature with special attention given to protecting the identities and maintaining anonymity of each participant. In my role as a teacher at Southgate Anderson High School, I was involved in daily interactions with students both within the classroom and in other social settings, such as hallway passings, sporting events, and dances. Occasionally, while working in my normal capacity, I would observe situations or activities where quoting a student would have been extremely helpful for my research. I logged these moments into my observation notes and used paraphrased statements along with my analysis of the situation to help guide me through the research process. In many cases, I was able to interview students who were involved in the situations or activities that I observed and recorded observation notes. Unfortunately, many of these situations involved students whom I was unable to interview at a later date

because I was unable to identify them after the incident in order to set up an interview. In a high school of more than 1100 students in grades 10-12, it was difficult to find every student whom I wished to interview while protecting the anonymity and the well-being of the students involved with regard to the IRB. Even without interviewing these students, their words and the reality of situations helped guide the research by allowing me to continually focus on understanding the experiences of school-choice students at Southgate Anderson High School.

On the other hand, due to the use of little prior instrumentation, Miles and Huberman (1994) described that, not unlike the use of definite pre-instrumentation, the study design consciously addressed and emphasized specific types of validity. In particular, studies that use little prior instrumentation emphasize construct, descriptive/contextual, interpretive, and natural validity.

Construct validity addresses the question "Are the concepts well grounded?" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 36). The answer to this question stems directly from the conceptual framework. Since the conceptual framework of this study acted as a lens to view the phenomena, construct validity was emphasized in the design of a study of school-choice students.

The next emphasized type of validity was descriptive/contextual validity. When addressing descriptive/contextual validity, researchers attempt to answer the question "Is the account complete and thorough over time?" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 36). The study of the experiences of school-choice students

was explanatory by nature. Hence, descriptive/contextual validity was emphasized in the fact that the study used student descriptions to move towards explanation of their experiences.

Interpretive validity, according to Miles and Huberman (1994), revolved around the question "Does the account connect with the 'lived experience' of people in the case?" In other words, I needed to be sure that my description of the experiences of school-choice students at Southgate Anderson High School really reflected the experiences of these students. This was the primary goal of the study. The study was designed to describe and explain the experiences of school-choice students at Southgate Anderson High School by telling their story. Through engagement over time in the setting, I increased my ability to describe and explain the experiences of the school-choice students.

Finally, studies utilizing little prior instrumentation emphasize natural validity (Miles & Huberman, 1994). That is, as a researcher, I could not disturb the natural setting that existed. This was similar to observer bias. While the observer could cause an effect on the environment, the study was designed to account for such an effect. As mentioned earlier, I worked to reduce and recognize the effect I possibly had on the findings.

According to Miles and Huberman (1994), the question of whether a study is internally valid is one of accuracy. In order to be valid, the findings of the study must make sense, be credible to the people they studied and to the readers of the study. Finally, the findings must paint an accurate portrait of what the researcher was looking for (Miles and Huberman). Therefore, Miles and

Huberman suggested that in order to conduct valid qualitative research, the researcher must adhere to several queries. A qualitative study of the experiences of school-choice students must first provide meaningful and detailed descriptions to the reader. In addition, the account rendered was comprehensive and based upon several complementary methods and data sources (i.e., triangulation). Also, the data were well-linked to the categories of prior and emerging theories while allowing rival explanations to be considered. Finally, negative evidence was sought (Miles & Huberman).

When addressing external validity, Miles and Huberman (1994) suggested that external validity relates to how well the conclusions of the study have a larger import. In other words, were the conclusions of the study transferable to other situations or settings? I did not intend to generalize the findings of this study to other settings. My intention was to describe, explain, and make meaning of the experiences of school-choice students only at Southgate Anderson High School and present the findings in such a way that an informed reader could choose to generalize from or use ideas from the study. However, the analytical framework was conducive to generalization because of its ability to be applied to similar situations. Since the initial conceptual framework was a combination of theories on various aspects of organizational behavior, an informed reader could look at the results of this study and apply the analytical framework to similar situations in hopes of gaining a more insightful understanding of the experiences of students in a similar situation. The final model presented is specific to

Southgate Anderson High School and could be used for the study of similar settings.

In terms of reliability of qualitative research, Miles and Huberman (1994) summarized the issue as whether the process of the study was consistent. Similar to the case for a study to be found internally valid, they outlined several areas that should be addressed by the researcher. First, the research questions needed to be clearly written and congruent with the features of the study design. Next, the researcher's role and status needed to be explicitly described. In addition, basic paradigms and constructs needed to be clearly specified. Furthermore, the data must have been collected across a full range of appropriate settings, times, and respondents. Finally, coding checks, data quality checks, and peer or colleague reviews must have been in place and made to insure reliability of the research. An inquiry audit (Hoepfl, 1997) was conducted involving several individuals familiar with SCSD and schools-of-choice within SCSD. The purpose of this inquiry audit was to ensure consistency with the findings. As a result, the inquiry audit helped assure that the findings were consistent with the lived experiences (Hoepfl) of the individuals within SCSD. The interviews, data, and field notes were kept so that others can see how I moved from descriptions to the explanations of the experiences. In other words, an audit trail was established. By addressing these issues, I accounted for maintaining the reliability of the study.

At the beginning of the research process, I thought that I would discover unique responses from each student. As the research progressed, I was forced to change what I initially believed. The data identified that the experiences were

unique to cultural groups and not to individual students. The change in my initial beliefs has great implications for practitioners. The cultural groups and the experiences of these cultural groups were very powerful throughout the research. The use of qualitative methods allowed me to sift through the data and reframe my own thinking through the research process. Collecting the data from individual students allowed me to gain perspective that demonstrated the effect of cultural groups on the experiences of school-choice students.

Outcome of the Study and Its Relation to Theory and Literature

The conceptual framework guided the data collection and analysis process. In turn, the analysis occurred as the data related to both the individual student experiences in the areas of adaptation and socialization as well as the organizational adaptations and boundaries. This two-sided analysis, combining the experiences of the students as they transitioned into the new school environment with the behavior of the organization that the students chose to enter, helped paint a picture of the experiences of the school-choice students at Southgate Anderson High School.

Thus, the outcomes of the study were simultaneously viewed from the perspective of the organization and the student. In particular, the outcomes of the study were discussed in terms of Pfeffer and Salancik's (2003), Scott's (2003) and Thompson's (1967) work in the areas of resource dependency, organizational environment, organizational consequences, partial inclusion of participants, and, finally, organizational boundaries as they related to school-choice participation.

All the while, the student experiences were discussed according to the conceptual framework.

First, a thorough background description of the context of the study was provided. Second, student experiences were broken down to include elements derived from Feldman's (1981) and Jablin's (1987) anticipatory socialization period, encounter period, and the metamorphosis of socialization as identified in the conceptual framework. These periods were titled pre-entry, encounter, and outcomes. The encounter period and the outcomes period were broken down to include more specific and detailed explanations. For example, the encounter period was viewed through the theories of Louis' (1980) areas of detection, diagnosis, and interpretation as well as Schein's (1990) concepts of identifying and learning the assumptions and norms of the new culture. The outcomes period was further broken down using categories derived from Schein's three outcomes and Carlson's (1964) adaptive responses.

It was the intention that analyzing the data from both the perspective of the students' experiences and the organization's experience would provide great clarity to understanding the overall experiences of school-choice students at Southgate Anderson High School. Through the conceptual framework, the theories on organizational behavior and student transition were combined to help guide such an analysis. In the end, the outcomes proved to be the results of both the students' attempts to socialize into the new organization and the organization's attempts to respond and adapt to their new clients. Such an understanding of this process proved beneficial to providing an understanding

of schools-of-choice policies as they related to the actual students and schools

choosing to participate in such programs. Figure 4 outlines the contextual

framework developed specifically to describe the experiences of school-choice

students at Southgate Anderson High School.

Power

Local ⟶ | **Proposal A** | ⟶ **State**

E F F E C T I V E N E S S   **History of Southeast Michigan**   **Resource Dependence**   E F F E C T I V E N E S S

SCSD

Conflict between rationalities

Culture maintains and pushes back

History and Origins of Southgate

Schools-of-Choice

Custodianship ≈ **Student** Not ≈

Exit
OR
"In-Between"
Adaptation

Racial and Socio-Cultural Congruence
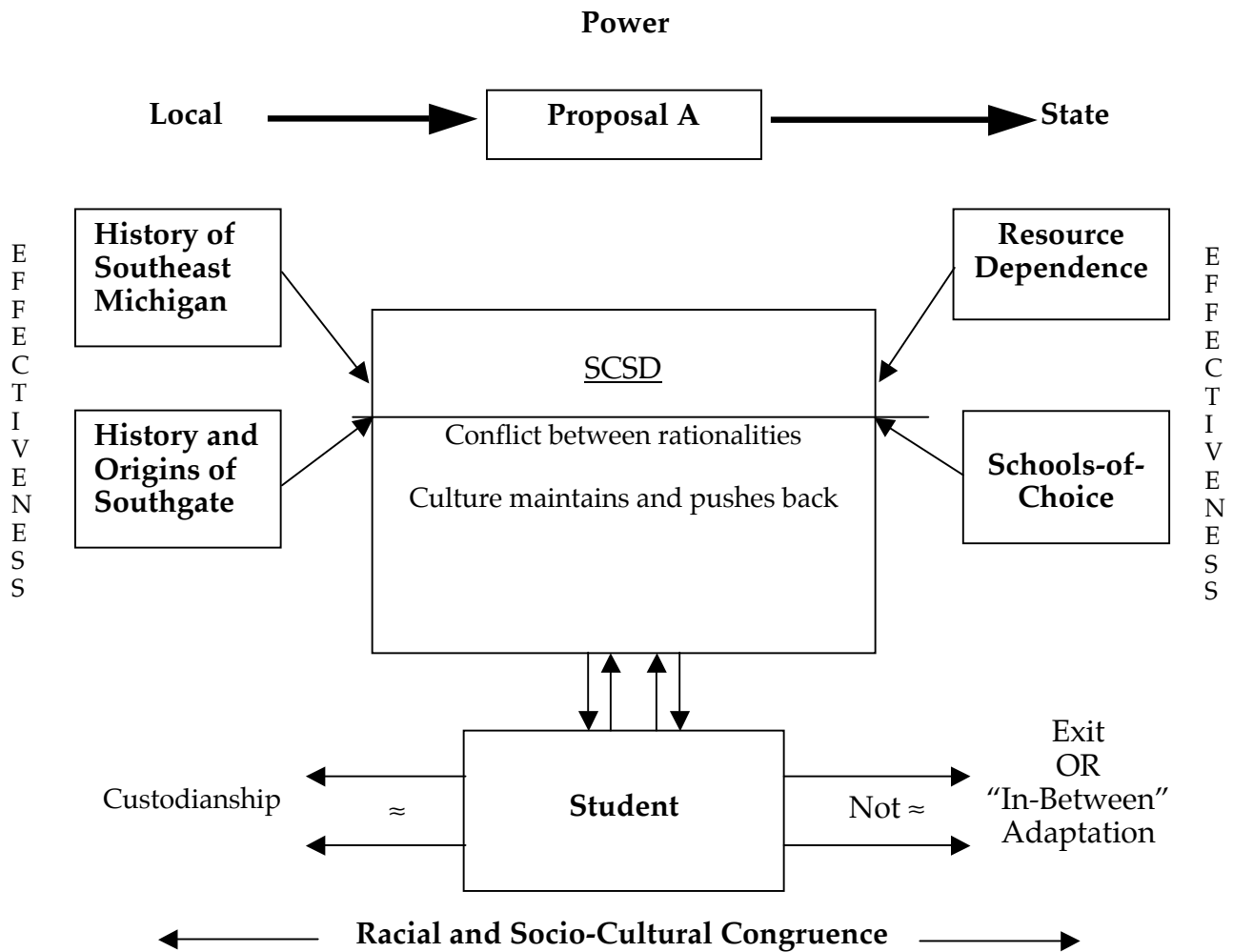
Figure 4. Contextual Framework of the Experiences of School-Choice students at
     SAHS

Chapter 4: Findings

Michigan: The Early Years of Settlement and School Funding

A Brief History of Southeast Michigan

In 1796, Wayne County's borders stretched from the area that is now Detroit to encompass nearly all of Michigan, northern Indiana, the eastern edge of Illinois, including the area now known as Chicago, and a small part of Wisconsin (Wayne County, 2005). Around 1822, Wayne County was narrowed down to the current borders with Detroit as its county seat (Wayne County). By 1834, the first census showed that 34,000 residents lived in southeastern Michigan, with 17,000 residents living in Wayne County (Schaetzl, 2005). During the period from 1810 to 1940, the population in Southeast Michigan increased from 5,000 to 5,000,000 residents (Schaetzl).

The tremendous growth of the region was the result of two waves of economic opportunity. Until the end of the 19th century, farming, lumber, and small industry provided economic opportunities to the settlers in the regions. However, the greatest period of growth occurred from 1910–1940 with the boom of the automotive industry. Each of the "big three" American car companies was born in Wayne County (Wayne County, 2005). This growth in population is demonstrated in the accompanying map that details the 1930 population in Michigan. The map (Figure 5) provides a clear picture of the concentration of Michigan's population in Wayne County and, even more specifically, Detroit.

Figure 5. Michigan Population in 1930 (Retrieved on August 1, 2005, from
http://www.geo.msu.edu/geo333/pop_thru_time.html)

Around 1826, Wayne County was separated into six townships. Since

then, the original six townships have been divided into several smaller cities

(Wayne County, 2005). The current Wayne County is shown in Figure 6. Detroit

is still the county seat and the largest city in the county. Its suburbs are

commonly categorized according to their location. The northern suburbs referred

to as the "east side" include the Grosse Pointes and suburbs in Macomb County.

The "western suburbs" include bordering suburbs from neighboring Oakland

County along with Wayne County's cities of Redford, Livonia, Northville,

Plymouth, and Canton. Another distinct set of suburbs, commonly referred to as

Downriver, are located south of Detroit near the Detroit River. The Downriver

area comprises River Rouge, Melvindale, Ecorse, Lincoln Park, Allen Park,

Southgate, Wyandotte, Riverview, Taylor, Brownstown Township, Trenton,

Woodhaven, Flat Rock, Romulus, Huron Township, Gibraltar, and Grosse Ile.
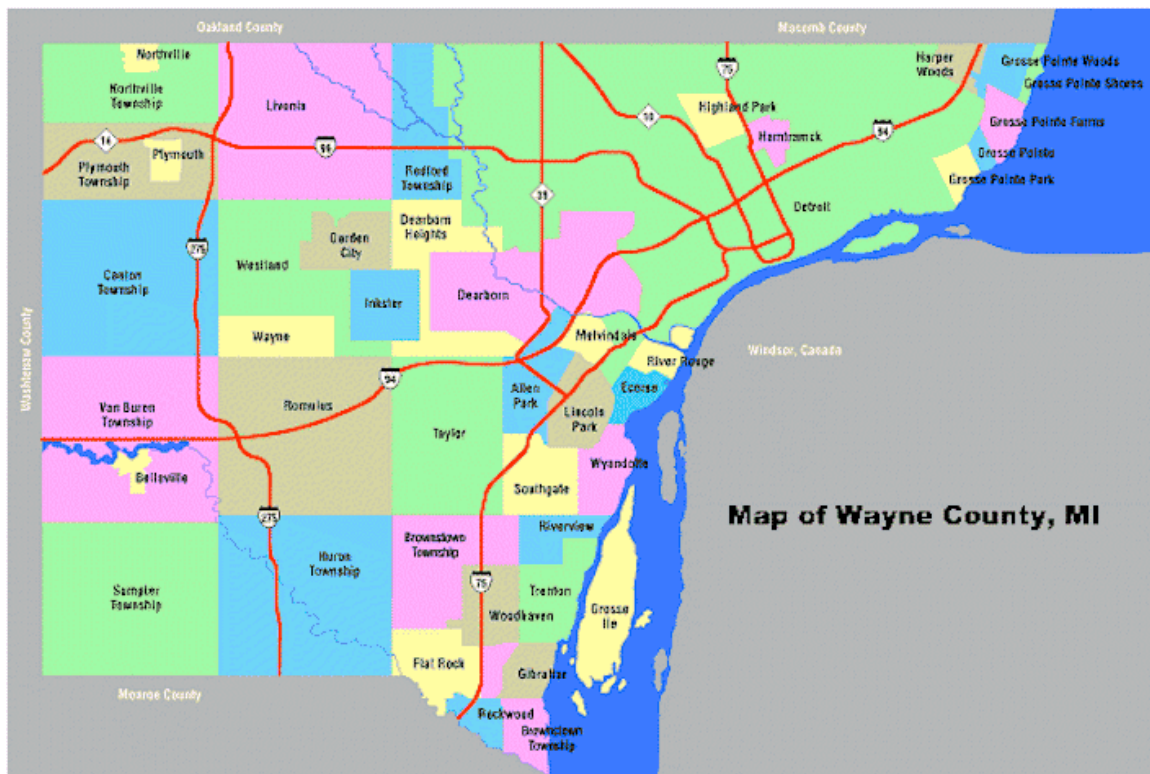
Figure 6. Map of Wayne County, Michigan (retrieved on August 1, 2005, from
http://www.michiganancestry.com/files/MapofWayneCo.gif

A Brief History of the Detroit Metropolitan Area

Detroit's earliest roots date back to the original settlers in the region

during the 1700s. However, it was not until the creation of mass-produced

automobiles that Detroit developed into a major metropolis. Detroit's population

peaked at 1.8 million residents in 1950 (Trowbridge, 2002). However, the next decade started a sustained decline in residents of Detroit, resulting in a total population of 951,000 residents in the year 2000 (City of Detroit, 2005). Meanwhile, the population in the Detroit Metropolitan Area grew to over 4.2 million residents in 1990 (State of Michigan, n.d.). Between 1950 and 1970, "about 340,000 Detroiters, nearly all Caucasian, left the city" (Trowbridge, 2002, p. B2). From 1950 to 1990, "the number of whites in the city declined from 1,546,000 to 222,000" (Farley, Steeh, Kupan, Jackson & Reeves, 1994).

The end result was the growth of the suburbs and the development of a highly segregated metropolitan area. In fact, analysis of the 2000 Census data determined that metro Detroit is the home of the most segregated neighborhoods in the nation (French, 2002). Trowbridge (2002) and Sugrue (2005) both attributed this segregation to the catalyst that built Detroit: the automotive industry. According to Sugrue, three percent of autoworkers in Detroit were African American in 1940 but, by 1945, almost 15 percent of Detroit's autoworkers were African American. As a result, Detroit became a magnet for African American migrants seeking these opportunities.

In the 1950s, jobs began to move away from the city into the suburbs through the beginning of de-industrialization. Between 1947 and 1963, Detroit lost 134,000 manufacturing jobs (Sugrue, 2005). These manufacturing job reductions were the result of plant openings in other areas of the country combined with the introduction of automation into the automotive plants (Sugrue). The African American residents of Detroit who moved to work in the

automotive plants resided in small, cramped areas such as Detroit's Paradise Valley (Trowbridge, 2002). After rising black incomes and open-housing laws allowed African Americans increased freedom, Caucasians continued to move out of neighborhoods where blacks began arriving (Trowbridge). As the automotive companies began to cut manufacturing jobs in Detroit, the African American workers suffered the worst because they lacked seniority (Sugrue). Hence, in the 1950s, 15.9 percent of African American were unemployed while only six percent of Caucasians were unemployed (Sugrue).

The combination of these factors helped set the stage for the current Detroit metropolitan area. In fact, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, Detroit has the second highest African American population of any city in the nation while one of its suburbs, Livonia, has the highest Caucasian population of any big city in the nation (Trowbridge, 2002). As of 2000, almost 9 out of 10 African American residents in metro Detroit resided in one of five cities: Detroit, Southfield, Highland Park, Inkster, or Pontiac (Trowbridge). It is this pattern of de facto segregation that defined the Detroit metropolitan area's history and growth.

A Brief History of School Funding in Michigan

The inequities in Michigan's public school funding were evident as early as the 1800s. Under the Northwest Ordinance, land in Michigan was divided into townships of equal size. Each township was then broken down into several smaller sections. The Northwest Ordinance required proceeds gained from

selling Section 16 lots of each township to be used for the maintenance of public schools. However, the Section 16 lot in one township could have been worth much less than the Section 16 lot in another township throughout the state. This resulted in instant funding inequities based solely upon location of the township (Diebold, 2004).

Consequently, state lawmakers wrote a policy in 1835 that funneled Section 16 lot proceeds directly to the state. These funds were later dispersed by the state to support local school districts. By the late 1800s, Michigan's school aid fund and the state's ability to fund public education had deteriorated. This forced local districts to rely more heavily on local property taxes to support schools. The end result was a continuous increase in taxes at the local levels. The increase in local taxes, combined with The Great Depression, caused many tax bills to become delinquent.

In addition, complaints of inequitable property tax burdens were heard primarily from farmers around 1930 because of the size and value of their land. These tax burdens had become unequal based solely on location in the state. More populated areas with smaller lot sizes could divide the tax load between many, while the most rural areas were forced to shift their tax burden upon only a few farmers.

 As a result, lawmakers responded in 1932 by implementing a 3% sales tax. In 1946, a portion of the state sales tax began to be added to the school aid fund (Diebold, 2004). This move was intended to supplement the amount of school funding that was available at the time. In the meantime, school districts

were struggling to provide well-trained workers for the state's industrial boom while simultaneously meeting the educational needs of the influx of immigrants to the state.

Throughout the 1950s, Michigan school districts continued to consolidate in the hope of providing better educational services at a decreased cost (Diebold, 2004). The decreased cost was temporarily achieved by no longer replicating services between districts. During this time, Michigan townships were given the authority to collect property taxes for public schools. However, these newly consolidated school districts rarely followed township borders. Instead, the new school districts took the shape of population distributions. Hence, the school funding structure created nearly 200 years earlier by the Northwest Ordinance was not of use to these odd-shaped school districts that no longer consisted of entire, or even the same, townships (Diebold). In 1960, Michigan school districts, instead of solely townships, were permitted to levy property taxes for their operations. This was a shift to local control of school district funding (Diebold).

Era of Suburban Growth

Suburban Growth and Changes in Michigan School Funding

In the 1950s, the population of Detroit began its decline as suburbs boomed. This was not isolated to the Detroit Metropolitan Area, but the impact of such population shifts can still be observed in terms of school funding in Michigan. As the automotive industry spread its production facilities outward

from the City of Detroit and suburbs began to grow, the landscape of Michigan

schools was greatly altered.

After the Michigan legislature passed Public Act 379 in 1965, teachers

were permitted to bargain collectively. As a result, teacher salaries increased by

73% from 1965 to 1972 (Diebold, 2004). The largest increases were in wealthier

suburban districts, with lower salaries remaining in urban and rural districts.

This resulted in even greater inequities in per-pupil spending between the

suburbs and other districts in the state. In 1972, a proposal was defeated by

Michigan voters that would have limited property taxes for schools by

developing a new state tax program as an alternative. The alternative would

have utilized a state income tax to be used to fund public education (Diebold).

This proposal was defeated by a fairly narrow margin and resulted in other

legislative moves to help address funding inequities for public schools

throughout the State of Michigan.

In 1973, two bills helped address the per-pupil inequities throughout the

state. The Bursley Bill and the Homestead Property Tax Credit helped address

these inequities by providing additional state help to districts with lower

property wealth. In short, districts with lower property wealth were given

assistance by the state to meet a minimum amount of per-pupil funding

(Diebold, 2004). Meanwhile, districts with higher levels of property wealth were

already able to bring in more than the minimum funds guaranteed by the state.

These changes, however, resulted in unanticipated consequences. High tax-based

property districts were able to levy lower millage rates than their poorer

counterparts that needed to levy higher mills to gain full benefit of the new plan.
Figure 7 demonstrates this relationship between property values and population.

	Low ⟷ Population ⟶ High	
High ↑ Property Value ↓ **Low**	Moderate School Property Taxes	Low School Property Taxes
	High School Property Taxes	High School Property Taxes
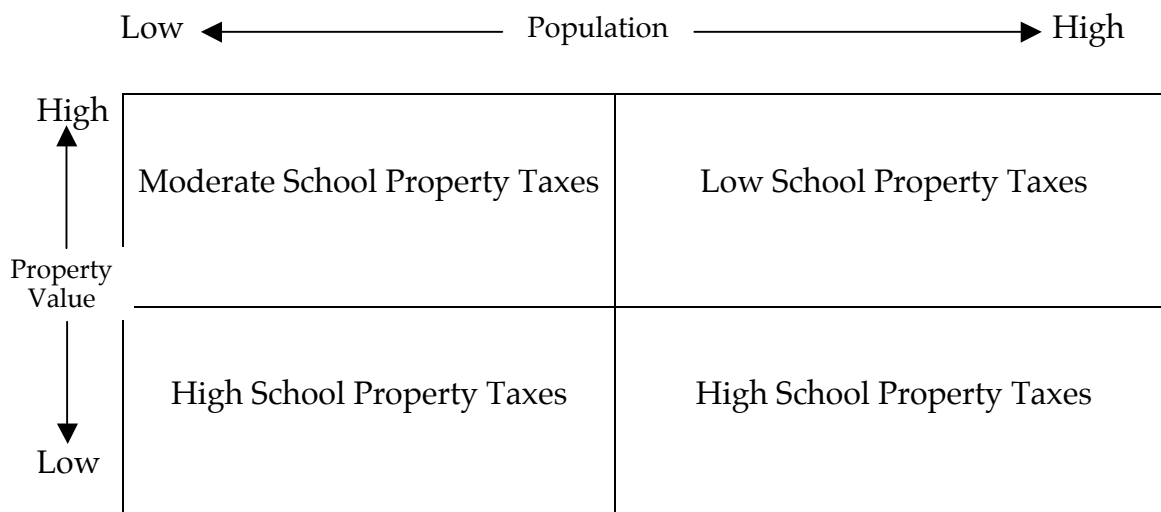
Figure 7. Continuum of Property Taxes vs. Property Value

If property values were high, the amount of revenue gained from one-mill
was higher than in an area of low property values. In order to generate the
necessary funds, poorer districts needed to levy two or three times the mills as
wealthier districts to generate the same number of dollars. Smaller districts with
less population were at an even greater disadvantage because they had fewer
residents to share the load of school funding. This compounded the problems of
inequity (Diebold, 2004). For example, after the Bursley bill was enacted, the per-
pupil spending gap for comparably sized school districts in Michigan ranged
from $2,205 to $5,760 per pupil, depending on the property values in the school
district (Diebold).

Unfortunately, the Bursley Bill and the Homestead Property Tax Credit caused schools to seek increased millage rates that continued to climb and, in turn, worsened the inequities in per-pupil funding between districts (Diebold, 2004). The Michigan Legislature continued to search for solutions to this ballooning problem. One solution was the Headlee Amendment, which voters passed in 1978. The Headlee Amendment was designed to address future tax growth by limiting the amount of increase permitted by local entities based upon inflation rates. Although the Headlee Amendment initially eased the tax burdens, it conflicted with the Bursley Bill and the Homestead Property Tax Credit. This conflict resulted in astronomical increases in property taxes (Diebold). As a result, seven proposed constitutional amendments were offered to Michigan voters over a span of three years. Six of these proposals were specifically designed to reduce or eliminate school property taxes. All of these proposals were soundly defeated by Michigan voters throughout the early 1980s (Diebold).

After the release of "A Nation at Risk" in 1983 by The National Commission on Excellence in Education (1983), there was a shift in values that fueled education reform goals from equity to excellence/effectiveness. This shift to effectiveness fueled policy makers to conclude that a resource dependent model with the state as a benefactor and schools as beneficiary would be necessary to promote more radical policy changes such as choice (Diebold, 2004). For the next several years, politics prevailed in the realm of school finance throughout Michigan. While increasing property taxes became the catalyst and

focus for discussion amongst policy-makers, equity for the education of children was all but forgotten in the name of political control and educational effectiveness.

In 1989, two proposals were put forward to the Michigan voters. The first proposal was offered by Michigan's incumbent Democratic Governor, Jim Blanchard. The proposal included an increase in state sales tax. The increase of 0.5% would be dedicated to the school aid fund. Meanwhile a second proposal, crafted by Senate Republicans, was led by future Republican Governor John Engler. This proposal reduced the state sales tax, lowered school property taxes, and set a permanent school operating millage. Both proposals were defeated by more than 750,000 votes (Diebold, 2004).

In the 1990 gubernatorial election, Republican John Engler defeated the Democratic incumbent Jim Blanchard by a margin of 0.3%. Engler ran on a platform of reducing property taxes. Immediately after election, the new governor began to craft ways to reduce the ever-increasing property taxes used to fund local schools. After initial failures to alter the current funding system and begin to control the increase of local property taxes, "Kalkaska" occurred. Following several failed attempts to pass a millage increase, Kalkaska Public Schools shortened the school calendar from 180 to 102 days. The district decided to close down for the year of 1992–1993 because they were financially unable to continue (Diebold, 2004).

Immediate claims of mismanagement of funds and political posturing began to overshadow the problems with Michigan's school funding system. The

State of Michigan audited Kalkaska's books and found that the district was underfunded, did not mismanage their funds, and had no choice but to close for the year. This resulted in more political posturing of Republicans, Democrats, and special-interest groups. More importantly, it was realized that districts like Kalkaska were not reliant on the State of Michigan for funding and were therefore not forced to adhere to state threats. This spurred more movement toward the efficiency models that would force schools to become dependent on the state for their resources. As a result, the "first" Proposal A was put in front of voters in June of 1993. The intent was to radically change the school funding system to help prevent situations like "Kalkaska." It failed by nearly 900,000 votes (Diebold, 2004).

Governor Engler, who campaigned on a platform of property tax relief, was up for re-election in 1994. After the "first" Proposal A vote in 1993, it appeared that he would need to make some drastic political moves in order to continue his tenure as governor. Talk of Engler wanting a 20% cut in property taxes began to work its way around the political arena. Democrats tried to counter his hopes for reelection by making an even bolder move towards cutting taxes. They proposed a 100% cut in property taxes that related to schools. This was an attempt to force Governor Engler to veto the bill and, in turn, be blamed for not attempting to cut property taxes during his time in office. Governor Engler "played the bluff" and signed the bill in late 1993. Immediately, Michigan's schools had lost all funding for the upcoming year (Diebold, 2004). It was this political move, of eliminating all school property taxes without another

revenue source, that forced what is now referred to in Michigan as Proposal A. Essentially, Proposal A shifted the funding of local schools away from the local communities and, instead, to the State of Michigan by increasing the state-wide sales tax to generate revenue while eliminating the ability for local districts to ask local voters for increases in property tax.

The City of Southgate

The City of Southgate was incorporated in 1958. It currently consists of approximately 30,000 residents within 6.85 square miles (City of Southgate, 2005). It is located five miles directly south of Detroit. Originally, the city was part of Ecorse Township, the largest township in Michigan in 1837, measuring more than 54 square miles. However, after World War I, Ecorse Township began to partition into several small cities. Allen Park and Southgate were the last two cities to incorporate themselves from the original township in 1957 and 1958, respectively (City of Southgate, 2005).

Around the year 1900, Southgate's residents comprised 64 farm families. By 1940, the community had grown to approximately 2,000 residents, and by 1950, more than 10,000 residents. The population continued to rise to 29,000 in 1960 and 33,000 in 1970. Meanwhile, Detroit's population fell from 1.8 million people in 1950 to 1.5 million in 1970 (City of Detroit, 2005). Southgate was built during the exodus of Caucasian residents from Detroit.

Residents of the City of Southgate are generally "blue-collar." In other words, residents of the City of Southgate are "of, relating to, or constituting a

class of wage earners whose duties call for the wearing of work clothes or protective clothing…dependable and hard-working rather than showy or spectacular" (Merriam-Webster, 2006). Approximately 10% of all Southgate adults possess a Bachelor's Degree or higher (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2005). The majority of residents are Caucasian with a very small, less than 9% minority population (National Center for Educational Statistics). In terms of religion, residents of the City of Southgate are generally Christian. Within the city limits are a total of 21 churches representing various faiths (five Baptist churches, a large Catholic church, a large Greek Orthodox church, two Lutheran churches, an Episcopal church, the Kingdom Hall of Jehovah's Witness, and several varying Christian denominational churches).

History of the Southgate Community School District

In order to serve the rapidly growing population, Southgate had two school districts: the Southgate Community District (which was formerly Ecorse Township School District Number 8) and the Heintzen District (which, until 1964, extended into the neighboring city of Allen Park and was originally Ecorse Township School District Number 7). For many years, each of these districts operated one-room schoolhouses. In the 1940s, these schoolhouses began to be replaced by modern facilities. District Number 8 constructed McCann School in 1940, and District Number 7 opened Heintzen School in 1964. In total, 13 public schools operated in Southgate including a high school in each district. Additionally, three parochial schools operated within the City of Southgate. In

1970, the two school districts merged into one district now known as the Southgate Community School District (SCSD).

Presently, SCSD has six elementary schools, a 6–7 middle school, an 8–9 middle school and a 10–12 high school. SCSD also operates a large adult/alternative education program and a center program for severely emotionally impaired students. Students who reside within the City of Southgate and the Southwest corner of Allen Park attend the Southgate Community School District along with other Wayne County students who participate in Michigan's schools-of-choice program. Currently, only two parochial K–8 schools operate within SCSD since the closing of one parochial high school in 1999. SCSD served approximately 4,300 students in 1999–2000 and has grown to 5,272 students in 2004–2005.

In 1999, SCSD started a major capital project that renovated the existing school buildings through the passage of a local bond program requiring repayment through local property tax dollars. The work, completed through the bond program, was designed to meet the needs of the district's strategic plan that had been put into place prior to the passage of the bond. Even though several new subdivisions were being erected throughout the city, the strategic planners anticipated very little to no actual growth in student population. Therefore, as one district administrator stated, "We cut back on the bond, like North Pointe Elementary cut off a couple of classrooms. Allen Elementary also knocked out a couple" (Anonymous, personal communication, January 26, 2005).

Relationship Between the Community and the Schools

The community of Southgate mirrors the rest of the Downriver communities. Overall, many of the current Southgate residents were raised in the Downriver area and have chosen to remain in the Downriver area. Support for the schools is typical of a blue-collar community. Many residents of Southgate are graduates of Southgate schools and, in turn, are familiar with the teachers and administrators working in SCSD. Hence, residents generally trust SCSD's employees and do not hesitate to discuss issues informally with staff members in the community.

In the past, SCSD struggled with passing the bond proposal that provided for capital improvements to the current schools. In fact, the proposal was voted down twice before it passed on the third attempt. During this time, the community was very vocal about their concerns with the local tax dollars improving buildings that they, the community, felt were allowed to become dilapidated as a result of poor management. Nevertheless, once the bond proposal was passed by district voters, the concerns of the community were addressed and the buildings were modernized.

Summary of the Suburban Growth Era and SCSD

Michigan's school funding system was reliant on local property tax dollars directly supporting local school districts. As the suburbs grew in population and popularity, the reliance on the communities to support local schools grew. In a nutshell, cities like Southgate were founded as part of the "white flight"

movement from the City of Detroit in the 1950s. To avoid becoming a city like Detroit where its residents were fleeing, suburban communities needed to continue providing educational systems that could meet the needs of the community.

In the case of Southgate, this meant that the school system could produce future factory workers who would find work in the automotive industry after graduation. Successfully producing these factory workers meant that the community could continue to replicate itself in terms of economics and demographics. This replication of community in suburbs like Southgate assured funding increases for local school districts. After all, local support of schools relied on increased property tax burdens. In order to maintain the community that would continue to thrive, the schools needed to continue being ahead of poorer areas in terms of resources and opportunities.

Sadly, these suburbs were taxing themselves too heavily and, in turn, greatly widening the gap between the haves and the have-nots. Specifically, the urban and rural school districts were unable to keep up with the property tax revenues produced by the suburban school districts. In a cyclical pattern, the suburbs were in constant competition with each other to keep up and continued to pass millage after millage to support their local schools and maintain the community that residents were so proud to have created. This caused even greater inequities in funding between suburban, urban, and rural school districts, while causing unmanageable tax burdens on all Michigan residents. According to Arsen and Plank (2003),

> In 1993–94, before the approval of Proposal A, per pupil spending in the highest-revenue school districts was more than three times higher than spending in the lowest-revenue districts. Since the implementation of Proposal A…Three-fourths of all school districts now receive the same per pupil foundation allowance…the highest-revenue districts now spend about twice as much as the lowest-revenue districts. (p. 4)

All of these problems were created as a result of preserving the communities that were founded on an organizational bias of maintaining their Caucasian population and the preservation of a racial buffer between this new community and the community of Detroit.

The Proposal A Era: Opening the Door for Schools-of-Choice

Proposal A

Proposal A changed not only the funding system for public schools in Michigan, but also the landscape of the public school system. As a result of panic in the Michigan Legislature, a plan needed to be crafted that would address school funding concerns and per-pupil equity issues without fueling the drastic property tax increases that were witnessed over the past 30 years. Engler chose to not only change the funding system for schools, but also to use this opportunity to promote educational reform solutions based on the value of quality/effectiveness. These reforms were intended to increase the overall quality of public education by challenging the monopolistic public education system.

Proposal A allowed Engler to shift the funding responsibility from local to state government for schools. This laid the groundwork and opened the doors

for public schools-of-choice in the State of Michigan. Engler believed that schools-of-choice and competition were the keystones to the policy changes introduced through the development process of Proposal A (Diebold, 2004). Under Proposal A, "the total funding level of schools will be determined by how many students they can retain or attract. The schools that deliver will succeed. The schools that don't will not. No longer will there be a monopoly of mediocrity in this state…because our kids deserve better" (Engler, 1993, p. 2). As Diebold (2004) stated, "Engler combined the problems of school finance and school performance which he believed would best be addressed by introducing the element of competition for students and competition for the funding resources that each pupil represented" (p. 201).

Proposal A was passed on March 15, 1994. As a package, it included four components. First, two cents were added to Michigan's four-cent sales tax. Second, Proposal A limited annual property assessments to the rate of inflation or 5%. Third, school operating millages were exempted from uniform taxation. This allowed a system of separate millage rates applied to homestead and non-homestead properties. Finally, Proposal A mandated that a 3/4 vote of the legislature would be required to exceed statutorily established school operating millage rates. This made it improbable that schools would ever be allowed by the Legislature to go back to the practice of using increasing local millage to supplement school operating budgets (Diebold, 2004).

While Proposal A was essentially a school-funding package, it had the effect of drastically changing the landscape of public schools in the State of

Michigan. After all, the responsibility for school funding shifted from the local level to a more centralized state level (Diebold, 2004). This shift made schools dependent on the number of students to generate revenue instead of local property tax dollars. The fundamental shift laid the groundwork for programs such as interdistrict schools-of-choice in the State of Michigan.

Summary of School Funding and Proposal A

Michigan has a long history of public schooling. Even though the Northwest Ordinance forced Michigan townships to sell land to fund public schools, it was essentially a mixed responsibility for public school funding between local and state dollars. As time progressed, the economy of Michigan changed along with the needs of students in the state. In industrialized areas, increased skills of workers forced townships to focus on their schools to maintain their industrialized jobs. Fortunately for these areas, land was at a premium and the sale of Section 16 lots generated sufficient funding to maintain the schools expected by the local community. Unfortunately for other areas of the state, the land was of less value and generated less funding for the local schools. Since the township sales of Section 16 lots generated unequal amounts of operating funds for schools, the funds were then shifted to the state and later dispersed to local districts.

Soon, the pool of dollars had deteriorated at the state level for public schools, and local districts were again responsible for their own funding. Local property taxes were used to generate additional dollars to provide for the needs

of the community. However, inequities in property values again yielded unequal dollars for schools. Combined with the Great Depression and other economic influences, school property taxes continued to rise. Meanwhile, the landscape of school districts began to drastically change based upon population shifts. Instead of districts taking the shape of the original townships, they were odd-shaped because of the areas people had chosen to live. This complicated the property tax issues because they were levied according to townships and not school districts. Soon, the state allowed districts to raise additional local property taxes in order to fund local schools.

After a trend of consolidating schools, the inequities in school funding continued to compound. Districts with high property values were able to levy a lower number of mills to generate the necessary funds while less-populated farming communities needed to levy higher mills that would be paid by fewer land-owners in order to keep up with the increasing educational demands of their community. Finally, school funding had reached a point that one community school district was no longer able to generate the necessary funds to remain open. This opened the door for a great shift away from local control.

With the passage of Proposal A in 1994, local school districts were reliant on the State of Michigan to provide the funding needed to support the local schools. It was this fundamental change in funding source that redefined the educational landscape in Michigan. Michigan schools were no longer able to rely on their local community to support their requirement for meeting the needs of this local community. Instead, local school districts were forced to depend on the

state to provide their funding, based on a per-pupil system, while still being governed by local school boards. After 200 years of local control, the schools were now financially dependent upon the State of Michigan under the new rules.

This shift in financial dependence provided opportunities for drastic changes in Michigan's educational system. In particular, Proposal A opened the doors for charter schools and public schools-of-choice. Since the state was now providing funding based upon student enrollment, it was no longer necessary to isolate student populations within district boundaries. After all, if the local property tax dollars were not funding local schools, then why should a student be forced to attend school within the district he/she lived? This fundamental shift provided for the start of a statewide interdistrict schools-of-choice program.

<div align="center">

The Era of Schools-of-Choice

</div>

Resource Dependence

In order to survive, all organizations must interact with their environments. Therefore, no organization is self-sufficient. A dependency is created between the organization and the environment. As Emerson (1962) described, an organization is "dependent on some element of its task environment (1) in proportion to the organization's need for resources or performances which that element can provide and (2) in inverse proportion to the ability of other elements to provide the same resource or performance" (p. 30).

Resource Dependence from the Perspective of the State of Michigan—Power Shift

After the passage of Proposal A, funding for Michigan schools was based on student enrollment and supplied directly from the state to local school districts. Proposal A forced Michigan school districts to become dependent on funding from the State of Michigan in order to survive. If the funding had been available elsewhere, the school districts would have been able to function much more independently from the State of Michigan. However, with the passage of Proposal A, Michigan school districts were no longer able to simply ask their community for additional operating funds. Instead, districts needed to acquire more students in order to increase revenue. This represented a fundamental and strategic shift away from local control. Local communities no longer directly funded their schools; the state funded the schools. This shift away from local control redefined the operating procedures of local school districts to better align with a reform agenda that was moving through the political spectrums.

As a result of a change in political values to quality/effectiveness, changes in the old locally-funded, locally-controlled schools were evident. In particular, the financial shift away from local control permitted the state to begin redefining the educational landscape by allowing charter schools and schools-of-choice. The old community school models, where the local community dictated its expectations for a school through choosing to vote for or against a millage, was drastically changed. In the process, cases where property tax inequities created a huge discrepancy between the haves and the have-nots also no longer existed in

Michigan after Proposal A. Instead, the state controlled the money and, in turn, forced school districts to depend on the state instead of the community.

Schools-of-Choice in Michigan

Proposal A created a fundamental shift from local dollars funding local schools to student enrollment generating funds from the State of Michigan. According to Proposal A guidelines, school funding was solely reliant on student enrollment. This fundamental shift in school finance forced school districts to become dependent on student enrollment to generate revenue. Soon after the passage of Proposal A, the Michigan School Code was revised to complete the agenda of then-Governor John Engler. Language regarding choice was included as part of the State School Aid Legislation for the 1996–1997 school year (Liepa, 2001).

Public Act 180 of 1996 amended the Michigan School Code of 1976 to permit interdistrict schools-of-choice within Intermediate School Districts. In 1999, Public Act 119 modified the schools-of-choice program. Instead of isolating options for students to attend only districts within the Intermediate School District, students were permitted to enroll in districts that are located in contiguous Intermediate School Districts.

"Many proponents of school choice believe that if schools have to compete for students (and money), their staffs will be motivated to improve their programs. Inadequate schools will either get better or go out of business" (Fowler, 2004, p. 74). Schools-of-choice, contrary to its name, was not a policy

that was created through a dominant value of democracy or choice. Instead, the schools-of-choice policy was created as a means to achieve effectiveness. Proponents of choice felt that market competition would serve as a means of educational reform. Educational reform has one primary goal: to achieve effectiveness. Hence, quality/effectiveness was the true guiding value of schools-of-choice.

Schools-of-Choice in Wayne County

Under Michigan's schools-of-choice program, parents can choose to send their students to a school within their district of residence, to a charter school, or to schools outside their district of residence through interdistrict choice (Arsen, Plank, & Sykes, 1999). In Wayne County, all individual public school districts belong to a larger intermediate school district named Wayne County Regional Educational Services Agency (WCRESA). Hence, students can attend any district that chooses to participate in schools-of-choice located within Wayne County or in contiguous counties. Figure 8 displays the individual school districts in Wayne County.

Figure 8. Wayne County Local School Districts, Michigan

Note. Retrieved on April 2, 2005, from
http://www.wcresa.k12.mi.us/local_districts_map.htm

The City of Detroit borders on Wayne County's northern edge. As a result,

school districts belonging to Wayne County RESA are located either west or

south of Detroit. Figure 9 represents the approximate location of each district

with respect to the City of Detroit. Only districts that participated in interdistrict

schools-of-choice in 2004–2005 are represented. Furthermore, Figure 9 only

displays districts in relation to Detroit and not to scale in terms of district size.

A quick scan of Figure 9 shows that large groups of students are moving to school districts that are further and further away from Detroit. In other words, the arrows, which represent student flows, all move away from the City of Detroit. The data used to construct this diagram were from a document provided to all Wayne County public school districts by WCRESA. The document details the number of students attending every local school district in Wayne County and the student's district of residence. Hence, school districts are provided with a yearly update of the number of students gained and lost through Michigan's schools-of-choice program. The most recent data available were from the fall count of the 2004–2005 academic year. In order to construct a diagram that was not an overwhelming web of arrows, I chose to identify only large groups of students moving from district to district. There were many cases of very small numbers of students who chose to attend other districts, but the most informative trend appeared after representing only large groups of students.

School of Choice as
"Flight from Detroit"
2004-2005
Number of Students Leaving Each District
Groups of >49 Students
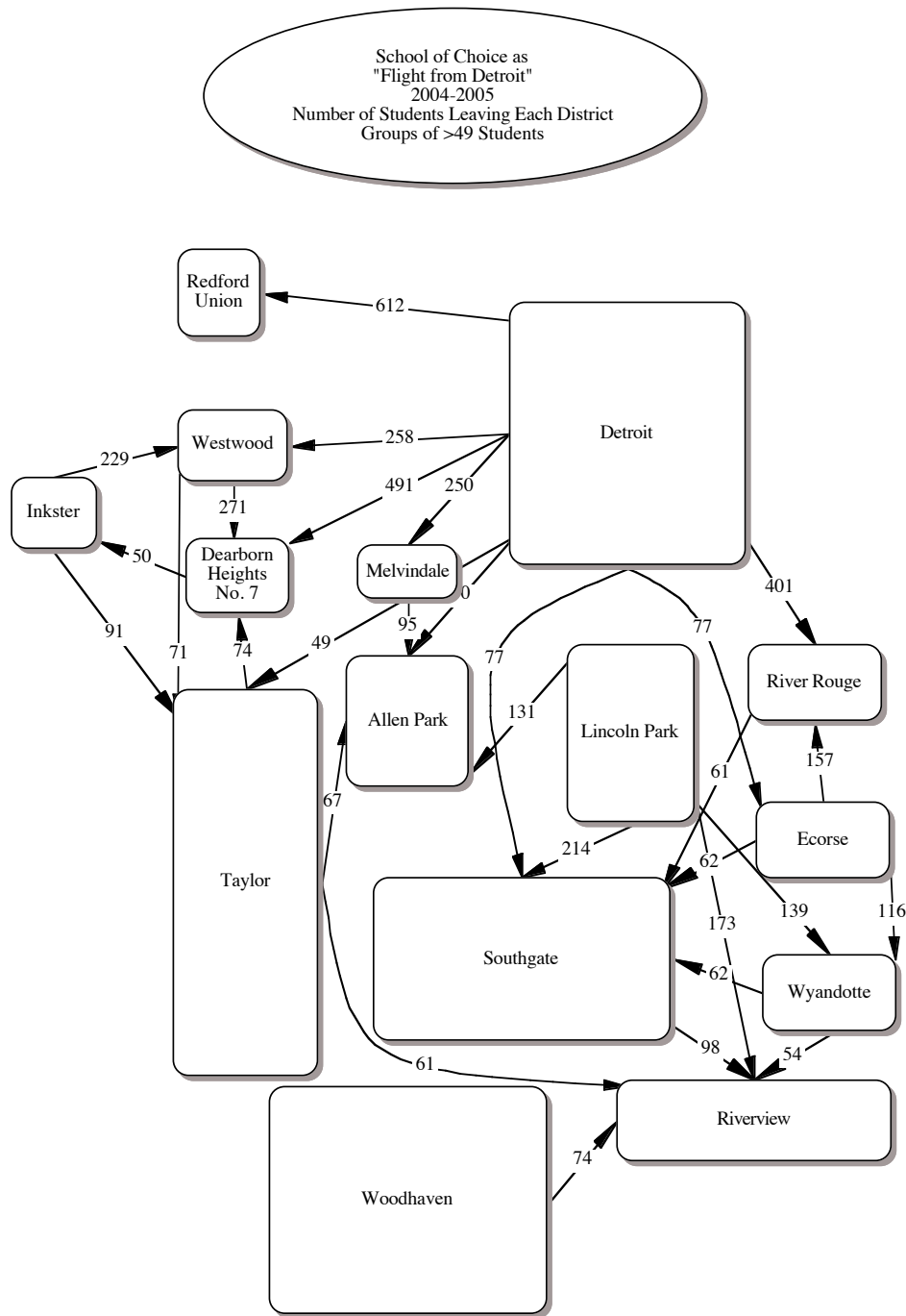
Figure 9. Groups of Students > 49 Leaving to Attend a District Further From
Detroit

Note: Data available from WCRESA. Retrieved on March 12, 2005, from
http://www.resa.net/finance/ethnicracial.htm

Figure 10 shows the outgoing flow of students participating in schools-of-choice in several districts in Wayne County. The information is displayed in terms of percentage of minority population by school district. Five distinct tiers of minority percentages existed. The first included the school districts of Detroit and Inkster. This tier represented districts with over 90% minority residents. The next tier included Westwood, River Rouge, and Ecorse, which all were composed of nearly 70% minority residents. The third tier, representing districts with minority populations between 15 and 25%, included Wayne-Westland, Melvindale, Taylor, and Woodhaven. Next, Southgate and Lincoln Park were grouped, with both districts having 11% of their students classified as minority students. Lastly, Dearborn Heights Number 7, Allen Park, Wyandotte, and Riverview all had roughly 5–6% minority populations.
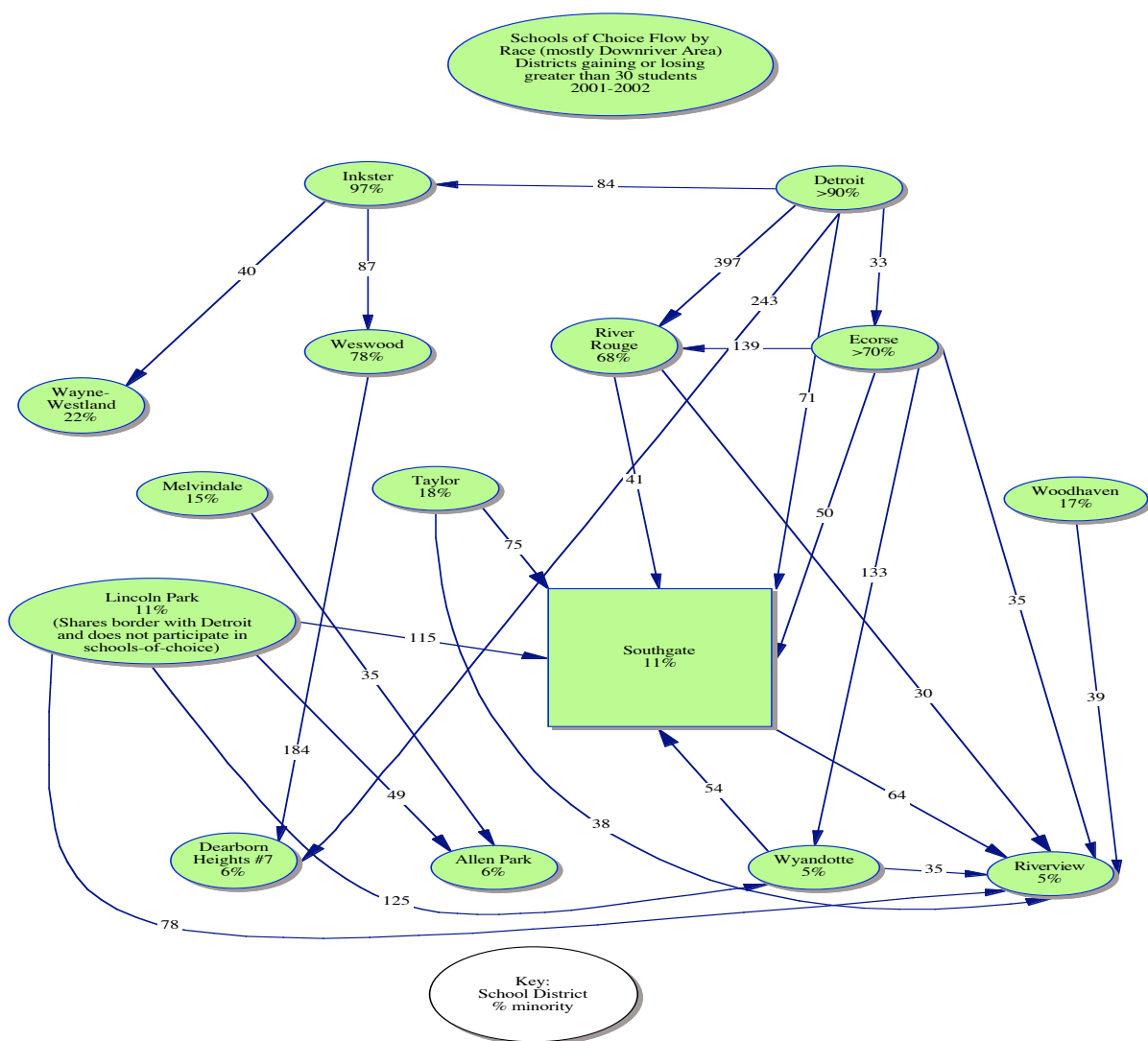
Figure 10. School-Choice Flow by Race Outlining Gains/Losses (2001–2002)

Note: Data available from WCRESA. Retrieved on March 12, 2005, from
http://www.resa.net/finance/ethnicracial.htm

Summary

After observing the flow of students, a pattern existed that was mirrored

in recent research on schools-of-choice. Liepa (2001) found that students attended

districts with a lower minority population than their home district. This pattern

of school-choice participation flowing along the premise of moving to a district with a lower percentage of minority students actually appeared, according to the arrow directions in Figure 9 (p. 101), to be movement to the district with the lowest population of minority students.

While the pattern indicating school-choice enrollment based upon minority population percentages was a major factor in the understanding of the experiences of school-choice students, there was an even more apparent pattern that emerged from simple pictorial representation of student flows. Figure 8 (p. 99) showed that students not only moved to districts that had lower percentages of minority populations, they were even more consistently moving away from the City of Detroit.

SCSD in the Schools-of-Choice Era

SCSD and Schools-of-Choice

SCSD began participating in Michigan's schools-of-choice program during the 1998–1999 academic year with the acceptance of 67 students scattered from grades K–12. In the 2004–2005 academic year, 687 school-choice students attended SCSD. This increase in enrollment was the result of active marketing that included cable television, radio, and newspaper advertising totaling up to $70,000 per year. During this time period, the district benefited from a consistent increase of students following the trend of moving away from Detroit.

Table 1 displays the increases in school-choice student enrollment in SCSD from the academic years 2000–2001 to 2004–2005. While 11% of the school-choice

students came directly to Southgate from Detroit, the trend of students moving further from Detroit reappeared. For example, 214 Lincoln Park students attended Southgate during the 2004–2005 academic year. This was an increase from 70 Lincoln Park students attending Southgate during the 2000–2001 school year. Hence, Lincoln Park, located directly between Southgate and Detroit, lost 214 school-choice students to Southgate (roughly $1.4 million) in 2004–2005. Detroit, the second largest source of school-choice students for SCSD, lost 77 students during the 2004–2005 school year. Two other districts located north of Southgate and closer to Detroit, River Rouge and Ecorse, lost 61 and 68 students to SCSD, respectively. However, Taylor and Wyandotte were also big suppliers of students to SCSD and were not really any closer to Detroit.

Table 1.

Schools-of-Choice Students Gained by SCSD from Wayne County Districts as reported by Wayne County Regional Education Services Agency

Resident District	00–01	01–02	02–03	03–04	04–05
Allen Park	6	13	12	18	19
Dearborn	0	3	2	3	7
Dbn Hts #7	4	3	7	9	3
Detroit	50	71	66	78	77
Ecorse	36	50	38	69	68
Flat Rock	7	9	1	4	6
Gibraltar	1	7	9	6	6
Grosse Ile	1	0	0	1	0
Huron	4	4	4	7	6
Inkster	1	4	0	1	2
Lincoln Park	70	115	139	196	214
Melv-NAP	9	12	4	6	5
Plymouth/Canton	1	0	0	0	0
Redford U	0	0	1	1	2
River Rouge	13	41	40	62	61
Riverview	14	19	6	17	20
Romulus	4	6	4	4	4
Taylor	45	75	39	66	74
Trenton	12	10	3	6	7
Woodhaven	15	19	19	29	43
Wyandotte	45	54	35	57	62
Total Enrollment (As reported by WCRESA)	346	528	429	641	687

Closer analysis of Table 1 shows that SCSD lost several school-choice students from the 2001–2002 to the 2002–2003 academic years. The possible rationale for this loss will be discussed under the experiences of school-choice students at Anderson High School. Nevertheless, the trend of moving away from Detroit was obvious in a simple observation of these numbers. Lincoln Park, a city located directly between Southgate and Detroit was the largest supplier of school-choice students to Southgate with 214 students in 2004–2005. Detroit lost

77 students to Southgate in 2004–2005, followed by Taylor with 74, Ecorse with 68, Wyandotte with 62, and River Rouge with 61. All of these districts are located further north of Southgate and closer to the City of Detroit. However, it is safe to assume that if SCSD gained students from Detroit and other districts closer to Detroit, then SCSD should lose students to districts further from the City of Detroit. Table 2 represents the number of students lost by SCSD over the same time frame.

Since the 2000–2001 academic year, SCSD experienced a steady increase in students lost to Riverview and Allen Park, with very few lost to Woodhaven. Riverview and Woodhaven are both located farther from Detroit than Southgate. However, Allen Park is located between Southgate and Detroit. Woodhaven is one of the farthest districts from Detroit that participated in schools-of-choice during the time of this study.

Table 2.

Schools-of-Choice Students Lost by SCSD to Wayne County Districts as reported by Wayne County Regional Education Services Agency

Operating District	00–01	01–02	02–03	03–04	04–05
Allen Park	0	7	7	22	29
Dearborn	0	0	0	0	0
Dbn Hts #7	0	1	3	4	6
Detroit	0	0	0	0	0
Ecorse	0	3	3	1	1
Flat Rock	0	0	1	2	1
Gibraltar	0	0	4	5	4
Grosse Ile	0	0	0	0	0
Huron	0	0	1	1	4
Inkster	1	0	0	0	0
Ln Park	0	0	0	0	0
Melv-NAP	0	0	0	0	3
Plymouth/Canton	0	0	0	0	0
Redford U	0	0	0	0	0
River Rouge	3	2	4	4	3
Riverview	56	64	74	78	98
Romulus	0	0	0	0	0
Taylor	0	0	7	13	17
Trenton	0	0	0	0	0
Woodhaven	3	2	2	3	3
Wyandotte	21	19	28	40	32
Total Lost (As reported by WCRESA)	84	98	134	173	201

SCSD managed to continue to grow in student population as a result of schools-of-choice participation. In addition, SCSD initially appeared to be consistent in maintaining its enrollment as the students moved from grade to grade, especially at the elementary and middle school levels. However, maintaining student enrollment from grade level to grade level proved problematic at the high school level. This trend was not uncommon nationwide at the high school level. Table 3 shows the movement of students within the

SCSD from the years 2000–2001 to 2004–2005. In addition, the number of new school-choice students was identified at each grade level for each year with the net change in students located next to the arrows.

After observing the increase in schools-of-choice enrollment into SCSD and the loss of Southgate students to other districts such as Riverview, I became curious as to the overall enrollment trends experienced by SCSD. Therefore, I compiled a chart showing the flow of students that included schools-of-choice enrollments by year ranging from 2000–2001 to 2004–2005. The intent of this information was to observe the pattern of filling seats used by SCSD. After closer analysis, Table 3 displayed not only a pattern of filling seats but a pattern of exit by students. This exit appeared to be a combination of both school choice and Southgate resident students.

Table 3.

Student Flow for SCSD Including New School Choice

Building(s)	Grade	4148 Gen Ed + 301 Sp. Ed 00–01	4384 Gen Ed + 297 Sp. Ed 01–02	4428 Gen Ed + 309 Sp. Ed 02–03	4633 Gen Ed + 309 Sp. Ed 03–04	4662 Gen Ed + 336 Sp. Ed 04–05
Elementary	K	256 17 new s/c +67	286 35 new s/c +28	270 39 new s/c +48	324 57 new s/c +28	306
	1	324 13 new s/c +19	323 21 new s/c +9	314 7 new s/c +23	318 18 new s/c +10	352
	2	329 5 new s/c +14	343 15 new s/c +1	332 6 new s/c +23	337 13 new s/c +1	328
	3	310 2 new s/c +27	343 14 new s/c +5	344 4 new s/c +5	345 15 new s/c +16	338
	4	318 3 new s/c +22	337 11 new s/c +16	348 5 new s/c +14	349 18 new s/c +3	361
	5	316 5 new s/c +8	340 12 new s/c +22	353 3 new s/c +28	362 8 new s/c +19	352
Gerisch Middle School	6	336 7 new s/c +22	324 11 new s/c +23	362 13 new s/c +21	381 18 new s/c +5	381
	7	332 13 new s/c +19	358 17 new s/c +21	347 12 new s/c +27	387 16 new s/c +6	386
Davidson Middle School	8	335 1 new s/c +65	351 16 new s/c +53	379 4 new s/c +17	374 12 new s/c -7	393
	9	357 2 new s/c +29	400 25 new s/c 0	404 11 new s/c -9	396 13 new s/c +58	367
Anderson High School	10	373 4 new s/c -66	386 18 new s/c -82	400 9 new s/c 0	395 17 new s/c -60	454
	11	300 8 new s/c -14	307 14 new s/c -36	304 2 new s/c -39	400 16 new s/c -81	335
	12	262	286	271	265	309

At first glance, it appeared that student enrollment was maintained as students progressed from grade level to grade level except for the high school years. Consider the 12th grade class of 2004–2005. In 2000–2001, these same students would have been in 8th grade with a total enrollment of 335 students, including one new school-choice student. The one new school-choice student was intended to fill an empty seat. The following year, this same group of students moved into 9th grade and added 25 new school-choice students. The new enrollment hit 400 students in this graduating class, a net increase of 65 students. Out of the 65-student increase, only 25 students were new school-choice students during the 2001–2002 academic year. The other new students may have moved from the private schools in the district that end their offerings after the 8th grade.

Nevertheless, this same graduating class of students moved to the high school in 2002–2003 and added nine school-choice students while maintaining an enrollment of 400 students. In 2003–2004, 16 new school-choice students joined this graduating class while their enrollment remained at 400 students. Finally, the graduating class moved to the 12th grade with a total enrollment of 309 students, a net loss of 81 students in one year. One would assume that these students merely did not earn enough credits to be classified as seniors; however, the graduating class behind them lost 60 students over the same one-year period. In the end, the graduating class of 2005 added 51 total school-choice students from 2000 to 2004 while losing total enrollment by 81 students over the same time period.

A similar trend occurred for every graduating class that entered the high school, except it appeared to be reaching further down in grade levels. In 2000–2001, the first grade level to lose student enrollment was 10th grade. The same was true for 2001–2002. In 2002–2003, the 9th grade lost nine students. In 2003–2004, the 8th grade lost seven students. While it is too early to determine whether there existed any reason for this trend or whether this trend will continue, the fact remained that enrollment was increasing in the early grades while dropping drastically in the high school years.

As SCSD continued to fill seats with school-choice students, the exodus of Southgate students appeared to creep into earlier and earlier grade levels. Instead of losing student enrollment in the traditional high school years, SCSD's ability to retain students moved from 10th grade in 2001–2002 to earlier grades every subsequent year. For example, in 2002–2003 SCSD lost students as early as 9th grade. In 2003–2004, the trend began in 8th grade. Contrary to the practice of filling empty seats to maintain enrollment, SCSD appeared to experience an unanticipated consequence.

More must be done to confirm the trend of exiting students to be true, but noting this trend is important in framing the context in which the study existed. As one district administrator noted, "There are fewer school-choice kids graduating. Last year there were 65. This year there are 43 that have stayed with us and are getting a diploma" (Anonymous, personal communication, February 24, 2005). In 2001–2002, SAHS reported a dropout rate of 2.7%; 2002–2003, they reported a dropout rate of 4.6%. The formula for calculating dropout rates was

altered after 2002–2003. Nevertheless, this dropout rate coincides with the trend of exiting students. As another district administrator noted of a school-choice student enrolling at SAHS, she was "being pulled out of Taylor Truman because an influx of Inkster students has caused many problems within the school" (Anonymous, personal communication, January 20, 2005). The community of Inkster was home to a 97% minority population in 2001–2002, while the City of Taylor was home to an 18% minority population in the same year. The pattern of students fleeing to attend the district with the lowest minority population appeared to be present. Nevertheless, this observation of increased schools-of-choice participation leading to exit of students was not the purpose of this particular study and needs further research but is important to note while continuing to analyze the findings of this study. The trend of students leaving SCSD is important in framing the context of the study.

While I can only speculate at this point, it did appear that increased participation in schools-of-choice was leading to exit of students. Choice was supposed to increase educational effectiveness. Instead, the reality of SCSD data demonstrated that choice was increasing the frequency of exit of students. While SCSD continued to bring in students from outside the district boundaries, in-district students were exiting at increased frequency. This pattern of leaving SCSD earlier and earlier in grade levels really began with the large influx of school-choice students in 2001–2002. During this year, SCSD admitted 214 additional school-choice students and lost only 14 in-district students, as compared to the previous year. By 2002–2003, SCSD lost an additional 36

students to other districts. The trend continued to a net loss of 39 additional in 2003–2004 and 28 additional in 2004–2005. This is not to mention the loss of 221 school-choice students from 2001–2002 to 2002–2003. The unanticipated consequence of choice participation appeared that choice was leading to exit instead of educational effectiveness. At the time of this study, the pattern was only beginning to present itself. Whether or not the pattern continued into subsequent years, and the true reason for this phenomenon, requires further study.

The ratio of school-choice students to SCSD students lost was part of a bigger picture. Table 4 breaks down this flow of students into a simpler form. While Table 4 represents schools-of-choice and total student enrollment in several forms, the most informative areas are the trends in the population of the student enrollment. In particular, the total student population grew from 4,611 students in 2000–2001 to 5,272 students in 2004–2005. This was partially the result of an increase in schools-of-choice enrollment growing from 346 students in 2000–2001 to 687 students in 2004–2005. However, the district also experienced an increased loss of in-district students to other districts. This pattern was identified in the second row of the table labeled "out."

SCSD almost doubled the number of school-choice students enrolled in the district over this time period while the number of students lost under schools-of-choice to other districts more than doubled, moving from 84 students in 2000–2001 to 201 students in 2004–2005. This trend was represented in the row labeled "ratio of s/c vs. lost." As can be seen in Table 4, in 2001–2002, for every

five school-choice students admitted by SCSD, the district lost one Southgate

resident student to another district. In 2002–2003, SCSD lost one Southgate

resident student to another district for every three out-of-district students

enrolled.

Table 4.

Schools-of-Choice Enrollment for SCSD as Reported by WCRESA

	00–01	**01–02**	**02–03**	**03–04**	**04–05**
In	346	528	429	641	687
Out	84	98	134	173	201
New This Year	+85	+214	+122	+226	
S/C Did Not Return		32	221	14	
Ratio of S/C vs. lost	4 to 1	5 to 1	3.2 to 1	3.7 to 1	3.4 to 1
Total Population	4611	4855	4911	5185	5272
S/C % of Pop	7.5%	10.9%	8.7%	12.3%	13%
Lost % of Pop	1.8%	2%	2.7%	3.3%	3.8%
10–12 total	935	979	975	1060	1098
Grade 12 enrollment	262	286	271	265	309
% of 10–12 population classified as Seniors	28%	29%	27.7%	25%	28%
What population should have been based on previous year's 9th–11th enrollment		1030	1093	1108	1191
# lost grades 10–12		51	118	48	93
% lost grades 10–12		5%	10.8% (221 S/C did not return)	5%	8%

SCSD lost 1 Southgate resident to another district for every 3.2 school-choice students it enrolled at the time. The ratio would have been much higher if compared to the anticipated school-choice enrollment prior to the non-return of 221 school-choice students. This is merely one more example demonstrating that the increase in school-choice participation led to an increase in exit numbers of students at SCSD.

Another interesting trend was the percentage of school-choice students in the entire student population enrolled in SCSD. In 2000–2001, 7.5% of all SCSD students were classified as schools-of-choice, while in 2004–2005, 13% of all SCSD students fell under schools-of-choice classification. This increase was the result of what one administrator explained as the future of schools-of-choice participation when it was stated, "…to try and fill every seat that we have so that we can maximize our space" (Anonymous, personal communication, February 24, 2005). Contrary to research conducted by Achilles (1999) relating the benefits of small class sizes to student achievement, SCSD was consciously raising the class sizes.

The reasoning for increased class sizes was elaborated on by another district administrator when asked about the district's experience with schools-of-choice. The administrator stated, "We've been fortunate to balance our budget off of school-choice students" (Anonymous, personal communication, October 7, 2004). Last, one administrator summarized the importance of schools-of-choice participation for SCSD by stating, "We would be devastated if we didn't have school of choice kids" (Anonymous, personal communication, September 27, 2004). It was this dependence on school-choice students for increased revenue

that led another district administrator to believe that schools-of-choice was "…a major driving force in everything that we do" (Anonymous, personal communication, January 26, 2005).

Summary

Initially, it appeared that SCSD's increase in student enrollment, especially school-choice student enrollment, was the result of an active marketing campaign. However, it really appeared to be the result of the trend for students to move away from Detroit. While interviewing school-choice students about their reason for choosing Southgate in lieu of another district closer to home, a school-choice student, who lived in Detroit, stated, "Lincoln Park is worse than Detroit" (Anonymous, personal communication, September 27, 2004). Another school-choice student stated that if he had not been accepted at SCSD, he "would have attended either River Rouge or Ecorse" (Anonymous, personal communication, September 6, 2004). Another student described how she left Taylor Schools because of an influx of Inkster students at Taylor (Anonymous, personal communication, January 20, 2005).

It is the belief in Detroit's negative image that fueled the flow of school-choice students in Wayne County and, more specifically, in the Downriver area that includes Southgate. For many years, residents of Detroit moved into the suburbs and benefited from suburban growth while observing the struggles of the City of Detroit. With Detroit's loss of residents, increases in crime, and stories

of corruption as reported in the local news, the suburban residents began to view the image of Detroit as negative.

This image of Detroit appeared to be the catalyst that moved students to Southgate. After closely analyzing the numbers of school-choice students moving from district to district in Table 1 (p. 106) and cross-referencing the location of those school districts with Figure 8 (p. 99), the pattern of moving from Detroit appeared reinforced. For example, in 2004–2005, Ecorse enrolled 77 students from Detroit and lost 116 students to Wyandotte. The influx of Ecorse students fueled a domino effect where Wyandotte sent 62 students to SCSD. In addition, Taylor enrolled 49 students from Detroit and 91 students from the Inkster Public Schools, a district with a 97% minority population, while losing 74 students to SCSD in 2004–2005. It was this trend of shuffling students away from Detroit that has fueled the increase in schools-of-choice enrollment in SCSD.

Table 1 (p. 106) also showed that SCSD was not losing students to Woodhaven, a district located further from Detroit than SCSD. Figure 10 (p. 103) displayed the minority population for each school district in the Downriver area. One possible, and very plausible, reason for school-choice students not opting to follow the trend of moving away from Detroit by attending Woodhaven is based upon race. Approximately 11% of SCSD students are minority students, while Woodhaven's population is composed of almost 17% minority students. It appeared that school-choice students were not only fleeing the physical City of Detroit, they were actually reinforcing the de facto segregation pattern of Detroit's metropolitan area.

Compounding this pattern were the enrollment trends at SCSD. As the number of school-choice students entering into SCSD increased, so did the number of students leaving SCSD. This exit of students appeared to be an unanticipated consequence of schools-of-choice participation. SCSD continued to enroll school-choice students in an attempt to fill empty seats. However, the enrollment began to be unpredictable at earlier and earlier grades. This was a relatively recent trend, but its timing, compared to the number of total schools-of-choice enrollments, warrants further study.

Resource Dependence from the Perspective of SCSD

Emerson (1962) stated that an organization is "dependent on some element of its task environment (1) in proportion to the organization's need for resources or performances which that element can provide and (2) in inverse proportion to the ability of other elements to provide the same resource or performance" (p. 30). In relation to SCSD, the district was dependent on school-choice students to provide the necessary per-pupil foundation dollars from the State of Michigan in order to continue to meet the needs of the community of Southgate.

It was this resource dependence, as Pfeffer and Salancik (2003) described, that required SCSD to enroll school-choice students as a means of survival. As Pfeffer and Salancik explained, no organization is self-sufficient. In order to survive, every organization must engage in exchanges with the environment as a condition for survival. In the case of a Michigan school district, the needs of the

community must be met without the direct financial support of local property tax dollars. The only means for a Michigan school district to increase revenue is through increasing its enrollment. The community of Southgate was not a growing community. Southgate was, however, a community created as the result of "white flight." As population trends continued to mover further away from Detroit under "urban sprawl," the expectations for strong schools that could maintain the homogenous community increased. Southgate is a community that holds an organizing culture of "white working class" and, like many other suburban communities, feared losing effective schools and changing that dynamic. Southgate was a community that held expectations of SCSD to maintain its stability. This required additional revenue to maintain current programming.

SCSD decided to exercise a practice that Porter (1973) described as resource mobilization. According to Porter, "the basic premises of the theory of resource mobilization are: (1) Organizations try to maintain themselves by meeting what they perceive to be their own needs and priorities. (2) Actors in organizations do not passively receive funds allocated to them from above; instead, they actively mobilize funds" (p. 9). The theory of resource mobilization originally was used to describe how public schools used funds acquired through federal aid programs. However, it can be extended to describe SCSD's participation in schools-of-choice.

Prior to Proposal A, Michigan's public schools were funded through local property tax dollars. Under this system, the community of Southgate was

responsible for funding operations in the Southgate Community School District (SCSD). These locally generated funds assured that the schools would continue to respond to the community's needs. Once Proposal A passed, the funding for schools was allocated by the State of Michigan on a per-pupil basis. This shifted the funding from the local level to the state level. However, the expectations remained that the schools were to respond to the community's needs.

As a result, SCSD began to mobilize resources in order to continue meeting the needs of the community and, simultaneously, their own needs as the Southgate Community School District (SCSD). In 1997, SCSD began to actively mobilize funds by hiring a full-time grant writer that specialized in acquiring both federal and private grants that could be used to enhance programming offered by the district. These grant dollars were a method to acquire additional funding that could have, in the past, been acquired through a local millage vote. Since the hiring of the full-time grant writer, SCSD was successful at actively mobilizing these resources. The downside was that the grant funding was earmarked for specific programs that greatly restricted the use of these funds. However, passage of schools-of-choice legislation in the State of Michigan allowed SCSD an opportunity to actively mobilize resources by filling empty seats. The additional funds acquired through admitting out-of-district students immediately became part of the general operating budget. This flexibility of funds was ideal for SCSD.

"School-of-choice, from the board office perspective, was a mandatory decision we had to make. We would be devastated if we didn't have school-of-

choice kids" (Anonymous, personal communication, September 27, 2004).
"We've been fortunate to balance our budget off of school-choice students" (Anonymous, personal communication, October 7, 2004). The question of whether to participate in Michigan's schools-of-choice program was not necessarily yes or no, but to what extent participation was necessary. As a district, SCSD realized that financially, "…we didn't have a choice" (Anonymous, personal communication, September 27, 2004). So, when SCSD first started to participate in schools-of-choice, "…it was whatever we could get, we took" (Anonymous, personal communication, October 17, 2004). After all, the stated philosophy was simple, "…the fixed cost is the same, but you can generate additional revenue by filling the seats" (Anonymous, personal communication, October 7, 2004). As one administrator noted, "In the perfect model, you bring in just enough students that you don't need to hire staff" (Anonymous, personal communication, February 24, 2005).

Therefore, the decision to participate in schools-of-choice, on such a large scale, was "…strictly financial. The more students we receive, the more revenue we can generate" (Anonymous, personal communication, October 7, 2004). School-choice students "…benefited our district as far as bringing in the extra foundational dollars" (Anonymous, personal communication, October 13, 2004). This was a prime example of SCSD practicing resource mobilization. The resources were the school-choice students that brought with them additional foundation dollars. In the end, SCSD has maintained "…fine enrollments in a period when foundation allowances have not increased" (Anonymous, personal

communication, October 7, 2004). All the while, SCSD maintained their current programs without creating additional programs to attract new students. As a result of schools-of-choice participation, SCSD was not forced "…to make drastic cuts like some of the places around us" (Anonymous, personal communication, February 24, 2005). SCSD was now dependent on school-choice students for the survival of the district.

Resource dependence was changing the way the district approached its mission of educating students. As one administrator noted, "The most negative impact, from my point of view, is that we're becoming dependent on them [school-choice students] to keep our budget balanced. They're just balancing budget. They're not doing new programs. They're trying to take care of deficit" (Anonymous, personal communication, January 26, 2005). This shift in priority for the district led to natural evolution, consequences, and changes in SCSD throughout the period of schools-of-choice participation.

Prior to the passage of Proposal A, SCSD was not funded on a per-pupil formula. Instead, the district generated dollars based on property taxes that allowed more flexibility and predictability in annual operating revenues. When the district anticipated financial difficulties, a millage proposal was taken to the local voters. Under the post-Proposal A system, funding for schools is generated solely on a per-pupil basis. The more students a district enrolls, the more money the district generates. These differences in funding schemes are represented in Figure 11.

	Pre-Proposal A	**Post-Proposal A**
Revenue	Pool of dollars based upon local property taxes and millage rate	Students = $
Ways to Increase Revenue	Local voters can increase revenue via local millage increase	State determines annual increase per pupil AND/OR Increase number of students enrolled

Figure 11. Comparison in Funding Schemes

Summary of Resource Dependence

SCSD's participation in schools-of-choice allowed Southgate resident students to continue to benefit from the variety of programs offered by the district. The additional revenue generated by admitting school-choice students permitted the district to continue operating all of its current programs. Even larger, SCSD was successful at mobilizing resources (students) to continue meeting the expectations of the community. Without being forced to cut programs, the community understood the need to continue participating in schools-of-choice on such a large scale. In the end, school-choice students were used to merely fill seats and allow Southgate resident students the same educational opportunities they had been accustomed to receiving. Through actively mobilizing resources, SCSD had become dependent on school-choice students for survival. This dependence on school-choice students appeared to become part of the culture of SCSD.

Organizational Responses and Consequences

The Culture of the City of Southgate

Schein (1996) defined culture as "a set of basic tacit assumptions about how the world is and ought to be that a group of people share and that determines their perceptions, thoughts, feelings, and, to some degree, their overt behavior" (p. 3). The history of Southgate's origins greatly defined the culture shared by its residents. Southgate, as a city, grew during the era of "white flight," or the exodus of Caucasian residents from Detroit. While this era was commonly referred to as "white flight," perhaps the modern terminology of "urban sprawl" is more appropriate. Even though people who moved to Southgate in the 1950s and 1960s were predominantly Caucasian, the reasons for moving to Southgate were not simply racially driven. Instead, they were culturally driven.

During the 1950s and 1960s, people moved to suburbs such as Southgate to buy new homes in a newer suburb that, eventually, distanced them from specific racial groups and the urban culture. "Many of Detroit's white as well as black forebears had come up from the Deep South, bringing with them antagonistic racial attitudes that were worsened by auto industry labor policies pitting blacks and whites against each other" (Vitullo-Martin, 1995, p. 4). In the last five months of 1967, more than 67,000 residents left Detroit. 80,000 left in 1968 and were followed by another 46,000 residents in 1969 (Vitullo-Martin). While the origin of this "white flight" movement was racially-based, the continued trend became a cultural issue. As the Caucasian residents moved to the suburbs, so did the companies, the jobs, and the local tax dollars. As Diebold

(2004) stated, "While urban Michigan was declining economically and demographically the suburbs were growing by an inverse proportion" (p. 117). As a result of moving to a newer suburb such as Southgate, residents were able to distance themselves from the quickly changing urban culture in Detroit. This history of moving away from the urban culture helped to define the more recent culture of Southgate.

Schein (1996) stated that culture manifests itself through assumptions, values and behaviors. Residents of Southgate shared the common assumption that the urban culture was one in which they preferred not to live. According to Harris (1999), the suburbs were viewed as "predominantly affluent, home to families with children, and blessed with good schools and little crime" (p. 2). The stereotypes associated with the urban culture represented negative changes to a once stable and thriving area. Southgate residents valued stability. For the most part, the City of Southgate replicated the original neighborhoods of larger cities such as Detroit. The neighborhoods were built as subdivisions that shared commonalities of design and consistent layout with one another. Symbolically, this represented the culture of Southgate. The residents valued the proximity of resources that suburbs or urban areas could provide, but wished for these resources to stay consistent with their idea of a city.

Striving to maintain "life as we know it" was the guiding value shared among residents of Southgate. Even though new stores and roads were constructed, the city represented the consistent idea of a "safe" city that Southgate residents valued. This "safety" came through stability. Meanwhile, to

the north of Southgate, Detroit was quickly changing. The changes were the result of the "urban sprawl." As new suburbs grew, people left and so did jobs, along with the perceived safety and stability that residents valued. These changes in Detroit were being represented through a growing belief of increased poverty and crime. The poverty and crime symbolized the urban culture that Southgate residents did not wish to share. Detroit was changing and the changes were demonstrated in a negative sense to Southgate residents, thus reinforcing the residents' wishes for stability. The changes associated with the urban culture were causing instability for Southgate residents. Fleeing this culture helped to maintain stability amongst Southgate residents.

The perceptions of Southgate residents toward the urban areas were best mirrored in statements by two SCSD administrators. The first administrator stated, "99% of them (school-choice students) come from disgruntled districts" (Anonymous, personal communication, September 27, 2004). The second administrator described, "The Southgate parents' answer is, look where they (school-choice students) come from. Sure they'd think that's better because where they come from is so bad" (Anonymous, personal communication, February 24, 2005). These statements demonstrate the perceptions held by Southgate residents in reference to the urban culture to the north.

Detroit is one of the most racially polarized cities in terms of central city-suburban residential segregation, income inequality, and employment outcomes (O'Connor, Tilly, & Bobo, 2003). As Diebold (2004) noted, "The downward cycle of declining property value of the urban areas continued through the 1960s

especially in the deteriorating cities of the state's major population bases of Detroit, Flint, and Grand Rapids" (p. 117). In fact, Farley et al. (1994) reported that "the population of Detroit went from 45% black in 1970 to 76% in 1990, while the average value of a single-family home (in constant 1989 dollars) fell from $49,000 to $26,000" (p. 777). This racial polarization was only the catalyst for greater separation between the suburbs and the City of Detroit. The growth of the suburbs accelerated the urban decay, while urban decay accelerated the growth of the suburbs (Diebold). The threat to stability was tied to both race and the urban culture since both factors impacted each other.

For example, in a study of the racial segregation in the Detroit metropolitan area, Farley et al. (1994) stated that "interracial neighborhoods will never be stable if there is extensive 'white flight' when blacks move in" (p. 775). The study also found that a perception of increased crime, violence, and drug problems, along with a drop in home values, was held by metropolitan Detroit residents associated with African American residents moving into Detroit suburbs (Farley et al., 1994). Trowbridge (2002) identified the extent to which this segregation existed when he found that almost 90% of all African American residents in metro Detroit live in 5 cities: Detroit, Southfield, Highland Park, Inkster, or Pontiac. Of these, the only cities within reasonable distance for students to attend SCSD are Detroit and Inkster.

Valuing stability and sharing the assumption that the urban culture was unstable guided the behaviors of Southgate residents. These residents continued to work to maintain the stability they valued. This stability was crucial for

avoiding the urban culture. Stability could be protected through the schools. Thus, Southgate residents used the schools to help replicate the community. As students graduated from the schools within Southgate, they were able to continue as members of the community.

Southgate was a blue-collar community with many residents working in the automotive factories or in an automotive-related field. The schools were successful at producing future Caucasian factory workers that could easily remain within this culture. The stability of a factory job was symbolic of the culture of the City of Southgate. Steady work with steady salaries assured maintaining the standard of living the community members desired. Hence, as graduates were able to move seamlessly from student status into this steady line of factory work, the community was able to maintain its stability. Stability meant avoiding the urban culture and all perceptions, regardless of their validity, associated with the urban culture.

Describing SCSD in Terms of Rationality

School districts can be described in terms of their rationalities. Three distinct rationalities, known as technical, organizational, and institutional rationalities, may be used to explain the activities and logics of an organization such as SCSD. Work derived from Thompson (1967), Pfeffer and Salancik (2003), and Scott (1998) can be summarized in a fairly simple model that represents the interconnectedness of the levels of rationality. Figure 12 displays the three levels of rationality.
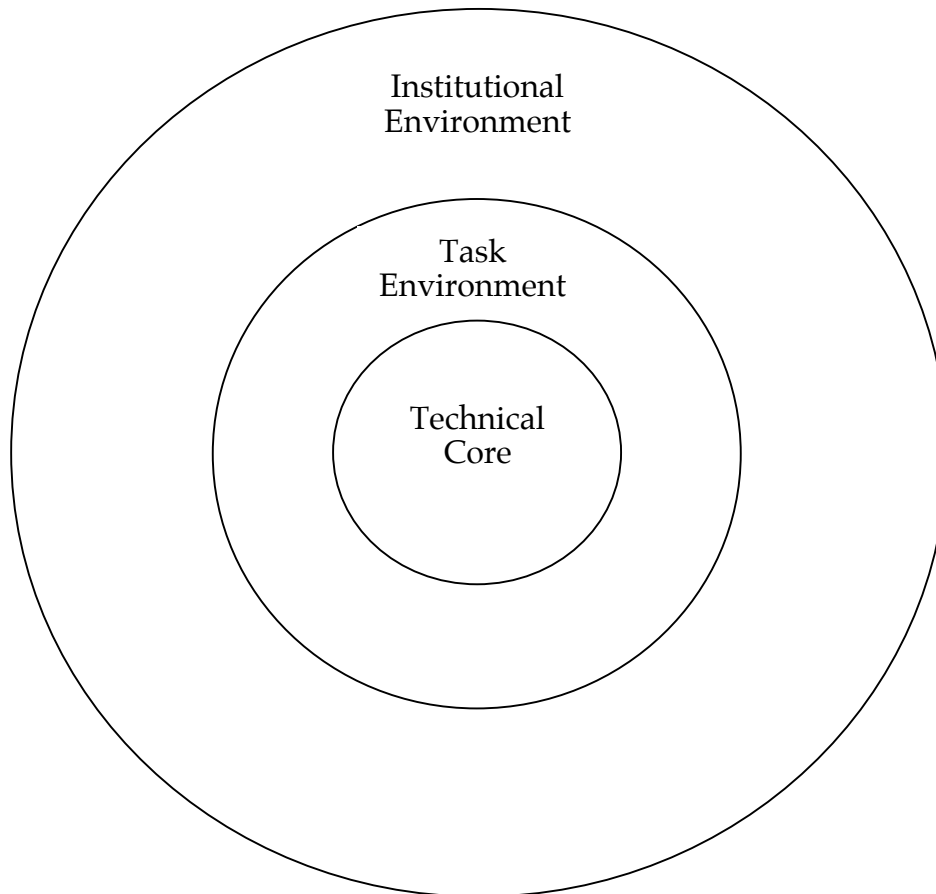
Figure 12. Levels of Organizational Rationality

At the technical core, SCSD was responsible for maintaining the core function of the organization. In order for SCSD to be technically rational, the school district needed to continue producing graduates who could work in factories. These graduates would possess the skills necessary to work in an automotive-related business. The ability to produce future workers helped SCSD maintain itself as technically rational. However, throughout the late 1990s and early 21st century, a new technical rationality was imposed on school districts via

schools-of-choice. Choice proponents believed that schools would improve if they were forced to compete for students. In other words, choice would lead to an increase in effectiveness as defined by standardized test scores in mathematics, reading, and writing. Districts with the highest test scores would attract students, and districts with lower test scores would lose enrollment and eventually close.

School districts such as SCSD were already reaching a level of effectiveness as defined by the local value of producing future factory workers. This was necessary to fuel the local economy and provide future stability to the City of Southgate. SCSD demonstrated this factory worker focus in their staffing at SAHS. The departments responsible for raising test scores were mathematics, English, science, and social studies. The mathematics department comprised six full-time teachers. Science and Social Studies also staffed six full-time teachers. The English department, the largest department at SAHS, included eight full-time teachers. Meanwhile, the Career-Technical Department and the Business Department combined for 10 full-time teachers. This department only included courses aimed at guiding students into their career path, not for higher education. This focus on guiding students into the local economy of factory workers was considered successful by Southgate residents.

However, the elite definition of effectiveness was being imposed in the form of increased test scores. In turn, school districts such as SCSD were now forced to become technically rational in terms of test scores while working within a system expected to produce factory workers. These conflicting definitions of

effectiveness created stress on the teachers at the technical core. Teachers, and the school system, were now being evaluated based on their ability to prepare students for college within a system designed to produce factory workers. While producing factory workers was acceptable to the community, the system was being pressured to produce college-bound students by forces outside the community.

Basically, school districts such as SCSD were faced with competing definitions of effectiveness. These competing definitions were also based upon different values. Effectiveness, as defined by test scores, is an elite definition. One district's test scores need to be higher than another. One school must lose in order for another district to win. On the contrary, effectiveness in producing factory workers is defined by the ability to replicate the community. The circular logic of this type of system fueled SCSD's organizational rationality. If SCSD could produce future factory workers, those graduates would move back into the community and have children who could attend SCSD. This would ensure the survival and stability of SCSD as an organization. On the contrary, if SCSD increased test scores, these students would move out of Southgate. These graduates with higher test scores would need to look for employment outside of the local economy. This would cause instability within the City of Southgate. Students would graduate with increased academic skills, attend colleges outside of the local area, and eventually move away. The instability caused by producing graduates who continued to move away would eventually impact enrollment and the district would suffer in the end.

Therefore, in the task environment, SCSD needed to maintain the resources and conduct the activities that ensured the survival of the organization and the city. SCSD's ability to be organizationally rational was dependent on their ability to survive. In the era of Proposal A, schools maintained resources or funding based upon enrollment. Therefore, schools were forced to compete with each other for students because they were funded solely on the number of students enrolled in a school. SCSD was responsible for acquiring the necessary resources (students) and sending these students out into future factory jobs in order to be organizationally rational.

Meanwhile, SCSD had to be conscious and responsive to its institutional environment. At the institutional level, the community of Southgate held certain expectations of its schools. Specifically, the community expected SCSD to continue working as a cultural transmitter for the assumptions, beliefs, and values of Southgate. The school district was responsible for socializing students into the culture of Southgate. Schools are a vehicle for cultural transmission (Spindler & Spindler, 1987). The culture of the community, at the institutional level, historically drove the schools. SCSD needed to continue adapting to the needs and expectations of the community of Southgate in order to be institutionally rational.

The need to be rational at each level of the organization was complicated by schools-of-choice policy. As Fowler (2004) summarized, "Proponents of school choice believe that if schools have to compete for students (and money), their staffs will be motivated to improve their programs. Inadequate schools will

either get better or go out of business" (p. 74). School-choice proponents were concerned with increasing the level of effectiveness of schools, as defined by test scores. This elite definition of effectiveness in test scores was a concern at the technical core. However, in order for the technical core to function, the organizational level needed to work towards survival. This meant acquiring students from outside of Southgate to increase revenue. Meanwhile, the institutional environment still expected the school to transmit the culture of Southgate. In the end, schools-of-choice policy was redefining "success" of a school district while causing conflicts within the organization. The policy was designed to change technical rationality, as defined by test scores, by forcing resource dependence at the organizational level. In the meantime, schools still were responsible to the needs of the community at the institutional environment.

In the end, the competition at the core to continue producing factory workers and to increase test scores was fueling a series of conflicts within the organization. These conflicts are represented in Figure 13. The system was not designed or geared to train elite students. The new core technology of effectiveness in test scores conflicted with the survival of SCSD as a whole. The institutional environment called for transmitting the values and culture of the community of Southgate. The task environment was concerned with survival of the organization through bringing in the necessary resources in terms of students and sending out factory workers who were able to obtain employment and return to Southgate. All the while, the technical core was conflicted by attempting to increase test scores in a system designed to produce factory

workers. Conflict between rationalities was being fueled by choice policy and its push for increased effectiveness in test scores. As a result of this conflict between and within rationalities, the organization as a whole would suffer.
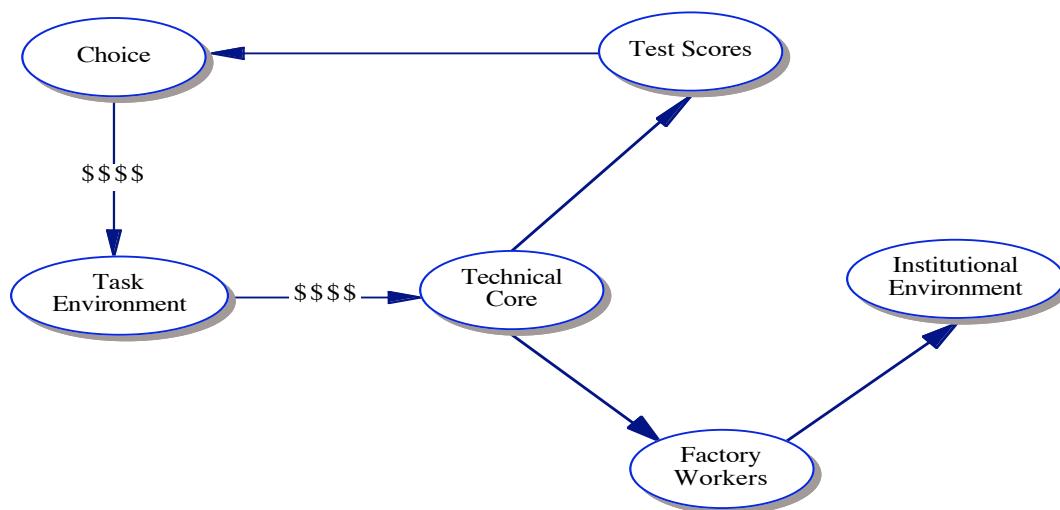
Figure 13. Conflict Between Rationalities—A Disconnect

Post Schools-of-Choice Technical Rationality at SCSD

The community of Southgate was well-buffered between its suburban culture and Detroit's urban culture to the north. Schools-of-choice created a bridge between Southgate and Detroit. Meanwhile, Southgate's organizing bias was one of "white flight." The era of schools-of-choice in Southgate was best understood as a constant push and pull between the well-buffered culture that created Southgate and the bridge built by schools-of-choice. The constant theme of conflict between organizational rationalities frames the discussion of the

organizational responses and consequences experienced as a result of schools-of-choice participation.

Resource Dependence in the Task Environment

Participation in schools-of-choice only delayed necessary changes to the district. At the end of the 2004–2005 academic year, the district was forced to cut several positions, including custodial and teaching positions, in order to balance the budget. At the time, these cuts were very common throughout school districts in the area and across the state. Schools-of-choice allowed SCSD to work under a sense of survival for a few years longer than their surrounding districts. However, at the time of these cuts, the solution was to allow more students to enroll in SCSD. In a memo issued to all staff, one proposal to balance the budget for the 2005–2006 academic year was to increase class size loads, according to the suggested contractual numbers, at all levels. In terms of rationality, this philosophy of increasing organizational rationality by balancing the budget was at the expense of the technical rationality by increasing class sizes. The hope was to generate extra seats that could be filled by school-choice students who would bring additional revenue with them, allowing the district to maintain current programming and staff. Again, SCSD would have to actively mobilize resources. SCSD was dependent on school-choice students for the district's survival.

Before the start of the 2005–2006 academic year, all laid-off teachers were called back. In addition, several other teachers were hired by SCSD. The original admittance of additional school-choice students to help alleviate financial

difficulties resulted in a population swell in the 8–9 building. As a result of organizational rationality overriding technical rationality, administrators at this building scrambled to reorganize their middle-school interdisciplinary team structure to accommodate the new population of more than 900 students in a building that served 760 students the previous year. This increase of 140 students was filtered into the building with adding only one staff member. The classroom averages were well over the contractual guideline of 32 per class. Teachers at the building understood that the increased class size was the only way for SCSD to remain financially secure. Resource dependency was now driving SCSD and working against the intent of choice proponents. Resource dependence was supposed to force the schools to improve their test scores. Instead, resource dependence was forcing schools to increase class sizes. The increase in class sizes was counter-productive to increasing test scores. This mode of "survival" at the organizational level overrode both the elite technical rationality of increasing test scores and the SCSD's technical rationality of producing future factory workers.

Class Size—A Structural Change

A district administrator stated, "If I lived in Southgate, I would be concerned about our class sizes because they have increased to accommodate those students (school-choice students). We held them at 22 in the elementaries until this year where we're getting up to 28 or 29 kids, which is way too many" (Anonymous, personal communication, October 13, 2004). As a result of the "filling empty seats" practice, SCSD experienced a dramatic increase in class size

at all grade levels. This was perhaps one of the most obvious, and verifiable, consequences of schools-of-choice participation. As another administrator commented, "I think that's the biggest thing is that you just keep making class sizes bigger and bigger" (Anonymous, personal communication, January 26, 2005). Therefore, in 2004–2005, "…we tried to slow down, get class sizes smaller than they had been. That worked, but we were a little below our number and hit the wall financially" (Anonymous, personal communication, February 25, 2005). SCSD was forced to allow resource dependence to take precedence over educational practice.

Figure 14 displays the class size numbers at Davidson Middle School from 2000–2001 to 2004–2005. The reason for choosing Davidson Middle School as a case to identify the trends in student enrollment in SCSD was the steadiness of the staff at the building. The building configuration maintained its consistency since the 1999–2000 academic year, with the exception of one extra teacher hired in 2001–2002 after the school year had started. The class size calculations were also easiest and most accurate in this building because of its consistent staffing over the time span that the data on enrollment were available. Davidson Middle School is one of the only buildings in SCSD that has maintained consistent configuration and staffing numbers throughout this period.

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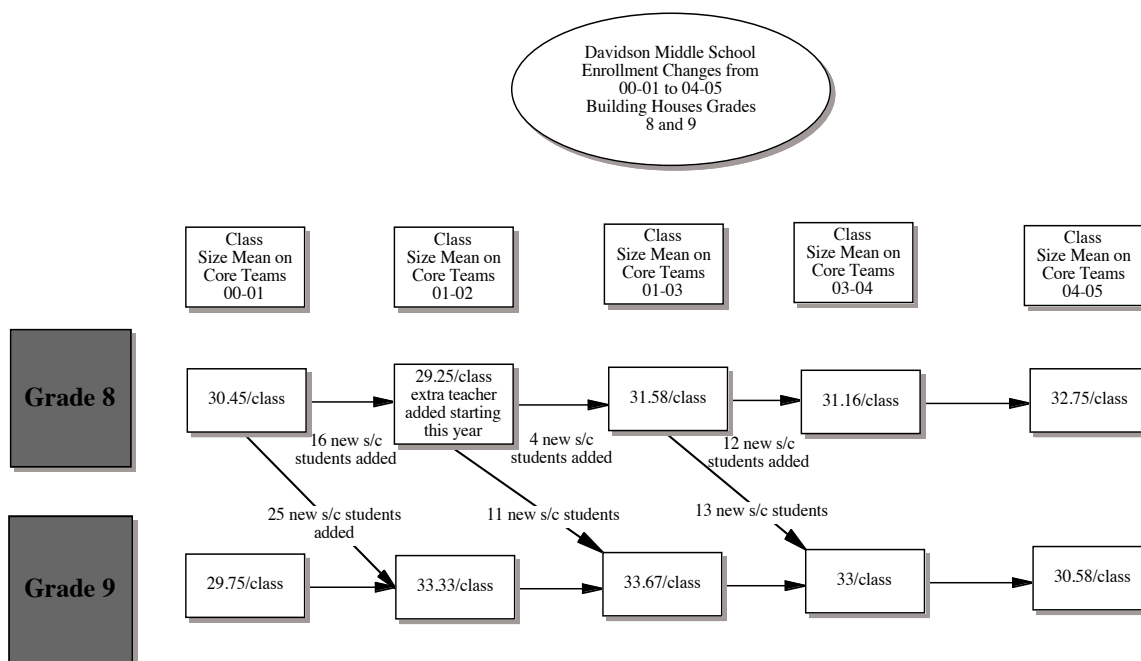
Figure 14. Class-Size Changes at Davidson Middle School

Note: Davidson Middle School is configured in four-person interdisciplinary teams of teachers. Each team consists of one science teacher, one social studies teacher and one language arts teacher. The class size calculations represent the actual number of students physically in each room in front of one teacher. These calculations are not pupil-teacher ratios. The Southgate teacher's union contract has language that addresses class size with an effort to limit the size to 32 students per class.

This is an example of "filling seats." In the 2000–2001 academic year, the 8th grade classes held slightly more than 30 students per class. The contract language identified 32 as the target for the largest number of students in each class. Therefore, the district opened space and allowed 25 new school-choice students into the 9th grade for the 2001–2002 academic year. This influx of students increased the average class size to just over 33 students in the 9th grade. Since the number was only slightly more than 32 students per class, very little

opposition occurred by the teachers' union.

Meanwhile, the 8th grade averaged 29 students per class during the 2001–2002 academic year. In order to bring that average to 32 students per class, under the current school configuration, SCSD could admit 12 school-choice students for the following year. However, only 11 new school-choice students were enrolled in the 9th grade for the 2002–2003 academic year. During the 2002–2003 academic year, the 9th grade classes again averaged more than 33 students per class. The goal of SCSD is "…to try and fill every seat that we have so that we can maximize our space" (anonymous personal communication, February 24, 2005). Looking at the Figure 12 (p. 130), it is evident that school-choice students have filled these empty seats and the district has been able to keep the average class size very close to a minimum of 32 students. In the words of one district administrator, "The fixed cost is the same, but you can generate additional revenue by filling the seats" (anonymous personal communication, October 7, 2004).

The dependence on school-choice student enrollment led to the increase in class sizes and other space issues. As one administrator stated, "We have two portables at a building (Grogan Elementary) that was just recently renovated" (Anonymous, personal communication, October 13, 2004). This space issue and class size issue was addressed by SCSD, but not in a manner that addressed either rationality of producing factory workers or increasing test scores. Instead, the district sought ways to open up more rooms at the elementary levels without any consideration of the effects on the later grade levels when these students

moved up. In addition, SCSD actively sought ways to enroll more students through schools-of-choice in order to avoid any more financial problems. Therefore, participation in schools-of-choice presented itself as entirely financial and required compromises in other areas such as effectiveness in SCSD's ability to produce factory workers or increase test scores.

Summary of Class Size as a Structural Change

SCSD's dependence on resources (students) was predicated on filling empty seats. As a result, the class sizes at all levels within SCSD were increased. While the increase in class sizes was only a few students, the inability to predict in-district swells in student populations caused space issues in the elementary schools. After adding portable classrooms to one elementary school that was recently renovated, the district attempted to scale back on the number of school-choice students. However, financial concerns required the district to continue its participation in schools-of-choice. As can be seen in the Davidson Middle School example, increased class sizes became the norm within SCSD. Regardless of contractual language, the district managed to maintain class sizes that were near, but consistently over, the contractual amount.

As one district administrator noted "financially, we benefited but class size is probably a detriment" (Anonymous, personal communication, October 13, 2004). Class size, especially at the secondary levels, is both an educational issue and a local political issue. In terms of class size research, a meta-analysis by Nyhan and Alkadry (1999) found that "reduction of class size for the purpose of

raising student achievement scores is best undertaken when schools are considered excessively overcrowded (greater than 35 students) (p. 217)." Choice proponents contended that schools would improve, as measured by test scores, in order to attract students. In reality, SCSD was purposely floating in what Nyhan and Alkadry (1999) considered the "excessively overcrowded" range. The Davidson Middle School example shows SCSD purposefully averaging 33 per class.

As a structural change in the normal operations of SCSD, this one-student overage in class sizes netted the district roughly $80,000 every year that the 9th grade classes averaged 33 students per class instead of the contractual 32. In reality, filling empty seats became code for acquiring additional revenue by adding seats and altering the structure of the district. Again, organizational rationality overrode technical rationality. Ignoring class size research such as the work done by Achilles (1999), SCSD was knowingly sacrificing effectiveness for survival. In other words, SCSD was sacrificing its newly imposed definition of technical rationality in test scores for organizational rationality of survival.

Special Education—A Structural Change

With increases in total enrollment, the district experienced a proportionate increase in special education enrollment. District practice was to fill empty seats, thus requiring no additional staff. However, as student enrollment increased, so did special education enrollment. As one administrator noted, after this oversight was noticed, "If 12% in the county is the average number of special

education kids, then for every 100 kids, that's half a [special education] teacher. For every 200 kids, we have to hire a new [full-time special education] teacher. It's a built-in cost" (Anonymous, personal communication, January 26, 2005). This is mirrored by another administrator who stated that "it has added to our special education numbers because some of them do need the special education services which is a costly program" (Anonymous, personal communication, October 13, 2004). In other words, for every 200 new students into SCSD, the district needed to hire an additional special education teacher. Salary for this teacher was overlooked because the teacher would not have a traditional classroom. Instead, the teacher would be responsible for a caseload of special education students that may be mainstreamed into traditional classrooms. The students brought in to "fill seats" were generally spread out amongst buildings and, at times, caused several special education teachers to be hired as a result of legal limits to caseloads at an additional, unforeseen cost to the district. The district intended to use school-choice students to fill already empty seats, yet ancillary changes were ignored such as special education changes and the possible effects of increased class sizes on the technical core.

Summary of Special Education as a Structural Change

SCSD grew as a result of schools-of-choice participation. This impacted the general education programs by increasing their scale. This change in general education was predictable. On the other hand, as enrollment grew throughout the district, the enrollment of special populations also increased. Special

education student enrollment remained in the same general proportion with the percentages prior to schools-of-choice, with a slightly higher proportion of special education school-choice students at the high school. At the high school, 16% of the school-choice student population received special education services while only 13% of in-district students qualified for services.

As SCSD attempted to fill empty seats with no additional staff necessary, they overlooked the need for special education staff and support. This oversight resulted in fewer financial gains than originally anticipated by the district. Again, the technical core suffered because special education teacher caseloads continued to increase. Instead of maximizing the benefits of programs such as special education, SCSD's participation in schools-of-choice was minimizing the effectiveness of the special education programs by increasing caseloads and general education class-sizes throughout the district. As a result, less time was available to help special education students because of the additional strain on the newly hired special education teachers.

Test Scores—A Perception Change

One administrator asked, "Are our scores as good as they'd be if the kids were with us from K–12? Probably not" (Anonymous, personal communication, September 27, 2004). Many districts experience changes in student population throughout the twelve years of schooling, but such large-scale participation in schools-of-choice "…caused what are perceived to be some problems because of

students coming in that are not as prepared as our students" (Anonymous, personal communication, October 13, 2004).

However, these perceived problems, while shared by many district personnel, were unproven in reality. As one district administrator stated, "They haven't proven the case of why our MEAP scores aren't progressing" (Anonymous, personal communication, October 13, 2004). The perception by the teachers "…before they looked at the data is that it [schools-of-choice participation] did drop scores immensely. But when they actually pulled out the school-choice kids versus the other ones, it wasn't that great of a gap…there's not much variance between those scores [school-choice student scores] and the overall scores" (Anonymous, personal communication, October 13, 2004).

In reality, SCSD scores were consistently below the state average. Table 5 displays the ACT scores for SCSD, State of Michigan averages, and National averages over a 5-year span. A quick analysis of the scores demonstrates that the SCSD scores were always below both the state and the national averages. Schools-of-choice had no impact on ACT scores at SCSD. The scores are still consistently lower than the state and proportionately lower than the national average. Yet the false perception of the teachers with regard to the scores is that school-choice students have brought the scores down.

Table 5.

ACT Scores for SCSD vs. Michigan vs. National

	SCSD	Michigan	National
1998–1999	20.6	21.3	21
1999–2000	20.6	21.3	21
2000–2001	20.8	21.3	21
2001–2002	19.9	21.3	20.8
2002–2003	20.4	21.3	20.8

Summary of Test Scores as a Perception Change

"If men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences" (Thomas and Thomas, 1928, p. 572). This is the first example of many changes within SCSD that were perceived to be the result of school-choice students. Many district employees truly believed that school-choice students caused the drop in scores. However, most SCSD staff were not even aware of who the school-choice students were in their classrooms. It was this perception that defined school-choice students in SCSD.

On the other hand, proponents for school choice claimed that districts would be forced to improve in order to attract students. SCSD's test scores did not improve, yet they were very successful at attracting students. Enrollments continued to increase while scores remained stagnant or decreased. The measure of success at SCSD appeared to be fulfilling one of the claims of choice proponents. It was true that schools would have to attract students in order to survive. In this case, test scores did not need to increase in order to attract the students. Instead, the students chose to enroll in SCSD for cultural reasons that had little to do with the prep-school definition of effectiveness in test scores that school-choice proponents argued would occur.

Race and De Facto Segregation—A Perception Change

Outside of class sizes, special education implications, and test scores, the district experienced attribution errors (Nisbett & Ross, 1980). Attribution errors are perceptions attributed to an individual when the changes are really a group phenomenon. District and community members were attributing a cause-effect relationship between school-choice enrollment and other changes within the district. These attribution errors were a result of attaching district changes to schools-of-choice participation without necessarily taking the time to verify the changes as related to school-choice students. Schools-of-choice "introduced some diversity in the district" (Anonymous, personal communication, October 13, 2004). "It's opened up the district to more minority students than we would have had" (Anonymous, personal communication, January 26, 2005). "I think there are some perceptions that you can spot them [school-choice students] in the hallways" (Anonymous, personal communication, February 24, 2005). The attribution error was attaching these changes to schools-of-choice participation instead of to the changing demographics within the City of Southgate and the surrounding districts.

De facto segregation happened in SCSD based upon race. There was a perception that school-choice students were all minority students, especially African American. This was a false belief shared by both students and staff. As one in-district student stated, "Basically, school-of-choice students are minorities [pause]…African Americans" (Anonymous, personal communication, March 4, 2005). This perception of school-choice students as minority students was not

only unfounded, but also frustrating for the minority students who lived in the City of Southgate. As one minority student stated, "Everyone thinks that I'm school-choice just because I'm black. I live in Southgate" (Anonymous, personal communication, April 7, 2005).

In actuality, as Table 6 demonstrates, out of the 157 school-choice students enrolled at Southgate Anderson High School in 2004–2005, only 7 were African-American, 32 were Hispanic, and 116 were Caucasian. Hence, the perception of all school-choice students as being minority students was not accurate. In addition, the perception that schools-of-choice opened up the district to more diversity was also inaccurate. These perceptions shaped the experiences of the school-choice students who enrolled at Southgate Anderson High School.

As one school-choice student, a minority student, stated, "I got picked on more. The teachers sent me to the office a little more. They said it was because of the way I dressed, but I didn't see anything wrong with it" (Anonymous, personal communication, October 3, 2004). This particular student dressed in a manner that SCSD students would refer to as "thuggish" or, more specifically, in a manner associated with urban culture. Another student commented, "I feel singled-out or out-of-place in some classes. Maybe it's because I think that deep-down inside they're looking at me and stereotyping" (Anonymous, personal communication, September 1, 2004). On the other hand, a Caucasian school-choice student stated, "A lot of people don't know that I'm a school-of-choice student" (Anonymous, personal communication, November 21, 2004). This was

mirrored by another Caucasian school-choice student who stated that "I kind of

blend in" (Anonymous, personal communication, November 16, 2004).

Table 6.

Schools-of-Choice Enrollment Information for SAHS in 2004–2005

City of Residence	M	F	10	11	12	Cauc	Hisp	Af-Am	Am-Ind	Ttl
Allen Park	3	2	3	1	1	4	1			5
Brownstown	10	5	5	6	4	14		1		15
Carleton		1		1		1				1
Dearborn Heights		1			1		1			1
Detroit	13	12	12	7	6	11	13	1		25
Ecorse	2	2	2		2	1	1	1	1	4
Flat Rock	2	1		2	1	3				3
Inkster		2		2		1		1		2
Lincoln Park	19	17	16	11	9	31	2	3		36
Melvindale	1	1	1		1	1	1			2
Monroe		1			1	1				1
New Boston	1			1		1				1
River Rouge	11	10	8	5	8	15	5		1	21
Riverview	3	5	2	2	4	7	1			8
Romulus		1		1		1				1
Taylor	3	6	3	5	1	7	2			9
Trenton	1	1	1	1		2				2
Woodhaven	2	3	2	1	2	4	1			5
Wyandotte	6	9	6	5	4	11	4			15
Totals	77	80	61	51	45	116	32	7	2	157

Summary of Race and De Facto Segregation as a Perception Change

The community of Southgate was created as a result of "white flight" or "urban sprawl" during the 1950s and 1960s. As a community, Southgate is culturally organized around "white working class." As a working definition, "white working class" is defined as Caucasian factory workers with middle-class incomes. This organizing cultural bias was built-in at the foundation of Southgate as a community. As a result, the school district holds and transmits the same organizing cultural bias. When the community's demographics began to

change, there needed to be a reason. School-choice students became the reason

for the demographic shift. Again, as Thomas and Thomas (1928) stated, "If men

define situations as real, they are real in their consequences" (p. 572). This

organizing bias of a "white working class" culture carried into the schools and

defined the role and perception of the students enrolled in SCSD.

Structural Forms of Segregation

While race and socio-cultural congruence seemed to be the most obvious

reasons of segregation between in-district students and school-choice students,

other cases of implicit and explicit segregation also emerged. For example,

miscalculations at the elementary levels caused entire classes of students to be

moved from one building to another after the beginning of the school year. In the

past, "We moved a whole section of kindergartners to Allen. They were all

school-of-choice" (Anonymous, personal communication, February 25, 2005).

"Many times we have to take those schools-of-choice students and move them to

other buildings, which is the understanding with those parents" (Anonymous,

personal communication, October 7, 2004). "I can't move a Southgate student if

I've got kids in that class that live there. It's only happened twice" (Anonymous,

personal communication, February 25, 2005). District-wide, explicit segregation

existed between in-district students and school-choice students, and it existed in

forms outside of simply moving students.

The elementary schools experienced an increase in the number of students

who were picked up from school many hours after school ended for the day. It

was discussed whether or not the building principals could send a letter to each of the parents and "…tell them if it continues that they will no longer be able to attend" (Anonymous, personal communication, February 25, 2005). Fortunately, the principals realized that they could not enact such a policy unless they followed the same policy for Southgate resident students.

During an observation at a high school staff meeting on June 8, 2004, a teacher commented that a large number of "school-choice students" were hanging around the hallways until 6:00 or so every night and wondered what the school should do to prevent this. Her observation was reaffirmed by a building administrator who stated, "They're there when I get in and they're there when I leave…waiting for a ride" (Anonymous, personal communication, June 8, 2004). This statement was followed by a group discussion that confirmed the perception of school-choice students staying after school. The next day, I spoke to these students to ask them if they were "school-choice students." Each of the students, all minority students, lived in Southgate and just chose to hang out in the school because they did not feel like walking home. The most interesting part of the conversation was that the students all lived within a few blocks of the school.

In addition to some high school staff members identifying students who stayed late after school as school-choice, the district experienced an increase in elementary special education testing of school-choice students. According to one district administrator, "Teachers get impatient when someone comes in and is really lost or behind and they want special services to come in and intervene. But

you don't want to label a kid disabled unless you have to" (Anonymous, personal communication, January 26, 2005). He continued by stating that at SCSD "we have had a little higher incidents of referrals because of that" (Anonymous, personal communication, January 26, 2005). "When I talk to the elementary team that does testing, they talk about how it's a bigger percentage of choice kids…it's tough when you get a fourth-grader from another district who can hardly read" (Anonymous, personal communication, January 26, 2005).

During an interview with a district administrator, a district study was referred to that found the overall special education percentages remained steady, but the percentage of students tested was much higher for school-choice students than in-district students. Unfortunately, the administrator did not have specific data the district was willing to share. However, another administrator noted that, "I think a lot of the kids do get referred to special ed eventually because they are behind…I haven't said much lately because I don't want to get stuck doing it [the research]" (Anonymous, personal communication, January 26, 2005). The particular administrator was intuitively aware of the increase in special education referrals for school-choice students but was choosing to ignore researching this further to see if it was really happening or "just a hunch." This implicit label of "behind" for school-choice students seemed to be prevalent throughout the district and shaped the other perceptions and experiences of these students.

One other interesting implicit form of segregation was also occurring at the high school based upon cultural or sub-culture differences instead of race. A

school administrator noted, "We've got kids who are more into street issues and are a little more street-wise" (Anonymous, personal communication, January 26, 2005). During an interview with an in-district student, the student stated "mostly school-of-choice students are multi-racial and come from broken families…minorities, basically African American and Mexican…you don't see a lot of school-choice students that are white" (Anonymous, personal communication, March 4, 2005).

As one school-choice student added, "They treat you different. Teachers kind of like, if you're from Lincoln Park, let you do less work" (Anonymous, personal communication, March 3, 2005). In addition, the student claimed that he had been accused of things simply because he was a school-choice student. During an incident in which he was falsely accused of creating problems in the computer system, he was told, "I know you're school-of-choice. You can go back to Lincoln Park. We don't need you here" (Anonymous, personal communication, March 3, 2005). The student, a Caucasian student, attributed this treatment to both his school-choice status and his manner of dressing in what he referred to as "thuggish." "Thuggish" was associated with the urban culture that Southgate residents had been buffered from for years. As a result, the student referred to the look of Southgate residents as "…high school preppy. American Eagle and stuff like that" (Anonymous, personal communication, March 3, 2005). In other words, he defined the dominant culture of Southgate. Outside of racial perceptions, there appeared to also be a perception that school-choice students look more of the part of the urban culture and were implicitly labeled as such.

Summary of the Other Structural Forms of Segregation

SCSD and the community of Southgate were organized around a culture of "white flight." This bias was deeply embedded into the culture of Southgate. The organizing bias of "white flight" defined Southgate as a community. Research conducted by Farley et al. (1994) asked Caucasian residents in the Detroit area about their willingness to live in racially-balanced communities. The findings indicated that, as of 1994, suburban residents in the Detroit metropolitan area were not willing to live in a neighborhood with a population of more than 25% African Americans (Farley et al., 1994). The belief system and values that drew residents to Southgate and other suburbs in the 1960s and 1970s still guided their perceptions and behaviors.

If a student looked like the typical Southgate resident, at least what was perceived to be the typical Southgate resident, then the student received treatment within the schools that would be given to a Caucasian, suburban student. However, any deviation from this appearance resulted in a distinct change in the treatment of this student by the organization because of the threat to the institutional rationality of SCSD.

In addition, SCSD knowingly treated groups of school-choice students differently than their in-district counterparts, regardless of race. In order to continue meeting the expectations of the community and to avoid raising community concerns, the district moved entire groups of students to other buildings. While these were not the buildings school-choice parents had requested, the district needed to appease in-district parents before the out-of-

district parents. Even though the funding for schools is directly linked to the number of students and, in turn, every student in SCSD brings in the same amount of funds, SCSD must still be responsive to the community of Southgate. Structurally, Southgate students were now of greater importance than any other student in the district.

Preferential Treatment—A Perception Change That Led to a Structural Change

During an interview, a district administrator stated, "I know sometimes parents' perceptions is that all these problems are caused by kids that don't live here" (Anonymous, personal communication, February 25, 2005). This simple statement summarized the findings under the organization's response to preferential treatment. In general, SCSD did not intentionally treat school-choice students any differently; however, they did perceive them differently. This led to differences in the treatment of in-district and school-choice students.

The only examples of widespread preferential treatment of in-district students over school-choice students occurred in the elementary levels due to an unanticipated class-size issue at two elementary schools. As a result of enrollment swells, the district moved a number of school-choice students to another building within SCSD. Specifically, SCSD moved an entire section of kindergartners to another elementary school after the start of the school year. All of the students in the class were schools-of-choice. The group, consisting of 20 school-choice students, was moved to Allen Elementary. One administrator stated, "Well, to those parents at Allen, those 20 looked like 300" (Anonymous,

personal communication, February 25, 2005). It is this perception that fueled any cases of preferential treatment. As the same district administrator noted, "The Southgate parents' answer is, look where they come from. Sure they'd think that's better because where they come from is so bad" (Anonymous, personal communication, February 25, 2005). In other words, the perception held by Southgate residents of these school-choice students caused significant structural changes such as moving whole groups of students.

However, there were cases of preferential treatment that were solely changes in perception. For example, at the high school, one school-choice student stated that many teachers "…excuse you for a lot more things if you were absent or something" (Anonymous, personal communication, March 3, 2005) if you are school-choice. He noticed a trend of in-district kids being expected to meet higher standards than school-choice students. He also noted cases where he was falsely accused of wrongdoings simply because of what he perceived to be his school-choice status. While this was one isolated case that I found, the pattern of perceptions that school-choice students were the scapegoats for the ills of the district was clear.

When asked to describe a school-choice student, one building administrator stated, "If a kid wants to turn a new leaf over and they've been a hard-time gangbanger at [a Detroit high school], what a great opportunity" (Anonymous, personal communication, September 27, 2004). Another administrator reflected on the initial decision to participate in schools-of-choice when he stated, "Everybody thought that we'd have a lot of bad actors, we'd

have more special ed. To a point some of that's true…but it's had its effect on the district, too, in terms of some of the kids, the way they come in. Some of the attitudes" (Anonymous, personal communication, January 26, 2005). These perceptions guided the treatment of school-choice students, and in-district minority students, within SCSD. As another district administrator noted,

> I think there are some perceptions that you can spot them (school-choice students) in the hallways…a lot of times when we talk to the principals, you'll hear a story of a kid who created a problem who came from somewhere else. I think for every one of those stories, I can probably match five with a kid from Southgate. I know sometimes parents' perceptions is that all these problems are caused by kids that don't live here…whatever percent of those kids get in trouble, our own kids get in trouble (Anonymous, personal communication, February, 24, 2005).

Perceptions of school-choice students as being responsible for problems within the district were both related to racial perceptions and cultural perceptions. Even in the area of test scores, the school-choice students were to blame. As another administrator stated, "we would be doing the same job whether our test scores were very high with no school choice or our test scores were slightly lower with school choice" (Anonymous, personal communication, September 27, 2004). In the end, the "gaps between them (school-choice students and in-district students) are not as great as what the teachers have perceived" (Anonymous, personal communication, October 13, 2004). School-choice students were a convenient scapegoat for any ills experienced by SCSD, and the attribution error of school-choice students causing these ills was fueled by cultural perceptions within the community of Southgate.

Summary of Preferential Treatment

The perceptions of school-choice students as minority, inner-city students who hold less academic ability than their stereotypical Southgate counterparts impacted how the system functioned. Students were physically relocated in the elementary schools and treated differently by teachers in the later grades. Community members and staff members successfully found a rationale, in their minds, to explain any ill within the district. Overall, these perceptions were the result of conflict between urban and suburban cultures. These perceptions were imbedded in the daily operations of the school district and, ultimately, changed the structure of the district in its daily operations.

Post Schools-of-Choice Organizational Rationality at SCSD

While the technical core at SCSD experienced conflicts with its rationality, the organizational rationality was focused on survival and attainment of resources. This focus on survival and resource dependency defined the organizational rationality of SCSD. However, it also challenged SCSD's institutional rationality. SCSD was historically effective at replicating the community of Southgate. Schools-of-choice created a constant conflict between the logics defining each level of organizational rationality. As a result, there was an ongoing conflict between these rationalities.

Goal Displacement—A Structural Change

Outside of perceptions of students based upon physical appearance, SCSD's reliance on school-choice students to provide additional revenue changed the goals of the district at large. At the technical core, teachers were concerned with effectiveness. This was evidenced by consistent references of test scores and the perceived impact of school-choice students on these test scores. For example, one district administrator noted that "mostly by teachers…distressed by some of the students coming in…the perception by the teachers is that it did drop them [test scores] immensely" (Anonymous, personal communication, October 13, 2004).

As an organization, district administrators had other concerns. "Our goal is to eventually reach $2.5 million (in the fund equity), but the only way we're going to do that is to still attract students through schools-of-choice...we were over 5,100 this past September…10 years ago at 3,900" (Anonymous, personal communication, October 7, 2004). Schools-of-choice was "…almost just a way of life now that we're accepting that to keep our money up in dollars and not having to cut programs" (Anonymous, personal communication, October 13, 2004). SCSD was officially in survival mode and being driven by this organizational rationality.

Summary of Goal Displacement as a Structural Change

SCSD was originally created to replicate the community by providing academic preparation that was consistent with institutional environment and

culture. The school system was expected to reproduce the community. In other words, the students enrolled in SCSD were instructed by members of the community of Southgate in a manner that would help continue to provide future residents of Southgate. Proposal A changed the school funding system, forcing schools to rely on per-pupil allocation for funding. This was a fundamental shift for schools in terms of local control. It also represented a fundamental shift in values. SCSD responded to this shift. As an organization wishing to survive, the district shifted their goal to enrollment over effectiveness. This was a strong structural change that impacted SCSD. Survival was the new goal of the organization. Contrary to arguments from choice proponents, SCSD was surviving without increasing test scores.

The Consequences of the Power Shift

Michigan school districts were created by local communities and are governed by locally elected school boards. Historically, school boards and school personnel primarily responded to the needs and expectations of the community because of both political pressures and financial needs. Survival and revenue were generated by local property tax dollars through local elections. However, with the advent of Proposal A, school districts were caught between responding to the needs and expectations of the community and the State of Michigan. Proposal A created a system where the dollars follow the child. It also opened the doors for schools-of-choice.

SCSD's local school board and community believed they were in control of the school system. They held the same expectations for the system that had been established since the founding of Southgate. However, SCSD also had to be responsive to the power established by the State of Michigan through its new funding system. The delicate balance of responding to two different environmental forces, with two distinctly different concerns and sets of values, complicated issues for districts like SCSD. As a result of the changing educational landscape, SCSD responded to the pressures of the community to continue providing educational programming consistent with the community expectations by participating in schools-of-choice. SCSD did not have the choice. SCSD was forced to increase enrollment in order to survive. Gone were the days of steady enrollments and consistent results. The new system relied on environmental control of organizations. In order to survive, schools needed to consistently increase their enrollments. The only way for SCSD to increase enrollment was through schools-of-choice. The State of Michigan had the power to force districts like SCSD to participate in schools-of-choice.

Post Schools-of-Choice Institutional Rationality

The community of Southgate expected SCSD to continue replicating "Southgate." However, the rules had changed at the state level. The community was now the water that SCSD swam in, but the food was supplied from outside of the tank. In order to survive, SCSD needed to generate more "food." This additional revenue was not available within the district boundaries. Therefore,

SCSD needed to actively recruit students from outside of the district boundaries. The state was now paying the tab for the schools, while the schools were still responsible to the community.

As SCSD admitted students from other districts, the community began to redefine itself. Southgate was founded on "white flight," and the walls had officially been breached. The environment that SCSD needed to function within had been redefined without anyone paying close attention. This resulted in a conflict between the rationalities.

Conflicts between Rationalities—A Summary of Organizational Consequences

The focus of keeping schools open within SCSD relied on the ability to recruit students from other districts while balancing the consequences of such a survival plan. As a district, especially at the high school level, the SCSD community chose to associate school-choice students with the perceived problems in the district. Such scapegoating or attribution errors were a direct result of conflicts between the technical, organizational, and institutional rationalities of SCSD. As the rationalities pushed and pulled against each other, the finger pointing began.

In addition, the SCSD community chose to reinforce the segregation of the Detroit metropolitan area by associating school-choice students with minority students or, even broader, with urban culture. The SCSD community denied the status of the district itself by pointing at the school-choice students as the scapegoat of the cultural changes both in the high school and the district as a

whole. The City of Southgate was organized as a result of "white flight," and schools-of-choice created an avenue for redefining the buffer built by the institutional environment of SCSD and the greater community of Southgate.

Prior to schools-of-choice and Proposal A, the technical core was solely concerned with producing future factory workers. This agreed with the goals of the institutional environment. As a result, the institutional environment was happy with the schools and approved millages that allowed the task environment to support the technical core. The relationship between each organizational level is demonstrated in Figure 15.
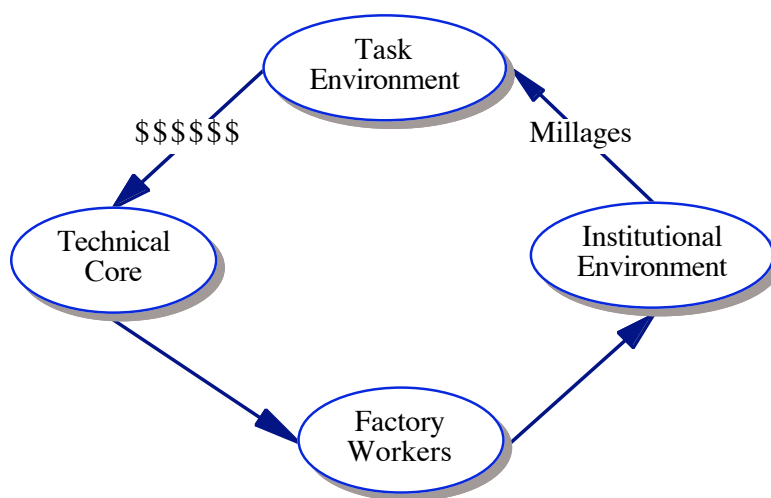

Figure 15. Continuity Between Rationalities Prior to Schools-of-Choice

The changes in the district after schools-of-choice were still a case of the haves versus the have-nots. As represented in Figure 13 (p. 135), the inequities of the funding system were causing the technical rationality to conflict with the need for survival. While the technical core was concerned with effectiveness in

test scores and ability to produce factory workers, the organizational core was concerned with survival. Meanwhile, both rationalities were trying to survive within an institutional environment driven by a need for the schools to work as a tool for cultural transmission.

The community of Southgate looked to its schools to function as socializing agents. Historically, the community defined SCSD's success according to its ability to help replicate the community. SCSD was very successful at socializing students to become long-term members of the Southgate community. However, choice proponents looked to schools-of-choice to work as a tool for education reform. It was believed that if schools were forced to compete for students, they would increase their levels of effectiveness as defined by test scores. Test scores were not the primary measurement used by local communities such as Southgate. While Southgate residents were concerned with the quality of their children's education, they were equally concerned with the ability of the schools to respond to the needs of the community in terms of socialization. This caused a constant and unanticipated conflict between the technical rationality of SCSD and the institutional rationality.

The State of Michigan's definition of effectiveness—that is, increased test scores—will not happen in this type of culture. The school district represents more than simply test scores. The school district represents the values defined by the community of Southgate. The community valued its stability and its culture. As one administrator noted "…sometimes the parents who are picking those kids [school-choice students] up, school-choice kids don't get bussing, so they have to

get picked up. They [parents] were complaining about some of the music the
parents were playing and those kinds of things" (Anonymous, personal
communication, February 24, 2005). Overwhelmingly, the community expected
its schools to produce graduates who held similar values with the organizing
bias of the community. While increased test scores were important, they were not
the most important aspect of schooling. Southgate was a community that formed
as a result of "white flight." Its residents were "blue-collar" and generally
worked in the automotive industry. Increased test scores were not a
measurement for maintaining this way of life. Test scores did not define this
culture. SCSD was designed to mirror the culture of Southgate, and the job of the
schools was to transmit this culture to its students. The conflict between the
technical rationality of effectiveness being touted by choice proponents and the
needs of the community at the institutional level was being fueled by the
organizational rationality of survival.

DeFrance (2001) found that districts that chose to participate in schools-of-
choice generally had lower test scores prior to participation than those districts
that did not participate. Hence, the perception by SCSD staff that increases in
schools-of-choice enrollment led to a decrease in scores may have simply been
the result of an increase in class sizes combined with weak scores prior to
participation. Combining these poor scores with a change in student population
provided staff members a scapegoat. However, the school-choice students who
were being blamed for the falling scores were not necessarily the same students
that the staff members thought were school-of-choice. School-choice students at

SCSD were not overwhelmingly minority students. This was contrary to the perceptions of SCSD personnel.

As a district, however, SCSD had really displayed evidence of evolving and changing. After several interviews with district leaders, one theme became apparent. SCSD was veritably turning into a business. The organizational rationality was winning. SCSD was less concerned about the community or local control that had seemed so important in the past. SCSD also was less concerned with effectiveness. Instead, SCSD was primarily concerned with survival. SCSD's survival ensured the survival of the professionals who were running the organization.

Schools-of-choice allowed the district to maintain current programming while realistically maintaining personnel and not forcing anyone to make the difficult decisions necessary to improve the organization. Out of the push for effectiveness, SCSD focused on survival. Growing enrollments meant that SCSD was organizationally rational. Survival was the new goal of the organization. The organizational rationality had won the conflict between rationalities, but only according to the new rules established by the State of Michigan. SCSD was able to survive, even without increasing its level of effectiveness.

The Student

The experiences of school-choice students at Southgate Anderson High School could not be explained without first understanding the context in which the students were being studied. This context included the culture and

organizational behaviors of the Southgate Community School District (SCSD), the City of Southgate and the greater Detroit metropolitan area. The context framed and gave meaning to the experiences of school-choice students.

In order to describe and explain the experiences of school-choice students at Southgate Anderson High School, I used the conceptual framework explicated in Chapter 3. Specifically, the students' experiences were broken down into three phases: Pre-entry, Encounter, and Outcomes. Each phase was further divided to explain the experiences of school-choice students that attended SCSD. The discussion of the results begins with a description of "who these students are" before entering SCSD. This is followed by a breakdown of the experiences of school-choice students after entering SCSD during the encounter phase. Finally, the discussion concludes with the responses of the students to the new organization during the outcome phase.

Pre-Entry

Discussion of the Pre-Entry phase includes a comparison of the characteristics of the sending districts versus that of SCSD, the characteristics of the school-choice students, and the reasons for changing districts. The students interviewed were able to provide vivid descriptions and rationale for leaving their previous districts. Their stories, combined with the story of the origins of Southgate and surrounding communities, add clarity to understanding schools-of-choice.

Racial composition of sending districts.

The Detroit metropolitan area is one of the most segregated areas in the United States (Trowbridge, 2002). According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2000), Detroit comprises 12.3% Causcasian residents and 87.7% non-Causcasian residents. African American residents are the largest racial group in Detroit's population. The remaining population is primarily composed of Hispanic residents and a small percentage of Causcasian residents. Just south of Detroit, geographically, are River Rouge and Ecorse. Each city, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, has approximately a 47% African American and Hispanic population. The remaining residents, more than 50%, are Causcasian. Detroit, River Rouge, and Ecorse have drastically higher populations of African American and Hispanic residents than the remaining cities in the Downriver area.

For example, Lincoln Park has the next highest population of non-Causcasian residents with 6.7% African American and Hispanic residents (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). Southgate follows Lincoln Park with 6.4% non-Causcasian residents. However, Southgate's minority population includes a mix of African American, Asian, and Hispanic residents. Following Southgate is Allen Park with 4.4% Asian, Hispanic, and African American residents (U.S. Census Bureau). The remaining cities in the Downriver area had less than a 4% minority percentage with very few African American and Hispanic residents as displayed in Table 7.

Table 7.

Race/Ethnicity of Sending Districts

City	Minority Percentage	Predominant Races/Ethnicities
Detroit	87.7%	African American, Hispanic, Some Caucasian
River Rouge	47.4%	African American, Hispanic, Caucasian
Ecorse	47.8%	African American, Hispanic, Caucasian
Lincoln Park	6.7%	Caucasian, African American, Hispanic
Southgate	6.4%	Caucasian, Asian, Hispanic, African American
Allen Park	4.4%	Caucasian, Asian, Hispanic, African American
Grosse Ile	3.9%	Caucasian, Asian, Indian
Wyandotte	3.7%	Caucasian, Hispanic
Trenton	1.9%	Caucasian, Asian, Indian
Riverview	1.1%	Caucasian, Indian, Asian

SES of sending districts.

SES varies widely throughout Detroit and the Downriver area. For

example, more than 26% of Detroit residents live below the poverty level, and

the median income is $29,526 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). Following Detroit are

Ecorse at 22.6% poverty and River Rouge at 22.0% poverty. Ecorse residents earn

a median income of $27,142 with a median home value of $44,300. River Rouge

residents earn a median income of $29,214 with a median home value of $45,500

(U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). These percentages of residents below poverty and

low median incomes are drastically different from those of the remaining

suburbs in the Downriver area.

Table 8.

SES/Socio-Cultural Status of Sending Districts

City	Percentage below Poverty	Median Home Value	Median Income
Detroit	26.1%	$63,600	$29,526
River Rouge	22.0%	$45,500	$29,214
Ecorse	22.6%	$44,300	$27,142
Lincoln Park	7.7%	$84,100	$42,515
Wyandotte	6.2%	$101,700	$43,740
Southgate	4.6%	$109,200	$46,927
Trenton	4.0%	$137,800	$49,556
Allen Park	3.2%	$118,700	$51,992
Riverview	3.0%	$144,300	$47,623
Grosse Ile	1.9%	$248,800	$87,062

While more than 20% of River Rouge, Ecorse, and Detroit residents live below the poverty line, only 7.7% of Lincoln Park residents fall into the same category. The median housing values in River Rouge and Ecorse were approximately $45,000, while Lincoln Park's median housing value is almost double at $84,100 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). Yet Lincoln Park residents own houses with a median home value of almost 20% less than the next group of cities in the Downriver area. Wyandotte's median home value is $101,700, followed by Southgate at $109,200 (U.S. Census Bureau). As the poverty percentage decreases from city to city, the median income and median home values continue to increase, with Grosse Ile having a 1.9% poverty percentage, median home value more than six times higher ($248,800), and median income nearly triple ($87,062) that of residents in River Rouge or Ecorse. This variance in poverty percentage and overall income is represented in Table 8.

Socio-cultural status.

Gilbert and Kahl (2002) defined social classes as the Underclass, Working Poor, Working Class, Middle Class, Upper-Middle Class, and Capitalist Class. The socio-cultural status of each city in the Downriver area can be categorized according to Gilbert and Kahl's breakdown of American social classes. Detroit is the only urban city sending students to SCSD. Residents of Detroit fit Gilbert and Kahl's definitions of Working Poor and Working Class. River Rouge and Ecorse are suburban cities with similar social classes of working poor and working class residents. Next, Lincoln Park, according to Gilbert and Kahl's definition, would be a suburban city composed of working-class and middle-class residents.

Three suburbs fit the description of middle class: Southgate, Allen Park, and Wyandotte. Two other suburbs, Trenton and Riverview, are middle- and upper middle-class suburbs. Grosse Ile, an island community located less than half a mile off of the shores of Wyandotte, Riverview, and Trenton, is composed of residents meeting Gilbert and Kahl's (2002) definition of upper-middle and capitalist class suburban. While Grosse Ile is a township with less development than the other suburbs described, it is not necessarily rural. Grosse Ile is a developed township with no farming areas and median home values nearly double bordering communities. Each city and its socio-cultural status are displayed in Table 9.

Table 9.

Socio-Cultural Status

City	Socio-Cultural Status
Detroit	Urban, Working Poor, and Working Class
River Rouge	Working Poor and Working Class Suburban
Ecorse	Working Poor and Working Class Suburban
Lincoln Park	Working Class and Middle Class Suburban
Southgate	Middle Class Suburban
Allen Park	Middle Class Suburban
Wyandotte	Middle Class Suburban
Trenton	Middle and Upper-Middle Class Suburban
Riverview	Middle and Upper-Middle Class Suburban
Grosse Ile	Upper-Middle and Capitalist Class Rural

Summary.

Communities in the Downriver area vary widely in terms of SES, dominant races, and socio-cultural status. Figure 16 displays the combination of these characteristics and the cities associated with each. Detroit, Ecorse, and River Rouge are all cities with residents who are part of the working poor and working class with high African American and Hispanic populations. Lincoln Park is a city composed of mostly Caucasian residents with some African American and Hispanic residents. Residents of Lincoln Park are working and middle class. Allen Park, Southgate, and Wyandotte are predominantly Caucasian, middle-class suburbs with very few African American and Hispanic residents. Riverview, Trenton, and Grosse Ile are suburbs with mostly Caucasian residents who fall into the upper-middle and capitalist classes. The variance in community characteristics created several clusters of cities. These clusters of cities are presented in Figure 16.

Working Poor/Working Class & High African American/Hispanic Population	Detroit/Ecorse/River Rouge
Working Class/Middle Class & High Caucasian population with some African American and Hispanic residents	Lincoln Park
Middle Class & High Caucasian Population	Allen Park/Southgate/Wyandotte
Upper-Middle/Capitalist Class & High Caucasian Population	Riverview/Trenton/Grosse Ile

Figure 16. Race and Socio-Cultural Status

School-choice student enrollment by city of residence.

Initially, I set out to identify characteristics of students who chose to participate in schools-of-choice at SAHS. I entered this area aware that no one description would fit such a large group of students. However, some general trends were clear. The majority of students were Caucasian students from cities comprised of lower social classes and higher minority percentages than SCSD. Table 10 displays a limited list of the sending districts previously described in terms of race and social class. Also included in Table 10 are the minority percentage of the sending district and the race of each school-choice student attending SAHS in 2004–2005. This is not a complete table of sending districts. Forty-one additional school-choice students attended SAHS from districts not

listed in this table, but were scattered amongst 19 total districts. A complete listing of districts was given in Table 6 (p. 150). The information in Table 10 adds the most to the findings of the Pre-Entry period.

Table 10.

Some Sending Districts of School-Choice Students to SCSD 2004–2005

City of Residence	Minority Percentage	Cauc	Hispanic	Af Amer	Am Indian	Total
Detroit	87.7%	11	13	1	0	25
River Rouge	47.4%	15	5	0	1	21
Ecorse	47.8%	1	1	1	1	4
Lincoln Park	6.7%	31	2	3	0	36
Allen Park	4.4%	4	1	0	0	5
Grosse Ile	3.9%	0	0	0	0	0
Wyandotte	3.7%	11	4	0	0	15
Trenton	1.9%	2	0	0	0	2
Riverview	1.1%	7	1	0	0	8*
Totals	N/A	**82**	**27**	**5**	**2**	**116**

Note: Six (6) of the school-choice students attending SAHS lived in Southgate prior to moving to Riverview and elected to finish high school at SAHS

I used information given to me from high school records that listed race and school-choice status. The categories for ethnicity were listed as Caucasian, Hispanic, African American, and American Indian/Alaskan Native. As Table 10 depicts, the majority of students were Caucasian. The largest group of students entered SCSD from Lincoln Park (36 students) and Detroit (25 students). Detroit's population consists of just over 12% Caucasian residents with African American the largest race (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). However, only one African American

student attended SAHS from Detroit while a total of 25 Detroit residents attended SAHS.

Similarly, River Rouge has significant African American and Hispanic populations, but no African American students attended SAHS from River Rouge. Fifteen of the 21 school-choice students from River Rouge were Caucasian students. The largest group of African American school-choice students attended from Lincoln Park. All three of these students lived less than a quarter-mile outside of Southgate. However, the 31 Caucasian school-choice students from Lincoln Park who attended SAHS were scattered throughout the city of Lincoln Park. Overall, very few African American students attended SAHS, with the largest group of three Lincoln Park students living very close to Southgate's boundary. A group of 13 Hispanic students from Detroit chose to attend SAHS. As noted earlier, Detroit's population is mostly African American residents. In all, the majority of the school-choice students were Caucasian students choosing SAHS from districts with higher African American and Hispanic populations.

Reason for leaving previous district and choosing sahs.

Each of the school-choice students whom I interviewed had a distinct story for leaving his or her previous district and attending SAHS. I interviewed students who lived in Detroit, Lincoln Park, River Rouge, Melvindale, Dearborn Heights, and Trenton. However, individual student stories shared several commonalities. Students chose to leave their previous district for reasons related

to race, socio-cultural status, friends, academics, and personal problems because something overall did not go as they wished in their previous district. They chose to attend SAHS for the same reasons. Each of these reasons is displayed in Figure 17 below.

Reasons for Leaving Previous District				
Race	Socio-Cultural Status	Friends	Academics	Something Went Wrong
Reasons for Attending SAHS				

Figure 17. Reason for Leaving Previous District and Attending SAHS

Race.

A Caucasian school-choice student from Detroit had the option to attend either Detroit Southwestern High School or Detroit Western High School. As a Caucasian student, she noted, "A lot of people go there and say there's more Mexicans [at Western] and like, if I went to Cass Tech, there's more black students…you want to be with more people your color" (Anonymous, personal communication, September 27, 2004). A Hispanic school-choice student from River Rouge was asked why he left his previous school. He noted, "I didn't really fit in with all the African American children there" (Anonymous, personal communication, March 4, 2005).

In a conversation with some parents of newly enrolled school-choice students, one parent described how his daughter, a Caucasian student, had just moved in with him from outside of Michigan and he did not want her to go to

the Detroit Public Schools, a predominantly African American district. Another parent was pulling his child, another Caucasian student, out of the Taylor Public Schools because of an influx of Inkster students who he claimed have caused many problems within the school. Inkster is a district with a 97% non-Caucasian population. The dominant race in Inkster is African American.

Socio-cultural status.

The only African American school-choice student from Detroit described his reasons for leaving Detroit and attending SAHS in great detail. After not being accepted to one of the magnet schools, Cass Tech High School, in Detroit, the student would have attended either Detroit Southwestern or Western High Schools. He told me that when he walked off of his 8th grade graduation ceremony stage, he told his parents, "I don't want to go to Southwestern or Western. I want to go somewhere else" (Anonymous, personal communication, September 16, 2004). He then took it upon himself to find another district to attend. During the summer, he looked in the phone book for school district phone numbers and began calling districts to ask whether they were accepting school-choice students. He chose SCSD over other districts because, at the time he was calling, "Southgate answered the phone" (Anonymous, personal communication, September 16, 2004). When asked if, after getting through to SCSD, he attempted again to call Lincoln Park, River Rouge, or Ecorse, the student noted that he felt each district was just "as bad as Detroit" (Anonymous, personal communication, September 16, 2004). Therefore, he chose SCSD.

A Hispanic school-choice student from Detroit said that his mother "…was looking around in the papers and she didn't want me going to the Detroit schools. She saw an ad in the papers about Southgate schools-of-choice…I've been going here since" (Anonymous, personal communication, September 20, 2004). When asked what he didn't like about his last school, he stated "…metal detectors" (Anonymous, personal communication, September 26, 2004).

A Caucasian school-choice student from River Rouge described how she had visited other districts prior to choosing SCSD. In particular, she noted that when she visited Allen Park, she was told that she needed to attend the "community school" for one year prior to attending Allen Park High School. The "community school" was an alternative program. She disliked this option because she wanted to attend a traditional high school. The conversations with these students followed a pattern of wanting an education in a school that is perceived to be a traditional high school with a reputation of enrolling better students than Detroit, River Rouge, Ecorse, and Lincoln Park.

Friends.

One Caucasian school-choice student decided to attend SCSD because "some of my friends from Rouge [River Rouge] transferred a year or so ahead of me" (Anonymous, personal communication, September 6, 2004) to SCSD. After speaking with her further, she maintained this same group of friends but did not socialize with any other students who still attended River Rouge. One of her

friends, another Caucasian school-choice student from River Rouge, stated that when you first come to SCSD, "you meet the kids that you used to hang out with at your old school" (Anonymous, personal communication, March 4, 2005). A Caucasian school-choice student from Dearborn Heights noted that she chose SCSD "because my friend goes to this school" (Anonymous, personal communication, January 21, 2005). Many of the school-choice students I interviewed noted that they had friends who already attended SCSD or chose to attend SCSD with them. This was interesting to hear from students and reaffirmed in interviews with school administrators.

For example, one school administrator observed, "Pretty much the kids that come in know at least a few students before they enter" (Anonymous, personal communication, September 8, 2004). As another school-choice student from Detroit described, his mother had a friend in their neighborhood who sent her son to SCSD prior to his attendance in the district. SCSD, like many other districts, spent up to $70,000 on advertising in a year when the majority of students who enrolled as school-choice students already knew someone who attended SCSD.

Academics.

Many of the school-choice students whom I spoke with identified academic reasons for choosing SCSD and leaving their previous district. For example, a Hispanic school-choice student from Detroit stated that at his last school, "The teachers would just sit up there and every day was a free day"

(Anonymous, personal communication, October 3, 2004). A Caucasian school-choice student from River Rouge described his last school as "…kind of chaotic. Kids did whatever they wanted" (Anonymous, personal communication, March 4, 2005). Or, as a Caucasian school-choice student from River Rouge stated, she left River Rouge for SAHS because "my grades were slipping" (Anonymous, personal communication, September 6, 2004).

A Caucasian school-choice student from Detroit stated, "I was going to go to Western or Southwestern, but my mom said that getting all A's in one of those schools wasn't as good as getting all good grades in another school" (Anonymous, personal communication, September 27, 2004). This fit the rationale used by other Detroit students who identified that some of the Detroit high schools, other than Cass Tech, have a perception as being ineffective. For example, after deeper conversation with a student about his choice of leaving Detroit to attend SCSD, he noted that Western and Southwestern High Schools were not considered strong schools in Detroit. However, Cass Tech in Detroit was a college preparatory school that enrolled the better and more affluent students in Detroit. Since he was not accepted into Cass Tech, where his sister went to school, he wanted to attend a school that he felt could better prepare him for college.

The decision to attend SAHS for academic reasons was pretty common among school-choice students whom I interviewed. This was noted by school administrators, but in a different context. For example, one school administrator stated, "Sometimes schools close and when they close, students then have to

determine where to go. For example, with private schools, do I go back to the school in the city that I live in or do I look for a quality education somewhere else?" (Anonymous, personal communication, September 8, 2004).

One Caucasian school-choice student from Lincoln Park described how he visited SCSD while playing basketball for another school. He liked the facilities and he was unhappy in his previous district. While living in Lincoln Park, he attended another school district. At that school district, he noted that "the teachers weren't getting paid enough so they didn't really have any passion for teaching… So, if their kids failed, they didn't really care…" (Anonymous, personal communication, March 3, 2005). This student went into great detail about his decision-making process and basically decided to attend SCSD because he liked the basketball program. Ironically, he never played or tried out for basketball during his years at SAHS. Another Caucasian school-choice student from Lincoln Park attended SCSD because of the band program, while another liked the football and basketball programs. The reasons for choosing SCSD by these students were related to the academic program overall. Even though a student discussed other areas of interest like basketball, the pattern of the interview fit the majority of interviews. The students generally started talking about academic reasons for leaving their previous district and choosing SCSD, then shifted to some other miscellaneous reasons like basketball or football and finished by returning to academics.

Something went wrong.

A Hispanic school-choice student from Detroit stated, "People just kind of took it for granted and didn't care and skipped school" (Anonymous, personal communication, September 1, 2004). She continued by commenting "…this wasn't my first choice. I didn't want to leave where I was from…I had no choice…skipping…that was my habit and that's what happened" (Anonymous, personal communication, September 1, 2004). This student went into deeper detail later and said that she needed to leave Detroit schools because of issues with friends and disciplinary issues at school.

A Hispanic school-choice student from Detroit went into great detail to describe a history of long-term substitute teachers and lack of classroom control in his previous schools. He had a long history of changing schools. As he stated, "The private schools, there were three of them [that I attended]…I went there for a few years…it was the same thing. So, [my mother] sent me out here" (Anonymous, personal communication, October 3, 2004). The reason for the private schools was that "I got kicked out of the public school around home" (Anonymous, personal communication, October 3, 2004). He elaborated that "The private schools were $4,000 per year…so, my mom sent me out here because her friend sent her son here" (Anonymous, personal communication, October 3, 2004).

One Caucasian school-choice student from River Rouge stated that, "I didn't like where I was before…[my parents] thought that I should get out of there" (Anonymous, personal communication, September 6, 2004). This student

casually described this as her reason for changing schools. On the other hand, a school-choice student who turned out to be a multi-sport, varsity athlete enrolled in advanced coursework with a 3.8 grade point average at SAHS stated that his reason for choosing SCSD was "I had to because I got into trouble at my old school" (Anonymous, personal communication, March 4, 2005). This student was also from River Rouge.

The student did not want to elaborate on what he was in trouble for at his old school and I chose not to push the issue since the school-choice application asks if the student was ever suspended or expelled at their previous school(s). It was common practice that SCSD denied students who admitted to being suspended or expelled at their previous school(s). The student obviously did not tell the truth on the application and putting him into a position of admitting to lying on an application was not the purpose of the interview or the study.

A Caucasian school-choice student from Dearborn Heights had a history of moving from school to school until attending SCSD. For example, in ninth grade, she "went to Henry Ford Academy in Greenfield Village [Dearborn]. And, I didn't like that school" (Anonymous, personal communication, January 21, 2005). She continued by describing that, at Henry Ford Academy, "it was in a museum and you had to walk all the way through the village to get to all your classes. And, I didn't like the people…they didn't have any sports and it wasn't just like a normal high school. It was weird" (Anonymous, personal communication, January 21, 2005). The student attended several public and private schools prior to ninth grade.

One of the most interesting stories was from a Caucasian school-choice student from Melvindale. The student attended public schools until 4th grade. After 4th grade in the public schools, "I was home-schooled from fifth- through eighth-grade. In ninth, I went to Michigan Health Academy" (Anonymous, personal communication, November 16, 2004). Michigan Health Academy was a charter school that, after one year, moved from a rented space in Southgate to Dearborn. She did not want to attend the school in its new location. Therefore, she attended SCSD.

Overall, many of the students whom I interviewed were school-choice in another district or charter-school prior to attending SCSD. This was an interesting occurrence. From a school administrator description, school-choice students attended SCSD because "…something hasn't gone right in their district…A child that hasn't had good friends and can't shake them" (Anonymous, personal communication, September 27, 2004).

Summary.

Many of the school-choice students credited their change in schools to seeking out a more comfortable environment. After analyzing the data and creating a profile that described the differences between communities sending and not sending students to SCSD, it became apparent that seeking a comfortable environment involved several factors. Race, socio-cultural status, friends, academics, and having to actually leave their old district were the commonalities in the students' descriptions. While these were listed as reasons for leaving their

previous district, they were also reasons for choosing a new district. It seemed that students looked at the school they were attending, identified reasons why they were unhappy and selected a district that fit the needs they were seeking. These needs generally involved socio-cultural status, culture, and race.

In the cases where students attended SAHS because their friends were students at SAHS, the school-choice students were seeking a place that fit their socio-cultural needs. This could have been the result of cultural congruence or friendship or a shared interest in attending a school that fit their social class dreams. Either way, student responses seemed to identify that what they were really concerned with was finding a racial and socio-cultural match with their personal characteristics, values, and beliefs.

Encounter

The Encounter Period was framed by the relationship between the school-choice students and Southgate Anderson High School (SAHS). This encounter period was shaped by the reasons the students chose SAHS and the beliefs held by the school about school-choice students. These beliefs included characteristics of SAHS, surrounding districts, and students from surrounding districts. In particular, the encounter period was based primarily upon racial-congruence and whether or not the school-choice students were racially congruent to SAHS.

However, other factors such as socio-cultural status, friends, activities, academics, and safety / violence played a role in determining the relationship between school-choice students and SAHS. These categories are outlined in

Figure 18 for both the school-choice students and SAHS. It was the relationship between school-choice students' characteristics with the characteristics of SAHS that shaped the encounter period.

Southgate Anderson High School	ENCOUNTER PERIOD	School-choice students
Race • Predominantly Caucasian Students • All Caucasian Staff		Race • Caucasian School-Choice Students • African American and Hispanic School-Choice students
Socio-Cultural Status • Middle Class • Suburban		Socio-Cultural Status
Activities • Extra-Curricular • Social		Friends
		Activities
Academics/Learning		Academics/Learning
Limited Violence		Safety/Violence

Figure 18. Encounter Period Relationships

Race.

The relationship between school-choice students and SAHS was immediately defined according to race. SAHS students were predominantly Caucasian and considered students from River Rouge, Detroit, Ecorse, and Lincoln Park to be African American or Hispanic. This resulted in school-choice students being categorized according to race and not school-choice status. In the

eyes of the SCSD community, school-choice students were minority students or lower SES students. Specifically, school-choice students were believed to be Hispanic or African American students at SAHS. The boundaries of the organization were drawn based upon race and not school-choice status. Caucasian school-choice students found themselves more easily included into the existing culture while Hispanic and African American school-choice students found themselves unable to become full actors in the organization. This was a result of the relationship between school-choice student characteristics and the characteristics of SAHS. According to Figure 18, the first characteristic was race. The relationship between school-choice students' race and the dominant race of SAHS immediately defined the encounter period for school-choice students.

The difference in beliefs and experiences of school-choice students fell almost completely along the lines of racial congruence. Caucasian students seemed to have similar experiences that revolved around initially trying to make friends and become actors in the organization while Hispanic and African American students were excluded from becoming fully included into the organization. Interviews with African American and Hispanic students included student comments that the encounter period involved struggles with the dominant Caucasian culture. On the other hand, the Caucasian students seemed to focus on the academic side of the change and the ease of making new friends. In particular, the Caucasian students agreed that teachers and students were completely unaware that they were even school-choice students. In turn, their experiences were affected by racial congruence and not by school-choice status.

This relationship between characteristics of school-choice students and SAHS shaped the encounter period for school-choice students.

African american and hispanic school-choice students.

As one Hispanic school-choice student noted, "They right away assumed that minorities are from school-of-choice" (Anonymous, personal communication, October 29, 2004). This statement defined the relationship between minority school-choice students and SAHS. It was this belief of school-choice students as African American or Hispanic that conflicted in shaping the experience of school-choice students. According to data outlined in Table 6 (p. 150), 74% of the school-choice students who attended SAHS were Caucasian. Nevertheless, the common belief at SAHS was that school-choice student meant Hispanic or African American student. This belief was founded in the beliefs held of the sending districts. Student statements like, "Oh, um, the minorities just need to go back where they came from. This school is just getting overpopulated with too many black girls and Mexican girls" (Anonymous, personal communication, October 29, 2004) shaped and reinforced such a belief.

In-district students mirrored this belief in their comments during interviews. For example, one in-district student commented of school-choice, "It's opened me up to a bunch of different minorities in school so that the school is not just all Caucasian" (Anonymous, personal communication, March 4, 2005). This same student provided a description of school-choice students as "most

school-of-choice students are multi-racial …minorities, basically African American and Mexican" (Anonymous, personal communication, March 4, 2005).

At first, it appeared that only in-district students held the belief that school-choice students were African American or Hispanic. However, as one Hispanic school-choice student noted, "The first day that I came, I right away knew that I think I might be the only Mexican here…then, I started hanging around with most of the seniors because there were lots of minorities that were seniors" (Anonymous, personal communication, October 29, 2004). One African American student noted of his initial encounter at SAHS, "I wasn't around the same kind of people at the other school. This school is all white" (Anonymous, personal communication, September 23, 2004). Another Hispanic school-choice student who transferred out of SCSD after one year stated, of SAHS, "there are a lot of white people" (Anonymous, personal communication, September 29, 2004).

The relationship between school-choice students and SAHS with regard to racial congruence and beliefs related to race shaped the experiences of school-choice students during the encounter period. For example, one Hispanic school-choice student stated, "The fact that I'm a minority at this school kind of makes me uncomfortable" (Anonymous, personal communication, September 1, 2004). She continued by saying, "Sometimes I feel that I don't belong here" (Anonymous, personal communication, September 1, 2004). In a follow-up interview the student elaborated on her struggles with racial congruence when she stated that "my bad experiences were just with the girls who flip [sic] something like, oh Mexican this, you know" (Anonymous, personal

communication, October 29, 2004). The struggles with the new culture and lack of congruence were consistent among the minority school-choice students that I interviewed. As one Hispanic school-choice student stated regarding his initial transition into SCSD, "I don't know how to get along with these people" (Anonymous, personal communication, October 3, 2004).

Racial congruence issues were not unique to Hispanic and African American school-choice students. For example, during an observation on March 16, 2005, I recorded the following in my notes regarding an African American student who lived in Southgate: "Students and teachers believe she is school-choice because she is a minority student. This frustrates her to the point that she wishes school-choice would stop. After a long tirade, the student made the comment that 'the students who are supposed to be here should be here'" (Observation notes, March 16, 2005). Her sentiments were mirrored by other Hispanic and African American students engaged in the conversation. I later interviewed this student and she elaborated on the struggle as an African American student in SAHS and the assumption by other students and staff that, based upon her race, she must be a school-choice student.

Hispanic and African American school-choice students struggled with the relationship with the SAHS community. Perceptions held by the students and by SAHS along with the lack of racial congruence during the encounter period outlined this struggle. For example, a Hispanic school-choice student recalled that when he first came to SAHS, he felt picked on by other students and by staff because of the way he looked and dressed. He felt that he struggled with fitting

into the dominant culture. So, as he recalled of his first month in SCSD, "I got into a fight, got kicked out, came back, got into a fight and got kicked out again" (Anonymous, personal communication, October 13, 2004). An African American school-choice student recalled that he was called a derogatory term during his first month at SAHS. The racial slur also resulted in a fight between the African American student and a Caucasian student.

Another Hispanic school-choice student stated of SAHS that "it just seems like you gotta [sic] be something in order to be in their group. The jocks or something like that and when, even at lunch time, you'll see tables…there's like two minority lunch tables stuck together. They're all together and all around it's just, excuse me, Caucasians" (Anonymous, personal communication, September 1, 2004). Racial congruence was a concern for African American and Hispanic school-choice students during the encounter period. Sentiments shared by minority, school-choice students ranged from "I wasn't around the same kind of people at the other school" (Anonymous, personal communication, September 23, 2004) to "I don't trust them or…I stereotype something about them" (Anonymous, personal communication, September 1, 2004) to "sometimes I feel that I don't belong here" (Anonymous, personal communication, September 1, 2004).

Even the responses to the same questions from Hispanic and African American school-choice students to Caucasian school-choice students were drastically different. The first question that was asked in every student interview was "What has been your experience as a school-choice student?" One Hispanic

school-choice student answered the question by stating that "…nothing bad has happened to me so far" (Anonymous, personal communication, September 1, 2004). On the other hand, the Caucasian students answered the same question by referring to friends or academics. The relationship between school-choice students and SAHS was distinctly different based upon the race of the school-choice student.

Caucasian school-choice students.

Caucasian school-choice students provided very different descriptions of their initial encounter phase that represented a very different relationship between themselves and SAHS. Caucasian school-choice students found that their relationship with SAHS was different than minority students because of racial-congruence. For example, a Caucasian school-choice student noted that "I just kind of fit in with everyone" (Anonymous, personal communication, November 16, 2004). The student continued by stating that "they (minority school-choice students) don't (fit in)…they have to feel even more uncomfortable" (Anonymous, personal communication, November 16, 2004). Teachers, according to this Caucasian school-choice student, were unaware that she was a school-choice student because "I don't really think that I stick out from everyone else. Like I said, I kind of blend" (Anonymous, personal communication, November 16, 2004). As another Caucasian school-choice student stated when asked the question, "Why do you think no one knows you're school-of-choice?" she responded, "Because I'm not different from

everyone else. There's nothing different" (Anonymous, personal communication, January 21, 2005).

Racial congruence during the encounter period was the primary factor in shaping the relationship between school-choice students and SAHS. Other factors such as socio-cultural status, friends, activities, academics/learning, and safety/violence also played a role in defining this relationship, but only after racial congruence allowed Caucasian students to access other areas of the SAHS community.

The Caucasian students felt as if they blended in while the African American and Hispanic students noted their lack of racial congruence. The beliefs about the dominant race of SAHS students were that Southgate students were Caucasian. As an in-district, Caucasian student stated "…a student from Southgate is Caucasian. A normal white person" (Anonymous, personal communication, March 4, 2005). This belief was mirrored and extended by an administrator who noted that the district was "…white, middle-class previous to school-of-choice…now we have a variety of racial and ethnic groups" (Anonymous, personal communication, October 13, 2004).

The empirical data suggested a different racial mix from the common beliefs. School-choice students at SAHS were not generally minority students. Out of the 157 school-choice students enrolled at SAHS, seven were African American students and 32 were Hispanic. In total, 116 out of the 157 school-choice students were Caucasian and thus "blended into" the culture.

Socio-cultural status.

Collectively, school-choice students described Southgate resident students in a fairly similar manner. For example, one school-choice student described Southgate students by stating "a lot of them think they're better than other kids…they might have money or drive a nicer car than someone else in the parking lot. So, they think they're better than other kids" (Anonymous, personal communication, March 3, 2005).

Southgate resident students tended to generally describe school-choice students according to race. In addition, perceptions of school-choice students held by SAHS students demonstrated the relationship between school-choice students and SAHS. For example, an in-district student stated, "Most school-of-choice students…come from broken families" (Anonymous, personal communication, March 4, 2005). Perceptions held by SAHS students that school-choice students differed socio-culturally affected the relationship between school-choice students and SAHS.

School-choice students seemed to describe the socio-cultural differences between who was believed to be a school-choice student and who was believed to be an SAHS student. As one school-choice student noted "…most kids that are school-of-choice are kind of thuggish" (Anonymous, personal communication, March 3, 2005). This description was mirrored in almost every conversation with a school-choice student, none of whom looked "thuggish." "Thuggish" was a term that either meant a Caucasian student dressing in a manner generally associated with minority students or with urban culture. As another school-

choice student stated, "Sometimes people think that school-choice students are bad and they have to come here because they were kicked out of their other school and stuff, but it's not like that all the time" (Anonymous, personal communication, January 21, 2005). Socially, the school-choice students referred to Southgate students as "…not as thuggish and ghetto" (Anonymous, personal communication, March 3, 2005).

In reality, the relationship between some school-choice students and SAHS was affected by this belief. For example, one school-choice student recalled that he was regularly pulled out of class by school administrators to have his backpack and locker searched. He claimed that this happened because of his school-choice status while referring to an incident when an administrator told him, "I know that you're school-of-choice. You can go back to Lincoln Park. We don't need you here" (Anonymous, personal communication, March 3, 2005). The belief that school-choice students are troubled students was alive and acted as an exclusionary boundary for these students to fully become involved in the culture.

One interesting description of the encounter phase and the change in culture was given by a Hispanic student from Detroit. The student stated that "I never saw anyone skateboard before I came here" (Anonymous, personal communication, October 3, 2004). This was an interesting response and was not mentioned by other students in the interviews. However, the concept of a drastic change in culture was evident from this student's response to the responses of other school-choice students.

Upon initial entry into SAHS, one school-choice student recalled that "You're really nervous at first and you're apprehensive" (Anonymous, personal communication, September 6, 2004). This was the sentiment shared by the school-choice students both through interviews and observations. Whenever a new member enters a new environment, the initial exposure is affected by the newcomer's previous experiences. In the case of school-choice students, the learning of the values, assumptions, and beliefs at SAHS was shaped by their previous academic and social experiences. In general, the school-choice students identified specific values, assumptions, and beliefs related to facilities, safety, and socio-cultural characteristics of students. Many of these values, assumptions, and beliefs were discovered in what Louis (1980) defined as detection, diagnosis, interpretation, and surprise.

The detection, diagnosis, interpretation, and surprise process for students included differences in facilities, social atmosphere, safety, and initial experience. Some school-choice students entered SAHS during the completion of renovations funded by a local bond program. Several of these students noted that, during the construction stages, the buildings were in disarray and their initial experiences were altered. As one student commented, "The whole construction thing…that was bad" (Anonymous, personal communication, September 6, 2004). However, the students who entered the district after the completion of renovations were quick to comment on physical characteristics of the buildings. The comments varied from "…the environment's different" (Anonymous, personal communication, September 1, 2004) to "the facilities just looked nicer…the

school's nice" (Anonymous, personal communication, March 3, 2005). Another student noted that the school was "…cleaner…quieter…the environment is safer" (Anonymous, personal communication, September 20, 2004).

Friends.

School-choice students were able to reflect and remember their feelings of their first day in the new district. As one student noted, "Oh my God. I don't know no one [sic]. They're all giddy and know each other" (Anonymous, personal communication, September 27, 2004). Another student stated, "I had no friends" (Anonymous, personal communication, September 23, 2004). On the other hand, one Caucasian, school-choice student explained, "Everyone just kind of treated me like I'd always been there and everyone was nice to me. It was just really different from what I expected" (Anonymous, personal communication, November 16, 2004).

A Caucasian school-choice student described her initial perception of the new setting as "it was a huge school and I was scared" (Anonymous, personal communication, November 16, 2004). This student successfully transitioned into the new environment very quickly. She continued to explain her first day by stating, "I'm really shy and quiet. So, when I came in, I was really scared…first hour, I was kind of sitting there and I didn't talk to anyone…the teacher told Sarah to come up and show me around the school" (Anonymous, personal communication, November 16, 2004). Meanwhile, a minority student who struggled in her transition to the new setting, identified that her first day was

"…lonely…no tour" (Anonymous, personal communication, November 29, 2004). These initial feelings described by school-choice students outlined a relationship concern regarding friendships at SAHS.

As one school administrator noted, "The other concerns that those students would have is because they don't know anybody" (Anonymous, personal communication, October 13, 2004). As one school-choice student recalled his thoughts of the first day of school, "They all had their little cliques. Everyone already knew each other" (Anonymous, personal communication, October 3, 2004).

Overall, friendships fell along the lines of racial congruence. As one Hispanic school-choice student described her pattern of friendships at SAHS, she noted that race was a primary concern and obstacle. She stated that, in terms of initial friendships, "It was people who lived in Southgate. It started mostly with Hispanic students" (Anonymous, personal communication, Octoberr 3, 2004). However, after some time, "I started talking to some white students and some of their friends" (Anonymous, personal communication, October 3, 2004).

Activities.

School-choice students crossed the boundary into SCSD as a result of resource dependence. As a result, two types of actors were created and their relationships with SAHS were defined by membership rights within the organization. The first type were the actors who entered the organization as a result of resource dependence and were not permitted to become involved in the

activities of SAHS. These students entered the organization but were not included in the activities of the dominant culture. In this case, African American and Hispanic school-choice students were actors who entered SAHS but were not fully involved in the activities at SAHS. Their relationship was determined by racial congruence, and this lack of racial congruence defined their membership rights within SAHS. The second type of actor was one who entered SAHS as a result of resource dependence and was included in the activities of the dominant culture. These students, all Caucasian school-choice students, crossed a separate boundary as a result of their inclusion in activities. Since these students were racially congruent with SAHS, their relationship allowed them to gain increased membership rights and inclusion into SAHS.

Two distinct stories can be told describing the experiences of school-choice students at SAHS as they related to the area of becoming actors in activities (Scott, 2003). The first story described the experiences while at the high school. The second story described the experiences back home. As one Caucasian school-choice student stated, the only difficulty was "…not always being able to hang out with everybody that I wanted to after school" (Anonymous, personal communication, September 29, 2004). Another Caucasian school-choice student stated, "people that live here can do more school related stuff" (Anonymous, personal communication, September 6, 2004).

"Stuff" referred to the activities that an actor could participate in within an organization. For example, athletics and band are the type of "stuff" to which the student was referring. After looking at the list of more than 600 students who

participated in athletics and band, I noticed that school-choice students were well represented on this list. While the percentage of school-choice students enrolled at the high school (14%) was slightly higher than the percentage of school-choice students participating in athletics (9.5%), the difference was very minimal and did not account for participation in clubs or groups.

Nevertheless, coaches and in-district students appeared not to realize that some of their players or teammates were school-choice students. For example, one in-district student stated that "I don't have any or I haven't played with anyone school-of-choice" (Anonymous, personal communication, March 4, 2005). After checking the rosters of the teams this student played on, several of the student's teammates, all Caucasian students, were school-choice students. In many cases, this perception of not including school-choice students in clubs and activities appeared to be incorrect at the high school level with one exception. The students participating in athletics and band were nearly all Caucasian school-choice students.

Social clubs and activities were prevalent at SAHS. Any student at SAHS was allowed to participate in these clubs, but usually only those students who had become fully included actors within the organization tended to participate. As one Caucasian school-choice student noted, "I didn't do anything my sophomore year. It was my junior year when I started doing stuff" (Anonymous, personal communication, January 21, 2005). "Doing stuff" seemed to be accessible to school-choice students once they were able to figure out transportation issues and learned the norms of the organization. For example, the

same student noted, "My junior year it was easier because I knew people. I got more comfortable. I knew the teachers. I knew the teachers who were, like, in the clubs and stuff" (Anonymous, personal communication, January 21, 2005). As a senior, this student participated in cheerleading, class congress, prom committee, hockey spirit, big sisters, and other clubs. She noted that SAHS helped make many of these activities, such as class congress and big sisters, more accessible because they often met during the school day. Symbolically, the student became involved because she was able to take advantage of her relationship with SAHS based upon her personal characteristics and the congruence with characteristics of the dominant culture of SAHS.

Other school-choice students described similar experiences related to involvement and taking the time to get involved. One school-choice student attributed playing a sport to helping him meet new people. He stated, "If I wouldn't have played a sport right away, I think that I probably would have met the same kids, but I don't know if we would have the same close relationships or friendships that we have" (Anonymous, personal communication, March 4, 2005). However, the Michigan High School Athletic Association prohibited students, for one semester, from participating in a sport if they had changed school districts without physically changing district of residence. This rule was intended to prohibit schools from using schools-of-choice as a method for athletic recruitment. In the case of this student, he entered SCSD in 8th grade and simply showed up to practice the first day. This was vital to his successful socialization into the new school district.

Other school-choice students noted that they felt included, by the school, in much of the school's activities. One Hispanic school-choice student told the story of being included at the honor's assembly. Hence, she had been included in an area of importance to her. Some students appeared to feel, for the most part, included in the school activities. This was not necessarily true their first year or so, but, in time, they began to become more active in the culture as a result of familiarity, having addressed transportation issues, and defining their relationship with SAHS.

However, participation in school activities was different from participation in social activities. School-choice students noted that Southgate students all "…had their little cliques…everyone knew each other" (Anonymous, personal communication, October 3, 2004). Yet, in terms of access, some Caucasian school-choice students pointed out issues related to transportation and regulations outside of SCSD's control. One student noted that he played basketball at his previous high school; however, when he changed to Southgate Anderson High School, "I couldn't play my first semester" (Anonymous, personal communication, March 3, 2005). This was an issue entirely outside of the school's control.

Another issue that served as an organizational boundary that was outside of the school's control was physical location. As one student noted, "It's kinda [sic] hard. I mean, I live in Detroit. So, it's about a 25-minute drive. It's hard to see your friends" (Anonymous, personal communication, September 27,2004). Another student noted a similar problem by stating, "…a lot of stuff I don't get to

come here and do" (Anonymous, personal communication, September 6, 2005). Unfortunately, the issue of transportation to extracurricular school activities was not one that could be addressed by SCSD.

In the end, the level and the degree of involvement in activities at SAHS was determined by the relationship between school-choice students and SAHS. If students were racially congruent and socio-culturally congruent, they were given different membership rights. Their relationship with the dominant culture was one of congruence, and this congruence provided these students with the ability to become involved in extra-curricular and social activities at a level different from their Hispanic and African American peers.

Academics/learning.

As one school-choice student described, SAHS is "a better environment. More learning goes on instead of just whatever kids want to do" (Anonymous, personal communication, March 4, 2005). When talking about the differences between his old district and SCSD, a school-choice student stated about SCSD, "They have a good program here. They know what they want. They know what they're trying to do" (Anonymous, personal communication, March 3, 2005). The student was referring to SAHS's instructional format that was organized around the State of Michigan's Career Pathways. The largest career pathway was the Engineering/Manufacturing and Industrial Technology Pathway. In total, nearly 50% of the students at SAHS declared "manufacturing" as their career pathway. The next largest pathway was the Business Pathway. The smallest two

pathways were Health Services and Natural Resources/Agriscience, with less than 15% of the students demonstrating interest in these two areas. The student's observation of the differences between the educational program at his old school and SAHS were centered on the career focus of the school and district.

Students also consistently noted that they felt the teachers at SAHS were better than those in their previous district. For example, one school-choice student noted that "The teachers are more helpful…things are more career-guided" (Anonymous, personal communication, September 26, 2004). These expectations were elaborated in another school-choice student's comments when he stated, "The school actually makes you do work" (Anonymous, personal communication, October 3, 2004). As another school-choice student explained, "I had to buckle down and study" (Anonymous, personal communication, September 23, 2004).

In the area of academics, school-choice students generally viewed the expectations as more difficult than their previous school's, except for one case. A previously home-schooled student stated, "I expected myself to be really behind in everything and I found that I was right where everyone else was" (Anonymous, personal communication, November 16, 2004). The remaining students, especially students who had previously attended River Rouge or Detroit schools, commented that the work was more rigorous and difficult. For example, one school-choice student from Detroit stated of the work at SAHS "it's definitely harder" (Anonymous, personal communication, September 27, 2004), while another student, from River Rouge, stated that the classes "seem harder"

(Anonymous, personal communication, September 29, 2004). However, another student from River Rouge stated that the classes were "…better, not necessarily harder" (Anonymous, personal communication, September 29, 2004). After asking clarifying questions to this statement, the student attributed his feelings to increased classroom control, making it easier to learn. In nearly all interviews, students made brief mention related to academics, then quickly went into dialogue related to the culture of SAHS, the students at SAHS, social interactions, and their relationship with SAHS.

Two of the most interesting statements made by school-choice students in terms of academics and learning were from a Caucasian school-choice student and a Hispanic school-choice student. The Caucasian school-choice student, from River Rouge, stated, "I think I realized that if you came someplace that's different and you like it more, you learn better. Like, I didn't like where I was before so my grades were slipping, but now that I'm here I actually enjoy coming to school. I have better grades" (Anonymous, personal communication, September 6, 2004), whereas the Hispanic school-choice student, from Detroit, stated "I was at the honors assembly" (October 29, 2004). This was a student who transferred high schools because of a lack of success at her last school. While this student struggled socially due to racial-congruency issues, she valued her academic achievements. The student showed genuine excitement about her increased academic achievement when discussing the honors assembly experience. Regardless of race, students demonstrated a concern for academic

success. Their statements were generally brief, but there was an obvious concern about academic success along with social success.

Safety/violence.

Several Hispanic and African American school-choice students noted that SAHS students were not as upfront with their disagreements with other students. For example, one African American student stated, "People do act different… at my old school, when someone had something to say about you, they said it to your face. Here, there is a lot of talk behind people's backs" (Anonymous, personal communication, September 23, 2004). This observation was mirrored in many of the conversations with Hispanic and African American school-choice students. Whatever the reasoning, the school-choice students were in consensus on this perception of Southgate students and helped to describe the relationship between SAHS and school-choice students. Such observations seemed related to perceptions of safety within the school. As one school-choice student said of his previous school, "There were a lot of fights and, here…maybe a fight or two every two months" (Anonymous, personal communication, March 4, 2005).

The focus on safety was evident during interviews with school administrators. For example, as one school administrator noted, "Only three students had to be rejected [for acceptance] because of discipline problems at their old school" (Anonymous, personal communication, September 8, 2004). Another administrator described the process as "…pretty neat, especially for the

high school, that we [tell] those kids if they want to come here to screw around, sell drugs, or any of that bad stuff, they're not going to do it here. We're just going to fight and they're going to lose and they're not going to have a school to go to" (Anonymous, personal communication, September 8, 2004).

Summary.

The encounter period was not just about individual school-choice students. Instead, the encounter period was a time to determine the relationship between the school-choice students and SAHS. For the Hispanic and African American school-choice students, the encounter period was completely based upon racial congruence. The relationship between Hispanic and African American students and SAHS was defined by the lack of racial congruence. However, for the Caucasian school-choice students who dressed similarly to most Southgate students, the encounter period included a relationship defined by congruence between characteristics beyond race. In short, the perceptions of the SCSD community that "school-choice student equals Hispanic or African American student of lower SES or troubled" made the relationships and experiences of the school-choice students drastically different based upon racial congruence or socio-cultural congruence. The school-choice students chose to attend SCSD for cultural reasons and were included or excluded for cultural reasons.

The pattern of schools-of-choice enrollment choices mirrored the pattern of the "white flight" movement that created communities such as Southgate. This

pattern has continued as a result of schools-of-choice and greatly altered student experiences. Although very few students would openly claim that race or culture played a role in their choosing to enter SCSD as school-choice students, the trend and theme presented itself through deeper analysis. Students stated that they left their old districts because of parent choices or inability to attend a specific school. Even further, SCSD students and school-choice students described a Southgate resident as Caucasian and school-choice students as Hispanic or African American, lower SES, or troubled. The data, however, show that more than 74% of school-choice students attending SAHS were Caucasian. This theme, anyone-not-from-Southgate equals Hispanic or African American or lower SES or troubled shaped the overall experiences and expectations of school-choice students in SAHS. In the end, the relationship between school-choice students and SAHS was shaped by racial congruence.

Outcomes

School-choice students crossed the boundary into SCSD as a result of resource dependence. However, two types of actors were created under this resource dependence model. The first type were the actors who entered the organization as a result of resource dependence and were not permitted to become involved in the activities of SCSD. These students entered the organization but were not included in the activities of the dominant culture. The second type of actor was one who entered SCSD as a result of resource

dependence and was included in the activities of the dominant culture. These students crossed a separate boundary as a result of their inclusion in activities.

Upon entering SCSD, students had three outcomes in terms of socializing into the new environment. Their experiences related to what Scott (2003) defined as becoming an actor involved in activities that allowed the students to be included or excluded. Students crossed the first organizational boundary by enrolling at SAHS and were actors in the new organization with limited inclusion. However, their level of participation in the social activities was dictated by racial congruence or socio-cultural congruence. This left students with three choices: fit in with the dominant culture and be accepted by them; adapt to fit in with the dominant culture in such a way that the dominant culture stops struggling with the values and beliefs of the student; or, last, rebell against the dominant culture. The three outcomes were custodial orientation, "in-between" adaptation, and rebellion. These outcomes are identified in Figure 19.

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┌──────────┐      ┌──────────┐        ┌──────────────┐
│          │      │          │        │  Custodial   │
│          │      │          │        │ Orientation  │
│          │      │          │        └──────────────┘
│ Pre-Entry│ ──▷  │ Encounter│ ──▷   ┌──────────────┐
│  Period  │      │  Period  │       │ ""In-Between""│
│          │      │          │ ───── │  Adaptation  │
│          │      │          │       └──────────────┘
│          │      │          │        ┌──────────────┐
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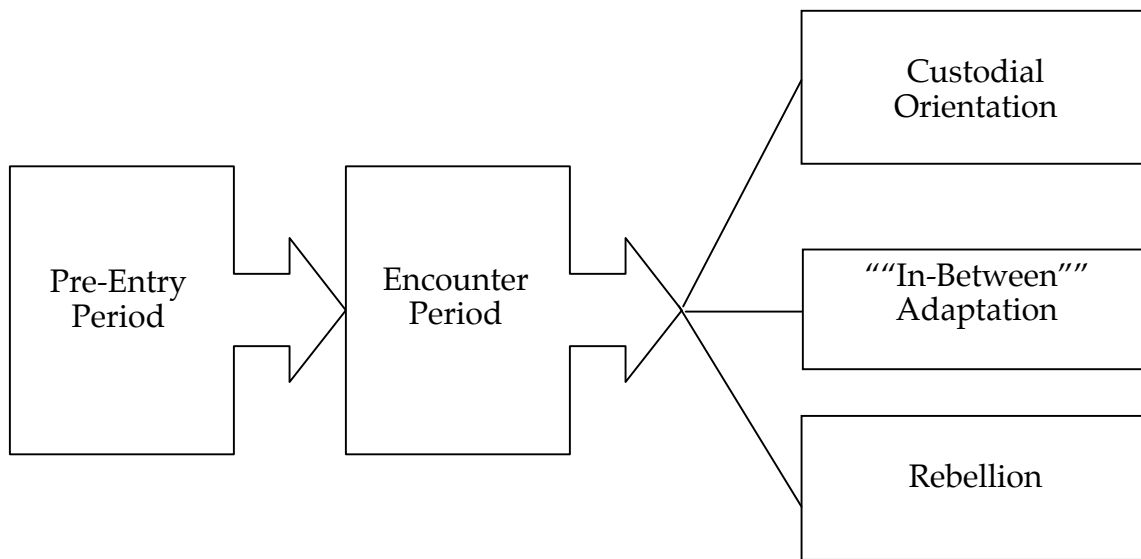
Figure 19. Stage Model for School-Choice Socialization

A number of students accepted the norms and were accepted by AHS because they were racially- and socio-culturally-congruent. These students were accepted by the culture and became fully included actors in activities. Some school-choice students struggled with the values and beliefs of the dominant culture, and the dominant culture struggled with accepting these students. Thus, they adopted a form of what Carlson (1964) referred to as "in-between" adaptation. These students would not become part of the culture or share in the overall belief system of the dominant culture, nor would the dominant culture accept them completely as full actors within the organization. Instead, they would struggle with the norms and simply "give up" fighting the dominant culture and try to survive within the role SAHS defined for them. Last, other school-choice students rebelled against, and were not accepted by, the values

and beliefs of the dominant culture. These students did not share the same bias against urban culture. In this case, many students opted to leave SCSD because of an inability to fit into the dominant culture.

Custodial orientation.

Carlson (1964) described receptive adaptation as an outcome where a student simply complies with the expectations of the organization. He identified a similar but more complex outcome he referred to as custodial orientation. Schein (1990) described it as a complete conformity to the norms and a complete learning of the assumptions to an organization. The encounter period for school-choice students was defined by the relationship between the students and SAHS. This relationship was different for students based upon racial congruence.

Hence, the findings in the area of custodial orientation were simple to summarize. Only students who were racially congruent met the outcome of custodial orientation. This was a result of the relationship between the school-choice students and SAHS. Not only did the students need to conform to the norms of the organization, but the organization needed to allow these students an opportunity to do so.

In short, two trends existed for students who moved to custodianship. The first move to custodianship is represented in Figure 20. Several racially and socio-culturally congruent school-choice students who stayed at SAHS fit this progression toward custodial orientation. The students, upon initial entry, became members of SAHS extra-curricular activities and were treated as

Southgate in-district students. Their racial congruence was the first factor that allowed the students to become accepted by the dominant culture. However, involvement in extra-curricular activities provided them an avenue through which to form friendships. Students fitting this description were considered actors included in important activities to the SAHS culture. These students were racially- and socio-culturally congruent, plus active in extra-curricular activities and, as a result, they were able to make friends who were part of the dominant culture of SAHS. These students were accepted by the dominant culture because they were racially congruent. This combination led to custodial orientation.

For example, as one school-choice student described, "I got more friends from playing football…wrestling came along, I met even more people" (Anonymous, personal communication, March 4, 2005). The student continued by stating that he felt he likely would have made the same friendships even if he did not play a sport, but noted that the friendships were stronger and with students of similar interest as a result of playing the sport. The relationship between this student and SAHS was one founded on his ability to make friends through extra-curricular activities. This student left his last district to attend SAHS because he was in trouble there and had a group of friends with whom he was no longer in contact. The extra-curricular involvement, combined with racial-congruence, allowed the student to identify with a group of friends who were already actors within SAHS.
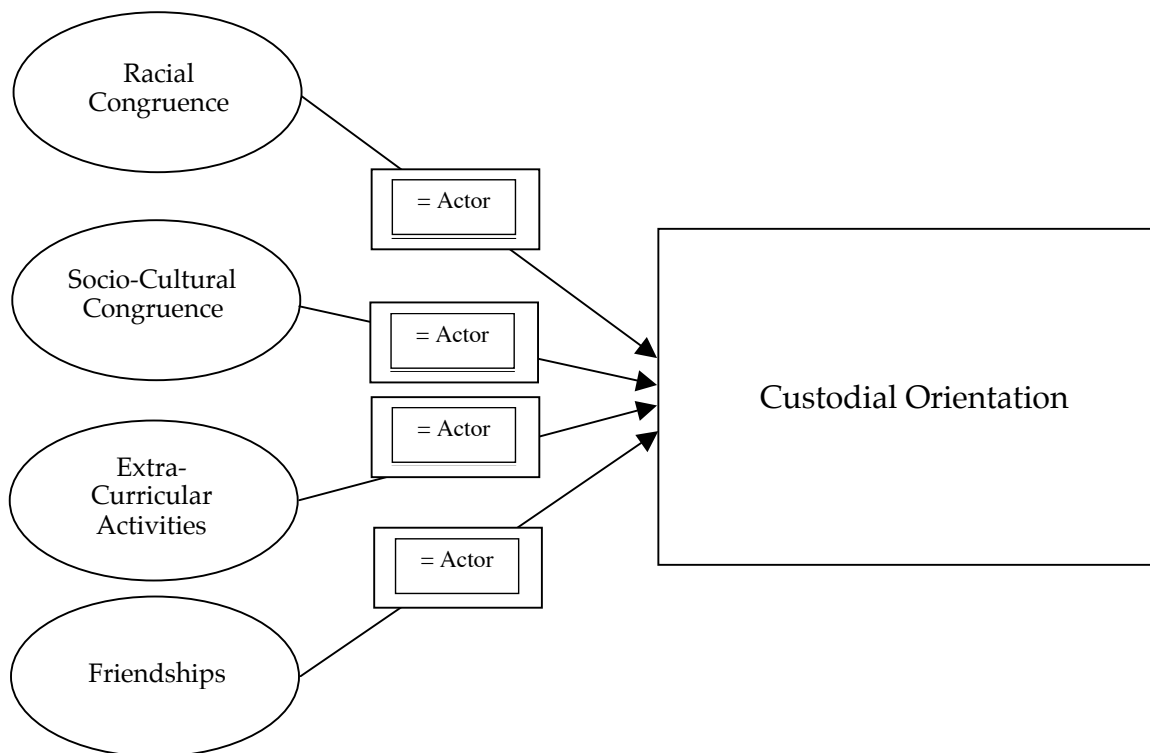
Figure 20. Move to Custodianship

When describing their overall experience, many school-choice students immediately described friendships. Humans are social creatures, and high school is the setting of a social activity. Many students already had friends who attended SCSD. For example, one student stated, "Some of my friends from Rouge transferred a year or so ahead of me" (Anonymous, personal communication, September 6, 2004). Another student described her transition as easy because "It helped coming in and already knowing someone" (Anonymous, personal communication, January 21, 2005). The students were concerned with friendships. It was these friendships that shaped their relationship with SAHS.

Social acceptance by peers was a key component to their role as actors in the organization.

This group of students also moved to custodianship. This second move to custodianship is represented in Figure 21. Again, this move involves becoming an actor included in important social activities within SAHS. These students crossed the first organizational boundary by enrolling into SAHS through schools-of-choice and were considered actors. As a result of friendships prior to entering SAHS, they were able to form a relationship with SAHS that allowed them to be socially accepted into the culture and, in turn, cross the next organizational boundary and become included in important activities. The commonalities among these students were racial and socio-cultural congruence with SCSD and having friends already enrolled at SCSD prior to their arrival.

Students following this path, unlike the group involved in extra-curricular activities, took up to a full year to become involved in other activities outside of the classroom at SAHS. Such activities included both social and academic groups. For example, as one school-choice student that followed this model stated, "I think I just had to get used to everything first" (Anonymous, personal communication, January 21, 2005). This sentiment was mirrored in the stories of school-choice students that fit this model. In general, these students described their experiences as successful while sharing their apprehension initially with SAHS outside of initial friendships prior to their entry into the organization. It was this ability to have friends in the district that guided the students into a relationship of social acceptance within SAHS that led to custodial orientation.
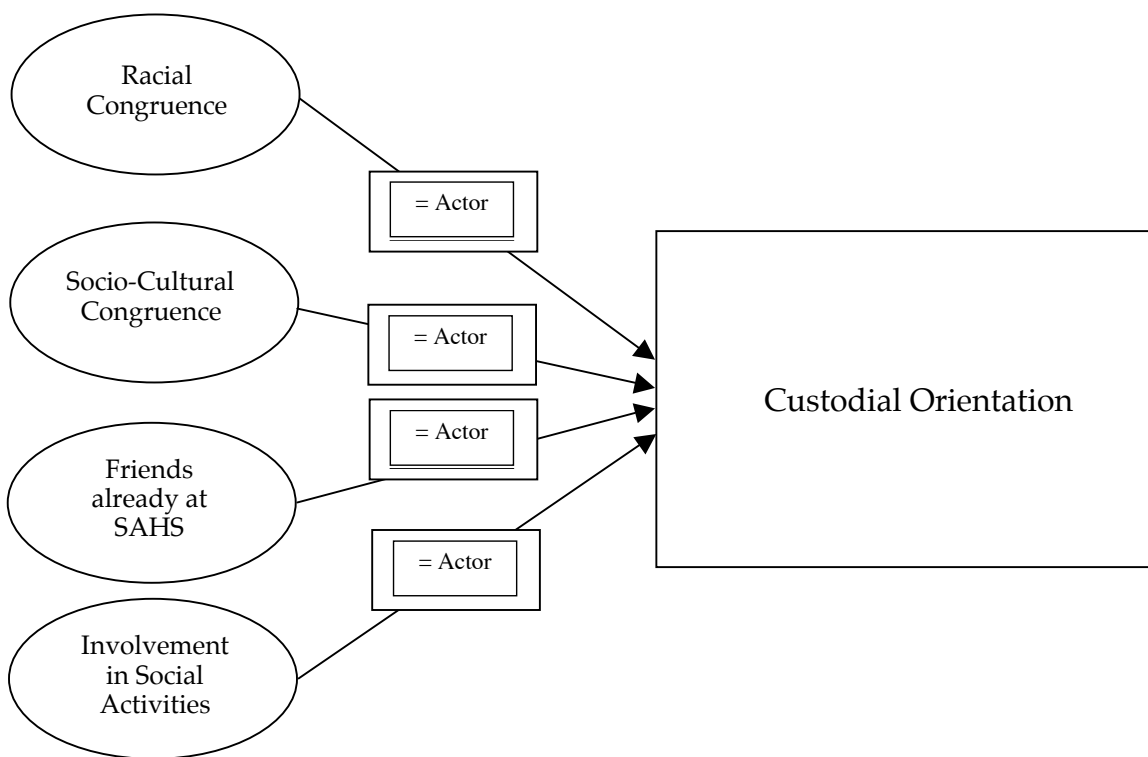
Figure 21. Pre-Existing Friendship Move to Custodianship

While several African American and Hispanic students described experiences that initially appeared to be examples of custodial orientation, the subtle nuances of their descriptions indicated more of a struggle with reaching custodianship than their Caucasian counterparts. For example, several Caucasian students described their experiences as very positive and socially fulfilling. Many African American and Hispanic students described their experiences very apprehensively and with more of a tone indicating that they had simply "come to terms" with the situation. This demonstrated that the SAHS culture fought to fully accept these students. Caucasian students provided very positive

descriptions of their perception of the transition: "When I first came here everyone was really nice and no one was mean to me" (Anonymous, personal communication, November 16, 2004) or "Everyone just kind of hangs out" (Anonymous, personal communication, January 21, 2005).

Several African American and Hispanic students described their perception of the transition in more of a "coming to terms" wording like "It's much better than Detroit" (Anonymous, personal communication, September 26, 2004), "I'm used to it by now" (Anonymous, personal communication, September 23, 2004), or "It started to get a little bit easier" (Anonymous, personal communication, October 3, 2004). This difference in perceptions based upon racial- and socio-cultural-congruence was repeated throughout the findings in all areas of the conceptual framework. In the end, custodial orientation seemed to be met by Caucasian students fairly easily while African American and Hispanic students continued to struggle with adapting and accepting the values, beliefs, and assumptions of the organization because they were never really included into important activities at SAHS. Instead, African American and Hispanic school-choice students existed as African American and Hispanic SAHS students, not simply SAHS students. All the while, African American and Hispanic SAHS students were an implicit code for school-choice student or "someone not from Southgate."

"In-between" adaptation.

Throughout the observations and interviews with students, the only students who struggled with reaching custodial orientation were African American and Hispanic students. The Caucasian students described their experiences as very positive both socially and academically, while African American and Hispanic school-choice students identified struggles with assimilating into the new culture. These students struggled with accepting the values and beliefs of SAHS and, conversely, SAHS struggled with accepting the values and beliefs of these students. In short, the process can best be described with the model provided in Figure 22.
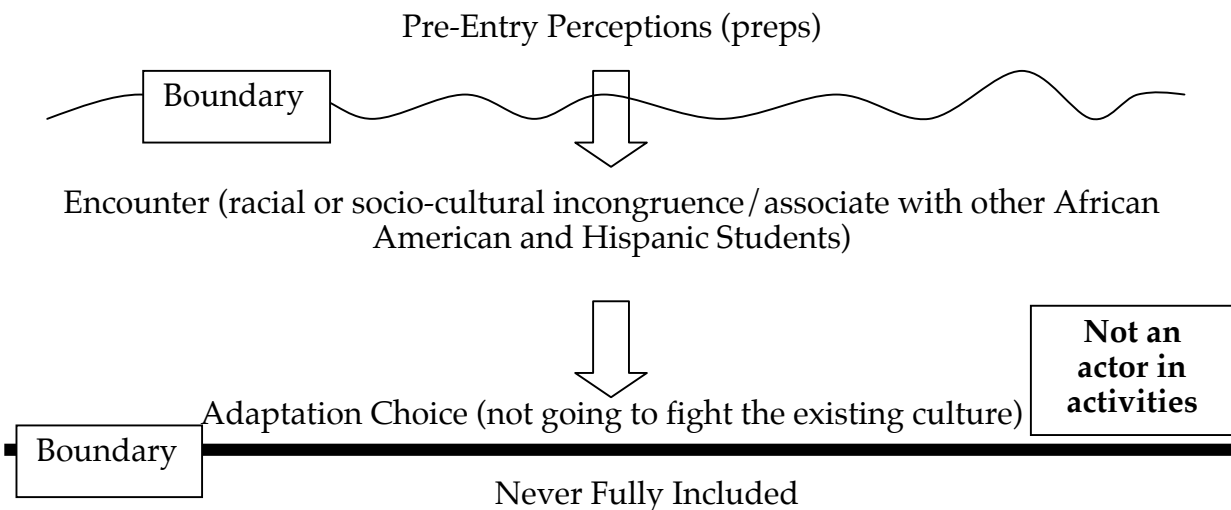
Pre-Entry Perceptions (preps)

Boundary

Encounter (racial or socio-cultural incongruence/associate with other African American and Hispanic Students)

Not an actor in activities

Adaptation Choice (not going to fight the existing culture)

Boundary

Never Fully Included

Figure 22. Flow to "In-Between" Adaptation

The process of reaching "in-between" adaptation seemed to be the result of compromise and inability to become an actor included in important activities

at SAHS. In short, the students adopted the norms of the culture but did not necessarily agree with these norms. The students were not entirely accepted by the culture of SAHS. Therefore, they understood that they must fit in and behaved in a manner consistent with the environment. They survived in the system as a member of a minority group, not as a Southgate student. African American and Hispanic school-choice students knowingly behaved in this manner and described their experiences in such a way as to really clarify this process. For example, one African American school-choice student stated that, socially, "I've gone through cycles" (Anonymous, personal communication, September 23, 2004). A Hispanic school-choice student stated, "My attitude towards it, I guess you could say, is semi-positive" (Anonymous, personal communication, September 1, 2004). This compromise with the culture by African American and Hispanic school-choice students was distinctly different than the Caucasian school-choice students who seemed to willingly accept the culture of SAHS and were accepted by SAHS.

In addition, one other model that described the move to "in-between" adaptation was defined in several cases. This model also related only to African American and Hispanic student experiences. The model is given in Figure 23.

Rebel ⬜⬜⟹ Segregation ⬜⬜⟹ Rebel ⬜⬜⟹ "In-Between" adaptation

Figure 23. Cycles to "In-Between" Adaptation

Under this model, all African American and Hispanic school-choice students that I interviewed, except one, appeared to initially struggle with socializing in the new culture. The minority student that did not fit the model was 50% Hispanic, Caucasian in appearance and very involved in extra-curricular activities. He became an actor fully included in activities.

For all other African American and Hispanic students, a pattern appeared that reflected initial attempts at rebellion resulting in finding themselves isolated further from the dominant culture. In the end, the students chose to compromise with the values and beliefs of the dominant culture and the culture stopped completely rejecting the values and beliefs of the students in this role. Students compromised values and beliefs since they did not wish to return to their previous schools and because of their perceived success in the new setting. In the words of the students, attending SCSD is "…a good opportunity" (Anonymous, personal communication, September 26, 2004). As another student stated, "I realize what I've got and I want to stay in school. I know that my mom wants me to do better and my father expects the best from me and I don't argue with my parents so I'll just stay in school" (Anonymous, personal communication, September 1, 2004). Another student said that his friends from his neighborhood asked him if he is going to return to his old school and he responded, "My mom won't let me and I don't really feel like it" (Anonymous, personal communication, October 3, 2004).

That same student described that when he first entered SCSD, "I got into a fight, got kicked out, came back, got into a fight and got kicked out again…it

starts out hard to get along with anyone for a couple of weeks" (Anonymous, personal communication, October 3, 2004). The African American school-choice student who described his experience at SAHS by stating, "I've gone through cycles" (Anonymous, personal communication, September 23, 2004) was suspended from school at SAHS in each of his four years in SCSD for reasons always related to racial and socio-cultural congruence. Three of the four suspensions were for fighting with a student of another race. The student stayed in SCSD and graduated from SAHS.

Another minority, school-choice student described her struggles as being self-initiated when she said, "Maybe it's just my attitude towards it that makes me feel like it's different" (Anonymous, personal communication, September 1, 2004). She had eventually formed friendships with predominantly Hispanic students and referred to organizational boundaries that forced African American and Hispanic students to associate only with each other. However, after really observing her behavior and analyzing her words, this behavior was partly self-induced. As she elaborated,

> "I felt kind of different…that just hit into my stereotypes and I kind of started to get attitude. It wasn't their fault that made me feel like that. It was my own attitude and I'll admit it. It was my own attitude thinking about them. Thinking that they're thinking negatively about me. I automatically think that they're thinking negatively of me. That's why I think differently about them…If I lived in Southgate, I would probably be more open to different people around me. I would have more variety in friends." (Anonymous, personal communication, October 29, 2004)

Such statements were consistent evidence that African American and Hispanic school-choice students adopted a form of "in-between" adaptation.

These school-choice students learned the central and pivotal assumptions of the culture. They also rejected the peripheral assumptions of the culture. These students were unable to be creative with respect to the organization's tasks. They were also unable to be creative in the manner the organization performed such tasks. Instead, African American and Hispanic school-choice students at Southgate Anderson High School were exempted from the dominant culture and fought with this isolation until they eventually "came to terms" with their lack of status and ability to participate as full members of the organization. Hence, they employed a form of "in-between" adaptation where they compromised with the dominant culture. These students did not work creatively within the organization. Instead, they succumbed to the organizational culture, and the organizational culture stopped struggling with the values and beliefs of these students.

Rebellion.

Rebellion refers to the total rejection of all assumptions of the culture and, in turn, the individual will subvert, sabotage, or cause revolution within the organization (Schein, 1990). While several students demonstrated brief examples of rebellion, they quickly moved to "in-between" adaptation. Their examples of rebellion took the form of fighting or struggling with racial- and socio-cultural-congruence issues. Students who did not move from temporary displays of rebellion to a form of "in-between" adaptation did not return to SAHS. Unfortunately, I was unable to track these students who chose not to notify the

school of their reasons for leaving. New schools requested student records, which usually had not yet arrived at SAHS. However, some severe discipline cases existed where students were given the option of not returning and re-enrolling at their previous school. These situations were very rare and were by mutual agreement between the parties involved. I could not gain accurate information on these few cases other than hearing that the student chose to leave.

This was not to say that every school-choice student who engaged in a serious disciplinary issue was asked to leave, since many were treated exactly as Southgate resident students were treated. Instead, only a few students mutually agreed that a new setting would be best for their chances of success. Nevertheless, the students who chose to employ dropout adaptation were not observed or interviewed under the design of this particular study.

Analyzing enrollment trends provided me with data to demonstrate rebellion. For example, Table 3 (p. 110) displays the flows in student enrollment at SCSD in the school-choice era. Enrollment continues to increase year by year at the elementary levels and drops earlier and earlier in the older grades. Traditionally, high school enrollments dropped in the later years. According to Table 3, SCSD was able to enroll students to fill these seats at the later grades. Yet, as time progressed, the drop-off occurred earlier and earlier. For example, in 2000–2001 and 2001–2002, the first grade to lose enrollment was 10th grade. In 2000–2001, SCSD lost 66 students in 10th grade and 82 in 2001–2002. As the number of school-choice students continued to increase in 2002–2003, the 9th grade class began to shrink by nine students. The next year, 2003–2004, the 8th

grade class lost seven students while grades 10 and 11 still lost 60 and 81 students, respectively. The trend of losing students moved to earlier and earlier grades as SCSD admitted more and more school-choice students year after year. In short, students were not staying at SCSD.

Table 4 (p. 115) demonstrates this data in another form. The row labeled "in" displays the total number of school-choice students enrolled in SCSD. This number has almost doubled over the five-year period. The second row labeled "out" displays the number of students lost by SCSD. This number has also continued to increase over the five-year period. However, the most striking numbers are in row four. This row, labeled "S/C Did Not Return," displays the number of school-choice students who chose not to return to SCSD. While I was unable to interview these students, it appears that students were demonstrating rebellion and leaving SCSD.

Overall, the data from this table outline a trend that could be considered rebellion by school-choice students. Schein (1990) defined rebellion as rejecting the existing culture. Students choosing not to stay at SAHS could be considered to have rejected the existing culture. As schools-of-choice participation increased at SCSD, so did student exits. In 2001–2002, SCSD admitted 214 additional school-choice students. In 2002–2003, SCSD admitted another 122 while losing 221 students. These students were demonstrating rebellion. They had chosen not to accept or did not fit the dominant culture. As a result, it is inferred from the pattern in the table that large groups of students rebelled from SCSD and left the district.

Summary.

It was primarily the struggle with racial and socio-cultural congruence that shaped the experiences of school-choice students at Southgate Anderson High School. Throughout the entire study, examples and trends continued to present themselves and proved that the experiences were different based upon racial- and socio-cultural-congruence. Caucasian school-choice students found it very easy to reach custodianship while African American and Hispanic school-choice students struggled with being accepted into the new culture. These same students "came to terms" with this culture while employing a form of "in-between" adaptation that allowed them to function as a minority student, with a group of African American and Hispanic friends, in a culture dominated by Caucasian students. They were never fully included into the activities socially important to SAHS students but were students in the school. These students were never accepted by the dominant culture but chose to stay at SAHS for other reasons. The trade-off was an increase in academic success and fewer struggles with their parents. In the end, the African American and Hispanic school-choice students never socialized successfully into the new organization. Instead, they "came to terms" with the new environment and considered it acceptable for their school setting, but for very different reasons than their Caucasian, school-choice counterparts.

Chapter 5: Conclusions

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to describe and explain the experiences of school-choice students at Southgate Anderson High School (SAHS). These experiences were directly related to the culture of Southeast Michigan, the City of Southgate, and the Southgate Community School District (SCSD). The experiences were also shaped by schools-of-choice as a policy initiative and Michigan's school funding system known as Proposal A.

Methods

The research was conducted using qualitative methods based upon studies designed by a variety of researchers from various disciplines ranging from organizational theorists (Etzioni, 1975) to anthropology (Chapple & Koon, 1942). The use of interpretive and existential based methods was rooted in the work of philosophers Edmund Husserl and Alfred Schutz (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992) combined with the theoretical perspective known as symbolic interaction that holds its roots in the Chicago School and theorists such as John Dewey (1922), Charles Horton Cooley (1909), Robert Plank (1968), Florian Znaniecki (1918), George Herbert Mead (1934), Herbert Blumer (1969), and Everett Hughes (1958). This particular research design was chosen to provide an understanding of the students' experiences as they related to the organization itself.

Using interpretive research methods, I worked as both interviewer and participant observer aimed at developing an understanding of the experiences of

school-choice students at Southgate Anderson High School (SAHS). Initially, I believed that the experience would be unique to individual students based upon the sending district's characteristics, individual reasons for choosing to attend SAHS, or coping mechanisms while within SAHS. The research process made it clear that the context and culture of the setting played a major role in framing the experiences of school-choice students at Southgate Anderson High School. The experiences were described using a framework derived from Feldman (1981) and Jablin's (1987) stages of socialization, Schein's (1990) three outcomes of organizational socialization, and Carlson's (1964) adaptive responses.

Summary of the Research Findings

Local Control, Urban Sprawl, and the Definition of Effectiveness

Southgate holds its cultural roots in the history of Southeast Michigan. In particular, Southgate was formed as a suburb of the City of Detroit in the 1950s and 1960s during the "white flight" movement. Original residents of the City of Southgate moved during an era of population shifts away from the larger cities into neighboring suburbs. As one of the "Downriver" suburbs, the City of Southgate provided opportunities for its Caucasian, middle class, factory-working residents to maintain their factory jobs in the automotive industry without having to live with the growing African American, urban culture in the City of Detroit. Easy access to freeways and newly developed subdivisions provided a stable environment for the city's new residents.
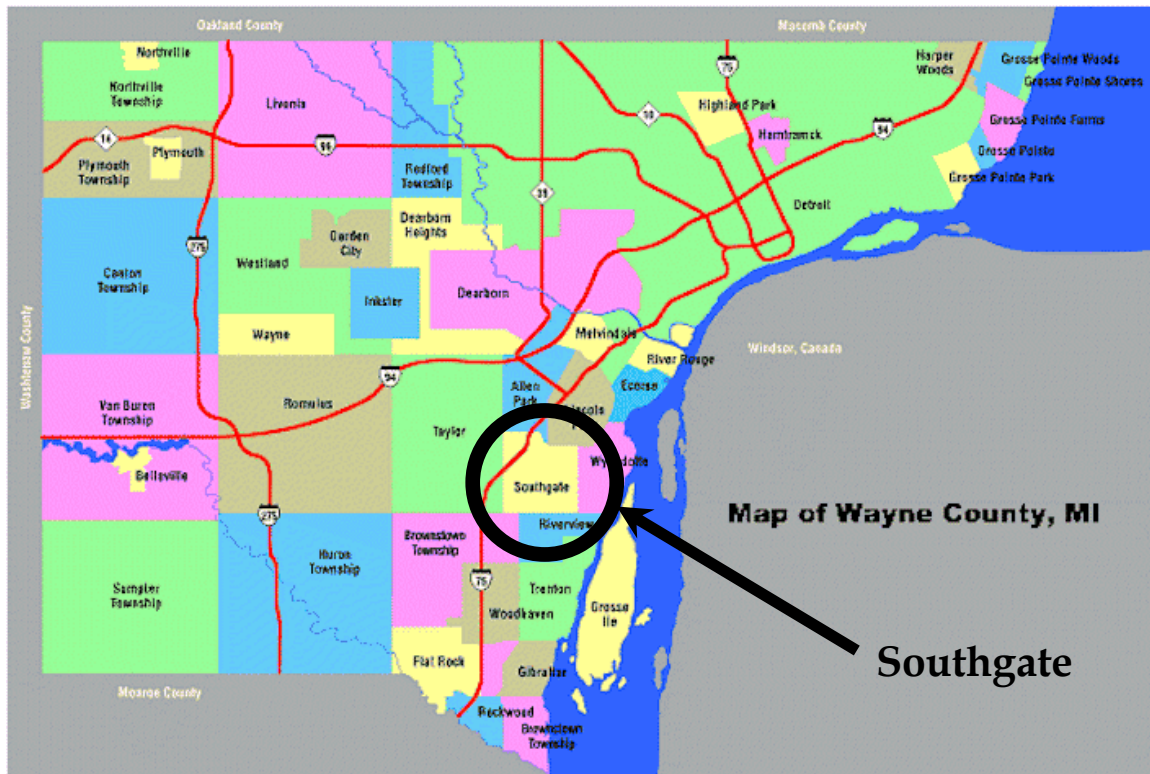
Figure 24. Map of Wayne County, Michigan with Southgate Identified (retrieved on August 1, 2005, from http://www.michiganancestry.com/files/MapofWayneCo.gif)

Southgate residents took great pride and interest in their schools in hopes of maintaining the culture they developed from the city's origins. Through local millage votes, Southgate residents continued to support their newly formed school system, the Southgate Community School District (SCSD). This new school district excelled at working as what Spindler & Spindler (1987) referred to as a vehicle for cultural transmission. In short, SCSD was responsible for socializing students into the culture of Southgate. This meant that the schools could produce graduates who replicated the community. These graduates were able to gain employment in nearby factory-type jobs or go to nearby colleges and

move back into the City of Southgate. Figure 25 displays the historical process of the schools working as vehicles for cultural transmission.

Working as a vehicle for cultural transmission assured the survival of the culture and of the school district. In this case, the original residents moved to the City of Southgate to preserve their ideal of a blue collar, Caucasian culture. Southgate residents took jobs in nearby factories and provided funding for the schools where they sent their children, and the schools prepared these students to become successful within the culture of the City of Southgate. These graduates moved back or remained within Southgate, had children who attended SCSD, continued to fund SCSD through local millages, and maintained the culture of the City of Southgate. All of this occurred without thought or purposeful planning. The culture of the City of Southgate valued stability. This stability was maintained through the use of the schools to replicate the Caucasian, middle-class, factory-worker culture. Farley et al. (1994) stated that "interracial neighborhoods will never be stable if there is extensive 'white flight' when blacks move in (p. 775)." The threat to stability was tied to race and the urban culture. Stability was maintained through the schools. In the end, the City of Southgate was able to employ SCSD as a vehicle to maintain the dominant culture without fear of the urban culture to the north moving into the City of Southgate.
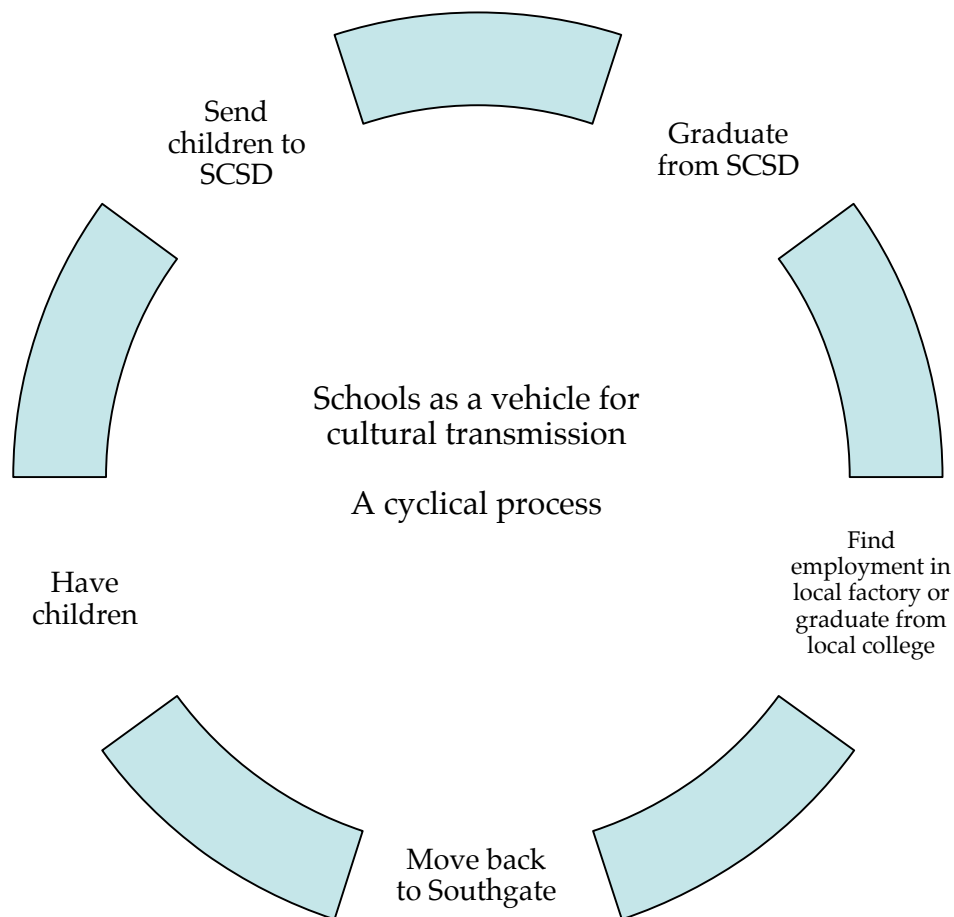
Send
children to
SCSD

Graduate
from SCSD

Schools as a vehicle for
cultural transmission

A cyclical process

Find
employment in
local factory or
graduate from
local college

Have
children

Move back
to Southgate

Figure 25. Schools as a Vehicle for Cultural Transmission

Figure 25 displays the local school districts in Wayne County. Working as a physical buffer between the City of Southgate and the City of Detroit were several other school districts such as Lincoln Park, Allen Park, Ecorse, Melvindale, and River Rouge. Over time, Ecorse, Melvindale, and River Rouge began to lose residents to suburbs such as Wyandotte, Riverview, and Southgate.

These residents were predominantly Caucasian, middle-class factory workers who were also distancing themselves from the black, urban culture of Detroit. Cities such as Southgate had little difficulty passing millage after millage in support of their schools. This support began to weigh on many districts but was understood as the method for maintaining strong schools that could continue replicating the community. In addition, supporting the schools through local property tax dollars and local votes gave community members an opportunity to maintain local control of their schools.

Local control of the schools was essential to ensure that SCSD would continue providing what the community felt was "effectiveness" in the schools. The definition of effectiveness in a community like Southgate was the ability to preserve the community. This meant that the schools needed to be effective in preparing graduates to do factory-type work and move back into the City of Southgate, have children, support the schools, and continue replicating the community of Southgate. Effectiveness was defined by the ability to produce future graduates who could become part of the Caucasian, middle-class, factory worker culture of Southgate. Hence, the schools were designed to be career-oriented and effective in producing this type of graduate.

Proposal A, the Power Shift, and a New Definition of Effectiveness

Before Proposal A passed in 1994, local school districts were governed by locally elected school boards, composed of community members and funded by local property taxes. Suburban districts with large populations and strong

property values were able to continually pass millages to increase funding for their schools. The greater the population and the property value, the more money generated by a local millage, at a lower rate. This phenomenon is represented in Figure 7 (p. 82)

However, under a property tax-based funding system, only those school districts with large or moderately large populations and strong property values were able to continue generating additional money for the local school districts. Growing suburban cities such as Southgate were able to continuously generate additional funds while keeping property taxes reasonably low. On the other hand, rural and urban school districts with lower property values were being taxed at disproportionate rates in order to survive. This caused inequities in the funding system. Yet the system allowed for local control of the schools.

Proposal A shifted this funding away from the local districts by eliminating the ability for local school districts to ask for increased funding from local voters. Instead of the old system of passing school millages within the district boundaries that would be solely funded by local property taxes, Proposal A used a two-pronged funding system for schools that filtered to districts from the State of Michigan. The passage of Proposal A called for a reduction in local property taxes and an increase in the state sales tax. These two revenue sources were then allocated by the State of Michigan to local school districts. The intent was to provide equity between districts on a per-pupil basis. In spite of this, many districts continued to receive thousands of dollars more per pupil than

their neighboring districts because of their operating revenues under the previous funding system. Figure 26 represents this shift in funding.

Proposal A, according to Diebold (2004), made it improbable that schools would ever be allowed by the Legislature to go back to the practice of using increased local millage to supplement school operating budgets. In the end, the responsibility for school funding shifted from the local level to a more centralized state level (Diebold). This shift in money generated was based upon student enrollment.
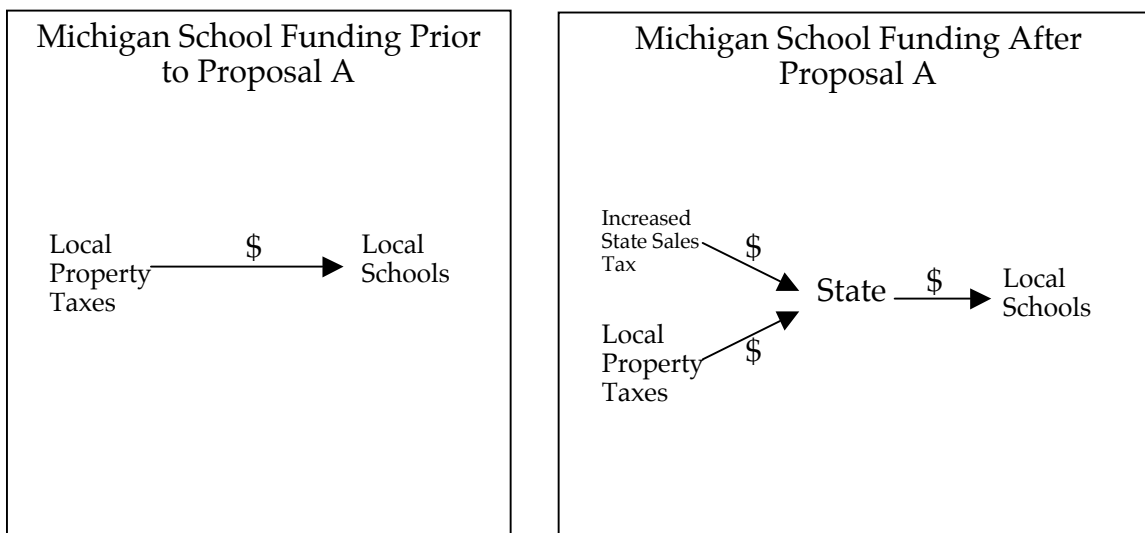

Figure 26. A Shift in School Funding

A school district received a per-pupil foundation amount from the state, solely based upon its enrollment. For example, if a school district enrolled 4,200 students in 2003–2004 and 4,400 students in 2004–2005, the school would receive funding from the state for an additional 200 students in 2004–2005. On the other

hand, if a school district enrolled 4,400 students in 2003-2004 and only 4,200 students in 2004–2005, the district received less money, as calculated by 200 less students, in 2004–2005 from the state. This shift in funding essentially awarded power to the state over local districts based upon their enrollment of local students. Basically, the equation for local school districts was simplified.

In order to increase operating budgets, school districts could no longer rely on local taxpayer funds. Instead, school districts needed to increase enrollment in order to increase operating budgets. The only exception to this rule was the case of passing a bond proposal. Bond proposals were a way to help fund special capital projects such as renovations and capital improvements. However, their funds could not be used to pay salaries or begin new programs. In the end, Proposal A shifted the power away from local communities to fund their local schools and, instead, provided the state with the power to fund the schools. Meanwhile, school districts were still governed by locally elected school boards. This phenomenon is demonstrated in Figure 27.
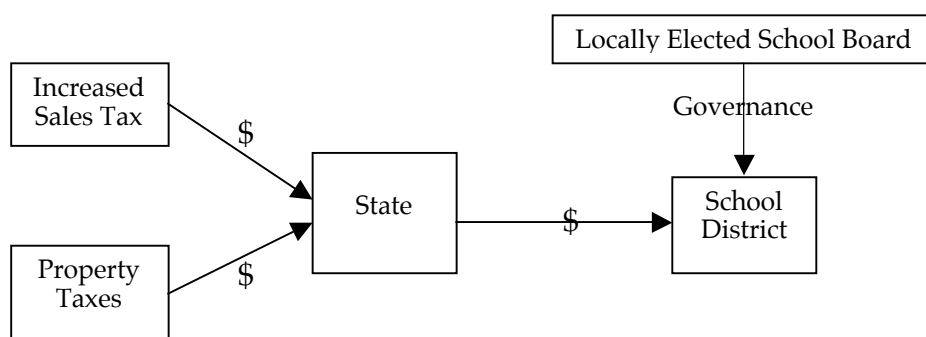

Figure 27. School District Governance and Funding

Since the State of Michigan was providing funding based upon student

enrollment, it was no longer necessary to isolate student populations within

district boundaries. If local tax dollars were first funneled to the state and not

being used to fund local schools in a particular district, then a student was not

required to attend a school within the district he/she resided. As a result, the

State of Michigan was able to begin a statewide, interdistrict, schools-of-choice

program.

"Many proponents of school choice believe that if schools have to compete

for students (and money), their staffs will be motivated to improve their

programs. Inadequate schools will either get better or go out of business"

(Fowler, 2004, p. 74). Proposal A's shift in funding from local control to state

control combined with schools-of-choice policy redefined "effectiveness" for

school districts. Districts were now defined as "effective" by test scores instead of

ability to replicate the community. Schools choice proponents believed that the

schools with the highest test scores would prosper and those with the lowest test

scores would fail. Failure meant losing resources in the form of students and

money. In turn, the worst schools would be forced to close and the best schools

would continue to prosper. Proposal A of 1994 and Public Act 180 of 1996

(schools-of-choice) allowed the State of Michigan to redefine the value of

effectiveness and apply this new definition to all local school districts.

The principles of market competition were being introduced to public

schools. Schools were forced to compete with one another, but the rules were

redefined. Historically, communities such as Southgate used their schools to

maintain the community. In other words, the schools were a tool to be used in competition between communities based upon local community values. Communities such as Southgate valued their Caucasian, middle-class, factory worker culture. This required the schools to continue replicating this culture. A school's level of effectiveness was defined by its ability to continue producing graduates prepared for tasks similar to factory work. However, market competition and schools-of-choice required schools to increase test scores in order to attract students and survive. This theory is outlined in Figure 28.
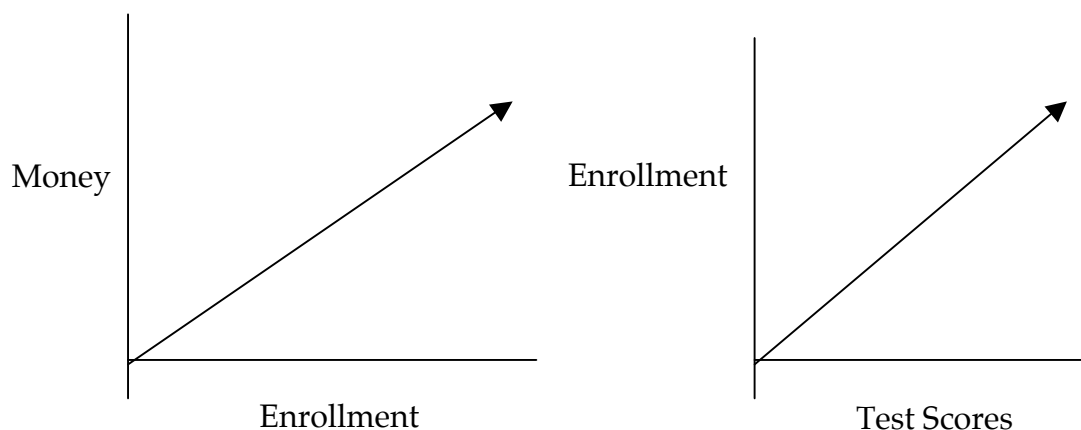
Figure 28. Market Competition Theory and Schools-of-Choice

According to Chubb and Moe (1990), schools-of-choice introduced market competition and market discipline into the education system by forcing schools to improve their performance and guide their design toward the wants and needs of their consumers, that is, parents and students. In the case of suburban school districts such as SCSD, the districts were already meeting the wants and

needs of their consumers as defined by the local definition of effectiveness (i.e., effectively producing graduates prepared for factory type tasks). Proposal A and Michigan's schools-of-choice policy redefined the wants and needs of the consumers by redefining educational effectiveness to effectiveness in test scores. The power was officially shifted away from local communities, in terms of funding and expectations, to the State of Michigan.

Resource Dependence and Conflicting Rationalities

As a result of Proposal A, school districts were forced to increase enrollment in order to generate additional operating revenue. Falling enrollment meant losing operating revenue. Districts maintaining steady enrollments relied on the State of Michigan increasing per-pupil allowances proportionate with increased costs. Yet the intent of the policy makers who framed schools-of-choice policy was to force schools to attract students in order to survive. This meant that increasing enrollments assured schools of adequate funding. In the past, SCSD would have run a millage vote to increase their operating revenues through local property taxes. After Proposal A, this was no longer an option. Southgate, as a city, was projected to have little or no growth in the number of households and children. The city was almost fully developed and was composed of residents who were happy living in Southgate. This meant that once their children graduated, residents stayed in their homes into retirement. Consequently, new families were unable to move into the district since very few new homes were being built. This left a limited opportunity for more children to enter SCSD.

As a school district, increasing enrollment through an increase in students living within Southgate was not an option. Therefore, SCSD was forced to open up to schools-of-choice. This allowed SCSD to consistently increase enrollment and generate additional operating revenues. Enrolling school-choice students demonstrated Porter's (1973) theory of resource mobilization. According to Porter, organizations do not passively wait for funds to be allocated to them; instead, "they actively mobilize funds" (p. 9). Participating in schools-of-choice allowed SCSD to actively mobilize funds by actively recruiting students from outside of the district.

Schools-of-choice proponents contend that the principles of market competition would cause schools to improve their level of effectiveness, as defined by test scores, in order to attract students and survive. SCSD successfully attracted students through schools-of-choice. However, SCSD did not have strong test scores. In fact, SCSD's test scores did not improve as enrollment of school-choice students increased. SCSD was able to continually attract students, in the short term, while not improving their level of effectiveness, as defined by proponents of market competition because of factors related to location, race, and socio-cultural status.

Meanwhile, legislation passed at the federal level was also measuring schools via test scores. This legislation, commonly referred to as No Child Left Behind, measured schools and school districts by their ability to meet increasing levels of achievement. As a result, school districts such as SCSD were being asked to meet two definitions of effectiveness. Locally, SCSD was considered

effective by their ability to replicate the community and prepare graduates for factory type work. On a larger scale, SCSD was being measured for effectiveness by their ability to increase test scores. Framers of schools-of-choice policy believed that the second definition of effectiveness (test scores) would be necessary to attract students. SCSD was experiencing conflicts within the organization as a result of schools-of-choice and these two competing definitions of effectiveness. SCSD was designed to prepare students for factory-type work and reproduce the culture of Southgate but was being measured at the state and national levels by its test scores. Test scores were purported to influence enrollment. Increased enrollment meant increased operating revenue. The increased revenue allowed the district to meet the needs of the institutional environment by providing educational opportunities consistent with community values. Meanwhile, SCSD was still concerned with increasing test scores in order to attract students. This was not a dominant community value and caused tension at the technical core.

Figure 13 (p. 135) displays this conflict or disconnect between rationalities. SCSD was being forced to recruit students from other districts while balancing the consequences of this survival plan. Since the majority of school-choice students who attended SCSD lived in cities closer to Detroit, the perception by the SCSD community was that these students were African American and Hispanic students. In addition, the SCSD community chose to associate school-choice students with the problems in the schools. These attribution errors (Nisbett & Ross, 1980) were a direct result of the conflict between the technical,

organizational, and institutional rationalities. This push and pull between rationalities accelerated the attribution errors. The SCSD community reinforced the segregation of the Detroit metropolitan area by associating school-choice students with African American and Hispanic students and the urban culture. Such attribution was a result of denying actual changes within the district boundaries. Since the City of Southgate was built as the result of "white flight" and the district seemed to be changing away from this demographic, the community felt that schools-of-choice eliminated the buffer built by the institutional environment.

Inequities in the funding system caused the technical rationality to conflict with the need for survival. The only way to increase revenues, after Proposal A, was to increase enrollment. Legislative changes had forced the technical core to focus on increasing test scores while the community still expected the technical core to prepare graduates for factory-type work. Meanwhile, the organizational level was concerned with survival and increasing operating revenues. Increasing test scores had not occurred since participating in schools-of-choice, yet the district was still successful at increasing its student population. As a result, class sizes continued to increase and test scores continued to stagnate. The students enrolled in classes were not necessarily students who lived in Southgate, and the technical core was torn between two definitions of effectiveness: test scores vs. preparation for factory-type work. The institutional environment was still expecting the schools to work as a tool for cultural transmission. In the end, the conflict between the technical rationality of effectiveness being driven by choice

proponents and the needs of the community at the institutional level was being fueled by the organizational rationality to survive. This continuous conflict between rationalities affected the ability for school-choice students to successfully socialize into the organization. These levels of rationality are represented in Figure 12 (p. 130).

In the eyes of SCSD personnel, school-choice students were African American and Hispanic students and students of lower socio-cultural status who were causing the test scores to fall. These African American and Hispanic school-choice students were not consistent with the Caucasian, middle class, factory worker culture of Southgate. The community expected the schools to replicate Southgate. The perception was that school-choice students differed from Southgate students and from the overall characteristics of the community. In addition, the perception of the test scores falling as a result of these students led to SCSD's failure to achieve effectiveness according to either definition of test scores or preparing graduates for factory-type work.

The empirical data showed that these school-choice students were predominantly Caucasian students and had little or no impact on the test scores. However, the perception was fueled by the scale of participation in schools-of-choice determined at the organizational level. This resource dependence fueled the conflict between rationalities and was actually caused by the funding system established by Proposal A. School districts needed to consistently increase enrollment in order to survive. Stagnant enrollment or a drop in enrollment meant failure, and the backlash from the community would have greatly

outweighed these false perceptions. This ongoing conflict between rationalities defined the experiences of school-choice students at Southgate Anderson High School.

In the end, this conflict between rationalities and resource dependence helped shape student experiences. Resource dependence opened the doors for students from outside of Southgate to attend SAHS. These students crossed one boundary of the organization and became what Scott (2003) referred to as "actors" within the organization. However, Scott identified that "actors" are chosen to participate in specific social relations within an organization. This was a second, and very distinct, level of membership rights within SAHS. Not all school-choice students were given the same membership rights to participate in activities within SAHS. This was determined by racial and socio-cultural congruence.

The Experiences of School-Choice Students at SAHS

As a researcher, I borrowed from work in the area of socialization while reviewing organizational theory. Models were selected to help me understand schools-of-choice as both a policy and from the perspective of the students. The concepts represented by each model were used as heuristic devices that helped guide my thinking. These concepts were combined into the conceptual framework represented in Figure 3 (p. 50).

Throughout the research process, I compared the data with the models and, conversely, the models compared with the data to arrive at the conclusions.

In the end, I was able to create the contextual model represented in Figure 4 (p. 73) that explains the experiences of school-choice students at Southgate Anderson High School as a direct result of the conflict between rationalities, the contrary definitions of effectiveness, their relationship with the culture of Southgate, and racial and socio-cultural congruence.

Overall, the experiences of school-choice students at Southgate Anderson High School were cultural and social. The conflict that existed between the rationalities was fueled by a shift in power from local control to state control as a result of Proposal A. This shift in power redefined the meaning of effectiveness. SCSD's definition of effectiveness was its ability to replicate the community. This meant SCSD was effective if it could produce graduates prepared for factory-type work. Proposal A opened the doors for schools-of-choice and redefined effectiveness to mean strong test scores. Competing definitions of effectiveness created tension between the rationalities. At the technical core, teachers believed that they were responsible for increasing test scores while the culture still wanted to replicate the community.

Opening the doors to school-choice students during this time of conflict provided SCSD personnel a scapegoat for their struggles with meeting both definitions of effectiveness. As a result, school-choice students felt the burden of this conflict. Perceptions shared by the SCSD community altered the experiences for some school-choice students in the new setting. In particular, false perceptions that school-choice students caused test scores to drop and, even broader, that school-choice students were African American and Hispanic

students of lower socio-cultural status shaped the experiences of these students. Both perceptions were false and were merely the result of the conflict between rationalities and competing definitions of effectiveness.

DeFrance (2001) found that school districts participating in schools-of-choice had lower test scores prior to their participation than those schools that did not participate. SCSD's scores were not strong prior to schools-of-choice, and enrolling school-choice students had little impact on these scores. SCSD was trying to meet two very different definitions of effectiveness. These competing definitions were almost polar opposites. Figure 29 outlines the relationship between the competing definitions of effectiveness.

Figure 29. Competing Definitions of Effectiveness
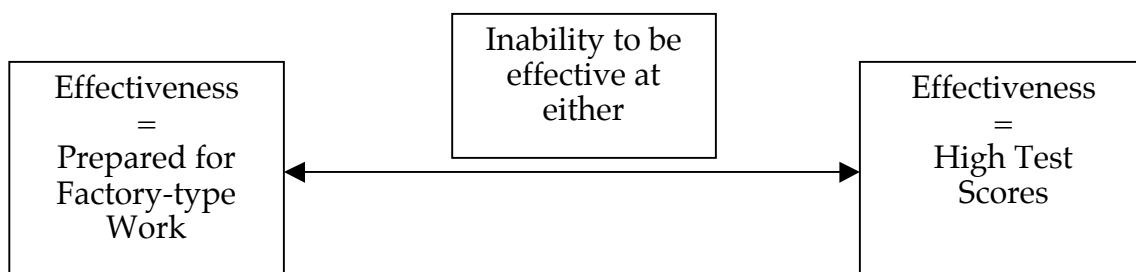
Inability to be effective under either definition was compounded by the perceptions held by the SCSD community related to the racial and socio-cultural make-up of the school-choice population. This was largely shaped by long-standing perceptions of other communities outside of Southgate. Figure 16 (p. 174) outlines these perceptions graphically in relation to the City of Detroit.

Since Trenton and Grosse Ile students did not attend SCSD through schools-of-choice, the long-standing perceptions of the region instantly labeled school-choice students attending SCSD from communities north of Southgate. The majority of school-choice students at SCSD were from Lincoln Park, Detroit, and River Rouge. The SCSD community immediately assumed that these students were African American and Hispanic. In addition, these communities were not believed to have strong schools. The combination of the perceptions of the racial composition of the sending district and the strength of the schools in the sending district created a label for school-choice students that shaped their experiences.

While this definition continued to present itself throughout the observations and interviews, it proved untrue upon analysis of the student demographic data. The perception of staff and students within SCSD was that the school-choice students were generally African American and Hispanic students. The empirical data told a different story. For example, during the 2004–2005 academic year, 157 school-choice students attended SAHS. Only seven of these students were African American and 32 were Hispanic. Even more telling is that only one of the 25 school-choice students from Detroit was African American and 11 of the 25 school-choice students from Detroit were Caucasian. Such false perceptions of student characteristics based upon district of residence was deeply imbedded in the culture of Southgate and impacted the experiences of school-choice students at Southgate Anderson High School. As a result of such perceptions, the experiences of school-choice students at Southgate Anderson

High School could be broken down into two groups. The first group consisted of Caucasian school-choice students who were racially and socio-culturally congruent. The second group was comprised of school-choice students who were either not racially or socio-culturally congruent, or both.

Student Experiences and Student Socialization

Student experiences and the socialization process followed a stage model derived from the work of Feldman (1981), Jablin (1987), Schein (1990), and Carlson (1964). Students started in the pre-entry period. During this period, students decided to enroll in SAHS and the culture of SAHS formed beliefs about students from other districts. Upon entry to SAHS, school-choice students progressed into the encounter period. During the encounter period, the relationship between the school-choice students and SAHS was developed and defined. Upon entry to SAHS, the characteristics of the students and their reasons for changing districts were compared with the characteristics of SAHS. This comparison of characteristics is demonstrated in Figure 18 (p. 187).

The first characteristic to be compared was race. Students who were racially congruent were able to move into the next characteristic while students who were not racially congruent developed a relationship with SAHS that limited their full acceptance into the dominant culture. Those students who were racially congruent were able to move into the next characteristic of comparison, socio-cultural congruence. Socio-cultural congruence created a second layer of acceptance between the student and the dominant culture of SAHS. The

remaining characteristics helped defined the relationship between school-choice students and SAHS.

This relationship created three options for students. Students could adopt a custodial orientation where they fully accepted the values, assumptions, and beliefs of SAHS and were accepted by SAHS. Or students could adopt a form of "in-between" adaptation where they compromised with the dominant culture and the dominant culture compromised with the students. Or, last, students could reject the values, assumptions, and beliefs of SAHS and SAHS could reject the values, assumptions, and beliefs of the students. This resulted in a rebellion from the organization. A model representing these stages is given in Figure 19 (p.211).

School-Choice Students Who Were Racially and Socio-Culturally Congruent

In order to fit into this category, school-choice students needed to look the part of a Southgate student. One school-choice student described a Southgate student as "…high school preppy. American Eagle and stuff like that" (Anonymous, personal communication, March 3, 2005). Another school-choice student described Southgate students as "…not as thuggish and ghetto" (Anonymous, personal communication, March 3, 2005). As a result of these perceptions, students who were Caucasian and dressed in the "high school preppy" style generally were not considered school-choice students. Mostly, these students blended into the culture because they looked the part. This difference was even noted by a Caucasian school-choice student during an

interview when the student noted that the experience of minority school-choice students must have been "…harder for them. They have to feel even more uncomfortable" (Anonymous, personal communication, November 16, 2004).

Overall, the experiences of school-choice students who were racially and socio-culturally congruent are best categorized as reaching Schein's (1990) Custodial Orientation. The majority of Caucasian school-choice students moved quickly to Custodial Orientation. These students described their relationship with the SAHS culture as positive and socially stimulating. Moving to custodial orientation was demonstrated in two different patterns that both required racial congruence between the school-choice students and SAHS. Students moving to custodial orientation required the same factors to move to custodial orientation, but the order of these factors changed. Both groups required racial and socio-cultural congruence, friends, and involvement in activities, but not necessarily in that order.

Pre-existing friendships.

Many school-choice students who moved to custodial orientation already had friends who attended SCSD prior to enrolling in Southgate. This helped these students assimilate into the culture because of their racial and socio-cultural congruency and familiarity with the values, assumptions, and beliefs of the culture of Southgate. A model of the socialization process for this group of students is presented in Figure 21 (p. 216)

Resource dependence removed a boundary for students from outside of Southgate to attend SAHS. This allowed school-choice students limited membership rights as actors within the organization. This group of students already had social contacts who "fit" into the culture of Southgate. As a result, they were permitted a second tier of membership rights into the organization. These school-choice students were able to seamlessly move into and blend with the new culture because of their relationship with the dominant culture of SAHS. They already accepted the values, assumptions, and beliefs of the new culture through their existing friendships with long-time SAHS students, and the culture accepted them as members of the SAHS community.

In addition, their racial and socio-cultural congruence allowed them to never be implicitly labeled as a school-choice student by SCSD students or staff. Instead, these students simply "blended into" the new environment. For this particular group of students, the experience as a school-choice student at Southgate Anderson High School was positive and an easy transition into the new culture. As stated earlier, the experiences of school-choice students was a cultural and social experience based upon the relationship between the school-choice student and the dominant culture of SAHS. Hence, this group of students experienced social and cultural success.

Students without pre-existing friendships.

Not all school-choice students entered SAHS with prior friendships. These Caucasian school-choice students demonstrated another path to custodial

orientation. The students tended to become involved in extra-curricular activities upon their initial enrollment into SCSD and did not already have friends in the district. These students noted that it took some time to decide what extracurricular activity they wanted to participate in and, once they decided to become involved, the relationship between the school-choice student and the SAHS culture was positive. Their process for moving to custodial orientation or receptive adaptation is outlined in Figure 30. These students were racially congruent with the dominant culture of SAHS. They were also socio-culturally congruent. Both of these factors provided the students with membership rights that helped shape their relationship with the SAHS culture. Involvement in extra-curricular activities increased their membership rights and helped them make friendships with other students who were active in social activities within SAHS.

Unlike the other pre-existing friendship move to custodianship, these students did not necessarily enter SAHS accepting the values, assumptions, and beliefs of their new culture through existing friendships. Nor were their values, assumptions, and beliefs immediately accepted by the new culture through pre-existing friendships. Participation in extra-curricular activities allowed school-choice students to redefine their relationship with the dominant culture of SAHS and create new friendships. The newly created friendships were the result of acceptance of the values, assumptions, and beliefs of SAHS by the students. Conversely, the culture of SAHS accepted the values, assumptions, and beliefs of the students as a result of these newly created friendships. Extra-curricular

participation acted as a gatekeeper to this next level of social and cultural

acceptance.
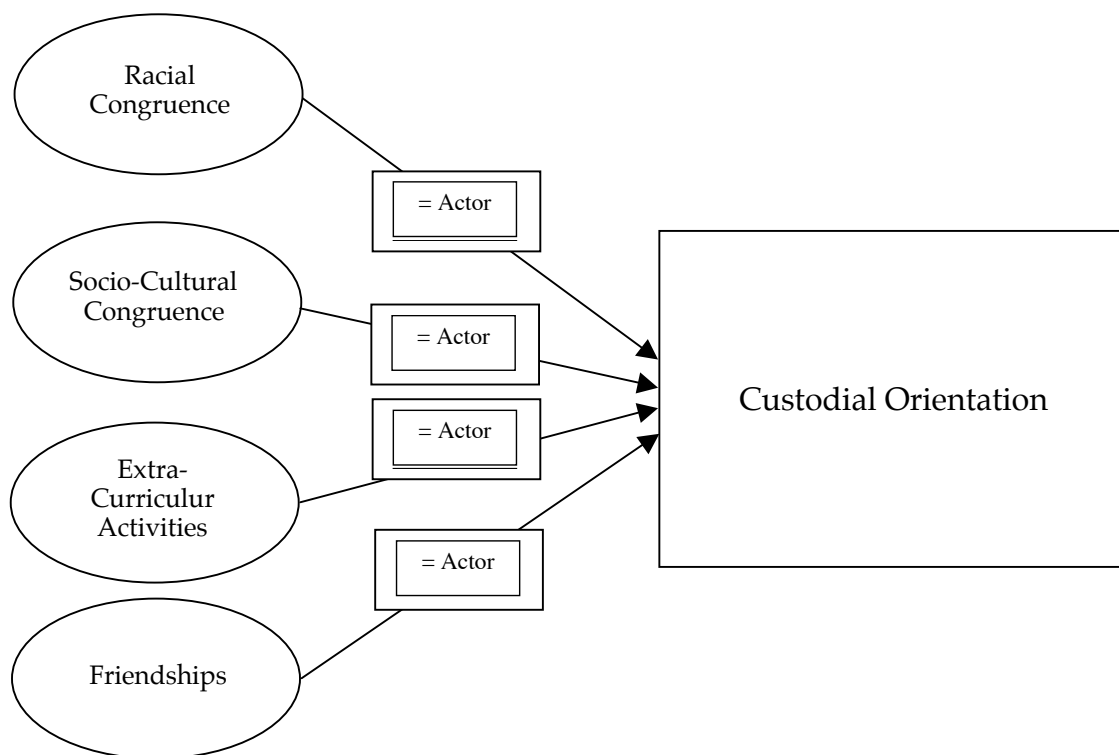
Figure 30. No Pre-Existing Friendship Move to Custodianship

School-Choice Students Who Were Not Racially and Socio-Culturally Congruent

     A distinct secondary group of school-choice students existed whose

experiences were shaped by the history and culture of SCSD. Their relationship

was not one of mutual acceptance with SAHS. These students were not racially

or socio-culturally congruent to Southgate. Overall, all African American and

Hispanic school-choice students employed either Carlson's (1964) "in-between" adaptation or Schein's (1990) rebellion.

"In-between" adaptation: actors not included in activities.

The group of students who demonstrated a form of "in-between" adaptation reached this adaptive choice through two different paths. In both cases, these African American and Hispanic school-choice students were not racially or socio-culturally congruent and were forced to "come to terms" with the dominant culture. This was the most common experience shared by African American and Hispanic school-choice students that I interviewed and observed. The first example of the socialization process is modeled in Figure 22 (p. 218).

Upon initial entry into SAHS, African American and Hispanic school-choice students noted that the dominant culture at SAHS was "preppy" which was code for a stereotypical suburban Caucasian culture. This initial assumption about the culture of SAHS shaped the relationship of the African American and Hispanic school-choice students and the SAHS culture. As the students realized that they were not congruent with the dominant culture, they found themselves identifying with other African American and Hispanic students. These students chose to behave in a manner that allowed them not to fight with the culture of SAHS. As a result, the African American and Hispanic school-choice students functioned as members of a minority group instead of members of the SAHS culture. While they attended SAHS, African American and Hispanic school-choice students were not viewed as SAHS students. They were viewed as African

American and Hispanic school-choice SAHS students. One other important finding was that all African American and Hispanic students at SAHS were viewed as school-choice students, whether they were actually school-choice students or lived in Southgate.

"In-between" adaptation for these students was the result of compromise and inability to become an actor included in important activities at SAHS. In short, the African American and Hispanic school-choice students adopted the norms of the culture but did not necessarily agree with these norms. The students were not entirely accepted by the culture of SAHS. Unlike the Caucasian school-choice students, African American and Hispanic school-choice students were unable to become involved in social activities as the result of friendships with members fully accepted into the SAHS culture. In general, African American and Hispanic school-choice students formed friendships with other African American and Hispanic students at SAHS. The SAHS culture implicitly labeled any African American and Hispanic student as a school-choice student. Implications from this label included limited membership rights within the SAHS culture. As a result, these students survived in the system as a member of a minority group, not as a Southgate student.

"In-between" adaptation: cycles.

Some African American and Hispanic school-choice students found the transition to a form of "in-between" adaptation to be less smooth. Upon entry into SAHS, their relationship with the dominant culture was a constant struggle.

The struggle was between accepting the beliefs, values, and assumptions of the SAHS culture and the SAHS culture accepting the beliefs, values, and assumptions of the African American and Hispanic school-choice students. These students experienced cycles of rebellion against the existing culture and exclusion from the existing culture. They fought to function as individuals within the culture while the culture fought back. However, after several initial attempts at rebellion, the students eventually "came to terms" with the dominant culture and again became members of minority groups instead of SAHS students. This phenomenon is reflected in research by French, Seidman, Allen, and Aber (2000) when they found that students tend to form friendships with members of their same ethnicity upon transition to a new school. Figure 23 (p. 219) outlines the process experienced by this group of students.

Overall, several African American and Hispanic school-choice students described or demonstrated difficulty socializing into the culture of SAHS. In the end, these students never really socialized into the culture, but chose to stop fighting the culture. The stories and behavior of several African American and Hispanic school-choice students followed the pattern of initially fighting the culture and demonstrating struggles with the dominant culture. This was demonstrated through disciplinary offenses such as dress code violations, fighting, or general unhappiness. As a result, the students found themselves segregated from activities that were open to other SAHS students because of suspensions, perceptions or non-participation within the culture. Choosing not to participate in the existing culture resulted in a second attempt at rebelling by

rejecting the values and beliefs of the SAHS culture. After realizing that the

culture was stronger than their individual efforts, the students decided to "come

to terms" with the existing culture and the culture stopped pushing back. In the

end, these students demonstrated a form of "in-between" adaptation that

allowed them to survive as members of a minority group and not full members

of the SAHS culture.

Rebellion.

Many of the African American, Hispanic, and newly enrolled school-

choice students whom I attempted to observe demonstrated a form of rebellion

that involved exiting the culture of SAHS. Figure 31 outlines the experience of

many school-choice students who employed Schein's (1990) rebellion by exiting
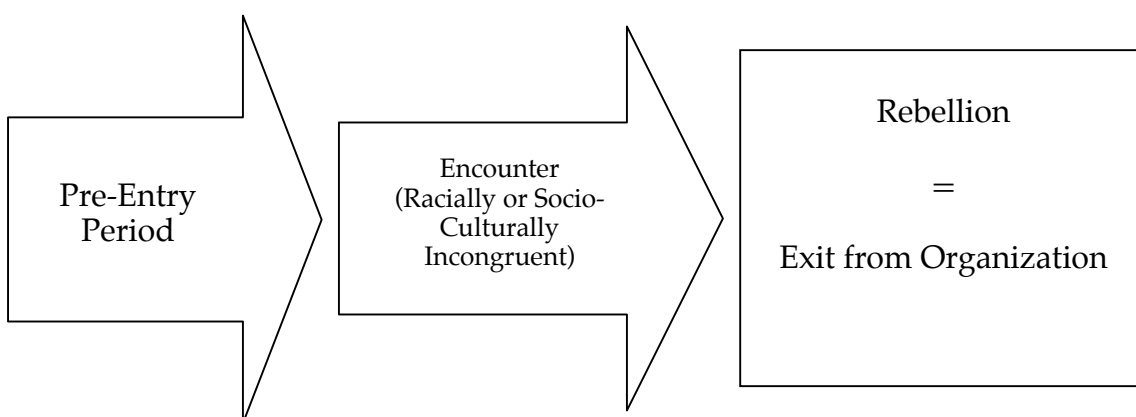
SAHS or SCSD.

Figure 31. Rebellion Leads to Exit

Overall, this group of students was difficult to track and observe in great detail. The experience of school-choice students at SAHS was both cultural and social and was shaped by the culture and history of SCSD, the City of Southgate, and the Detroit metropolitan area. Schools-of-choice proponents contended that market competition would lead to increased effectiveness in test scores. However, schools-of-choice created a conflict between organizational rationalities that impacted the students who chose to participate. These school-choice students were lost in the conflict between rationalities. If the students were racially or socio-culturally congruent and fit the dominant culture, they were able to move into what Schein (1990) referred to as custodianship.

If the students were not congruent to the dominant race and culture, then they struggled in the socialization process. African American and Hispanic school-choice students had two options available. They could employ what Carlson (1964) referred to as a form of "in-between" adaptation and give in to the values and beliefs of the dominant culture while the dominant culture compromised with their values and beliefs, or they could rebel and leave SCSD. They functioned as members of a minority group instead of as SAHS students.

Schools-of-choice as a competition between communities.

Michigan's schools-of-choice program was part of a greater shift in the educational landscape both within Michigan and nationally. Historically, schools were designed to replicate their community and were funded by their local communities. The power to control schools fell on the shoulders of the

community where the school was located. With the passage of Proposal A, the State of Michigan shifted the locus of power away from local communities to the state level. In the end, schools-of-choice was supposed to create competition between schools that would result in increased effectiveness as measured by test scores. However, the parents and students who chose to participate in schools-of-choice by attending SCSD participated based upon competition between communities, not between schools. This competition was deeply rooted in the history and culture of SCSD, the City of Southgate, and the Detroit metropolitan area. In the end, the experiences of school-choice students at SAHS were shaped based upon racial and socio-cultural congruence. Caucasian school-choice students were able to be successful in socializing within the culture of SAHS while African American and Hispanic school-choice students struggled.

These findings were not implications against the students or the staff of SCSD, but they are larger observations of the greater society. Schools-of-choice policy did not help to overcome deep-seated problems between races and communities, nor did schools-of-choice policy make the problems larger. Instead, it provided an excuse for larger societal problems. In this case, schools-of-choice policy and market competition did not result in increased levels of effectiveness as measured by increased test scores. Proposal A and schools-of-choice policy did lead to increased class sizes and internal conflicts that affected students. The market competition that was intended to be competition between schools resulted in competition between communities. Race, geographic location, and socio-cultural status were the determining factors in the competition.

Contextual framework.

In this particular case, schools-of-choice was not a competition between schools that led to increased test scores. Instead, it was a competition between communities. This competition had very little to do with the dominant value of effectiveness. Instead, it was deeply rooted in the history and culture of the Detroit metropolitan area. This history and culture shaped the experiences of school-choice students at Southgate Anderson High School. Students who fit into the dominant culture and were racially or socio-culturally congruent had positive socialization experiences, while students who were not socio-culturally or racially congruent never really became full members of SCSD.

In the end, racial and socio-cultural congruence defined the adaptive choice of school-choice students. Caucasian school-choice students were likely to move to custodial orientation if they "looked" like a Southgate student. African American and Hispanic school-choice students had two options. They could either adopt a form of "in-between" adaptation where they would function as part of a minority group instead of a traditional SAHS student or they could exit SAHS completely. The overall framework that describes the experiences of school-choice students at SAHS is represented in Figure 32.

This framework outlines the interaction between schools-of-choice policy with the impact on the students the policy was designed to serve. As a policy initiative, schools-of-choice acted as a catalyst to create conflicts between organizational rationalities. This conflict was forcing changes in the purpose of schooling at the local level. As a result, schools-of-choice provided an excuse for

the ills within a district such as SCSD. This blame for the imperfections of the SCSD system was reinforced by the organizing bias of Southgate as a community built upon "white flight." In the end, schools-of-choice coincided with the enrollment of African American and Hispanic students at SCSD. This timing caused SCSD to associate African American and Hispanic students with school-choice students. In the end, schools-of-choice and African American and Hispanic were viewed as the same students and blamed for whatever ills existed within SCSD. This progression was deeply embedded within the culture of Southgate and, as a result of schools-of-choice, defined the actual experiences of school-choice students at SAHS. Overall, the model represented in Figure 23 (p.219) demonstrates the spectrum between the interaction of educational policy and the impact of the policy on actual students at SAHS.
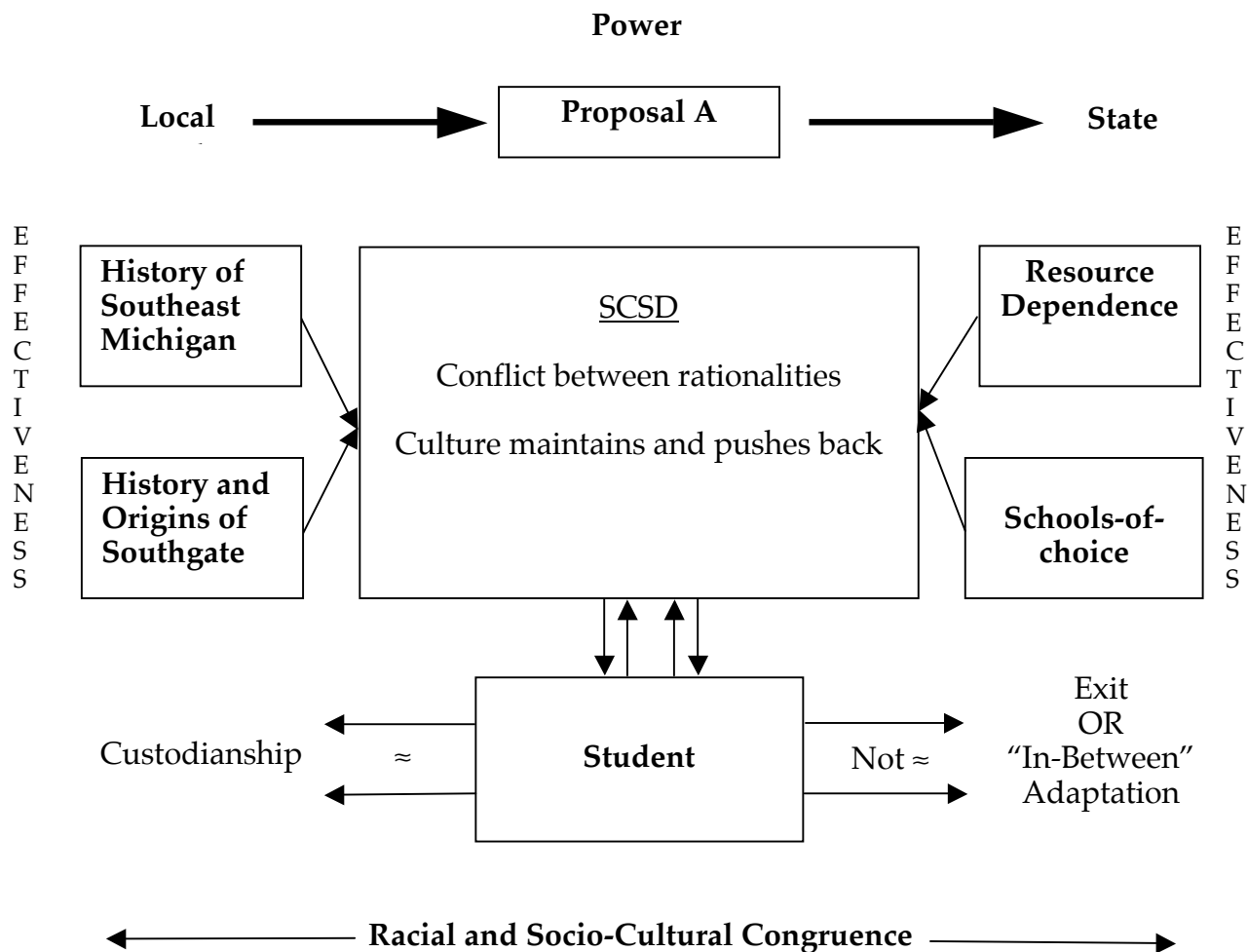
Power

Local ⟶ Proposal A ⟶ **State**

E F F E C T I V E N E S S

History of Southeast Michigan

History and Origins of Southgate

SCSD

Conflict between rationalities

Culture maintains and pushes back

Resource Dependence

Schools-of-choice

E F F E C T I V E N E S S

Custodianship ≈ **Student** Not ≈

Exit
OR
"In-Between"
Adaptation

⟵ **Racial and Socio-Cultural Congruence** ⟶

Figure 32. The Experiences of School-Choice Students at SAHS

Suggestions for Future Research

Understanding the experiences of school-choice students at SAHS provided insight into schools-of-choice as a policy initiative but left me with many questions and curiosities that are worthy of further study. I offer the following suggestions that build upon the findings of this particular researcher

for further research to better understand the implications of schools-of-choice as a policy. It appeared throughout the enrollment data of SCSD that as school-choice participation increased within SCSD, the number of students exiting SCSD also increased. In addition, the enrollment reductions tended to reach earlier into the grade levels. Whether this was a trend that was correlated with the number of school-choice enrollments was outside the scope and intent of this study. However, the impact of schools-of-choice participation at SCSD needs further study. In addition, the impact of such wide-scale participation in schools-of-choice may cause the same pattern to be replicated in other districts. This would be important for policy makers to understand the overall implications of schools-of-choice policy on both the districts that lose students to schools-of-choice and the districts that attract large numbers of school-choice students.

The second area that needs to be understood in terms of schools-of-choice is the relationship between funding and geographic location. DeFrance (2001) conducted an economics study of the districts that chose to participate in schools-of-choice, comparing test scores and per-pupil foundation allowances. The issue is greater than test scores and foundation grants, especially in the metropolitan areas. The enrollment and participation trends appeared to be racially and culturally driven. Liepa (2001) noted that districts with high minority populations lost students through schools-of-choice while districts with low minority populations gained students. In more densely populated areas such as the Detroit metropolitan area, the movement between districts was limited by location. Parents can transport students only a certain distance, and the highest

funded and most effective districts are generally located far from the inner city. In the end, the program, intended to help stimulate improvements in effectiveness for all schools regardless of geographic location, still limits these students.

Next, schools-of-choice as a policy was distinctly impacted by Michigan's funding system. Proposal A limited local districts by forcing them to be solely reliant on the State of Michigan for operating revenue. The per-pupil foundation allowance forced schools to increase enrollments in order to survive. Schools-of-choice was a solution to increasing enrollment for districts such as SCSD. Increases in enrollment led to an increase in instability within the district. Schools-of-choice was designed to help provide opportunities for students to become successful. The findings presented in this particular study demonstrate that success was not shared by all and that large groups of students, defined by racial and socio-cultural congruence, experienced less success than their Caucasian counterparts. Did schools-of-choice policy have unintentional and unanticipated consequences on the students who are not successful with their change in districts? In addition, did schools-of-choice lead to an increase in segregation by race between school districts? In the case of SAHS, the majority of school-choice students were Caucasian students who left districts with higher minority populations. If this pattern is replicated throughout the Detroit metropolitan area, including Oakland and Macomb Counties, and across the state, then segregation may have increased between districts.

The focus of this study was on the experiences of school-choice students at the high school level. In this particular case, African American and Hispanic, school-choice students had drastically different experiences than their Caucasian counterparts. Was this pattern replicated in other districts that participated in schools-of-choice? In addition, was the pattern similar for African American and Hispanic school-choice students who enrolled in a district similar to SCSD while still in the early elementary grades? The age level of the participants in this study may have impacted their ability to move to custodianship. Would a younger student have a different experience? In-district African American and Hispanic students reported that they were also perceived to be school-choice students simply because of their race. As noted throughout the research, Southgate's demographics have been changing to a more diverse population. How has this impacted the experiences of African American and Hispanic school-choice students in the elementary grades?

This particular study focused on one school in Southgate. Other suburban school districts are large participants in accepting school-choice students. If these districts were studied, would the findings and the conceptual framework hold true for the new setting? My intention was to describe only the experiences of school-choice students at Southgate Anderson High School. However, the findings appear to be favorable for one ethnic group. Do these findings describe the experiences of school-choice students in another school district or other school districts? If so, the knowledge gained from these findings would be

beneficial for policy makers and proponents of choice as school-choice and school funding are revisited and evaluated.

In reflecting on the research, it would be very worthwhile to study the schools-of-choice from the perspective of the non-school-choice students and staff instead of trying to describe and explain the experiences of school-choice students. It appeared that the dominant changes necessary were within the existing students and staff at SCSD. Instead of looking at the re-socialization experiences of school-choice students, it would be beneficial to study the experiences of the existing students and staff within SCSD. Studying the changes in these individuals, over time, would truly add to the body of work and understanding of policy implications at the local level.

One of the findings of this study was the tendency for school-choice students to employ Schein's (1990) rebellion. Following these students who chose to exit the organization and determining their reasoning for leaving would be beneficial to adding clarity to the experiences of school-choice students. As a researcher, this is an area that would prove beneficial to a district's ability to recruit and retain students through schools-of-choice. However, every researcher and study has limits. Following these students is a study in itself that would be valuable for educational practitioners and developers of future policy.

The initial conceptual framework developed for the study provides a model for describing the socialization experiences of students entering into a new organization. The conceptual framework used for this study presented the socialization process as a stage model working within the context the

organization was rooted. This framework can be utilized in future research related to student experiences upon entering a new academic or social setting. It can also be manipulated for use in studies of individuals entering a new organizational setting. Other researchers may choose to apply this framework to another setting to determine its usefulness and application to additional settings.

Implications for Theory

The conceptual framework developed for this study borrowed from work by Jablin (1987) and Feldman (1981) in terms of stage models for organizational socialization. Work completed by Louis (1980), Schein (1990), and Carlson (1964) aided in the development of the encounter and outcomes stages. However, without first understanding the resource dependency of SCSD and the historical context of Southgate, the findings in terms of student socialization would not have been clarified. Resource dependence was the catalyst that opened the doors for school-choice students to consider entering SCSD. The organizational context and culture helped shape the experiences of school-choice students as they progressed through the stage model. Meanwhile, the school-choice students and schools-of-choice participation influenced the organization in terms of organizational consequences. Socialization of the students did not occur in isolation. Individual socialization was related to the organizational consequences and vice-versa. Both were shaped by the context and culture of the organization.

This relationship is important in terms of socialization theory. Hence, the conceptual framework holds analytical generalizability to other settings.

Studying the socialization process of individuals involves studying the organization itself. The model provided in this study can be used to describe the interaction between individual socialization and the organizational consequences of a particular setting.

Implications for Practice

Since the passage of Proposal A, Michigan's school funding system has been "eroded with tax cut after tax cut over a period of years" (Diebold 2004, p. 303). The initial shift in school funding from local property taxes to the state level was intended to help school districts and provide relief to taxpayers. Instead, it has resulted in changes and unrest within communities regarding their schools. Unpredictable funding from these tax cuts, combined with increased costs and reliance on the State of Michigan to provide adequate funding, forced school districts such as SCSD to participate in schools-of-choice. Under Proposal A and any other market-driven funding system, the only method for a district to generate enough revenue to counter rising costs was to increase enrollment. Established districts with little space for new housing were distinctly disadvantaged under Proposal A's per-pupil funding scheme. Under this system, districts with steady or declining enrollments experienced the same negative financial effects. Schools-of-choice was intended to force schools to increase the levels of effectiveness in terms of test scores in order to attract students. The reality was that the wealthiest districts opted not to participate because their districts were already growing due to housing increases.

As a result, once-financially stable communities such as Southgate were forced to participate in schools-of-choice on a large scale. While the initial result of participation was an increased revenue stream that allowed SCSD to continue providing educational opportunities to the local community, the end result was a conflict within the schools that ultimately impacted the students of SCSD. This conflict was between organizational rationalities. Educational leaders choosing to participate in schools-of-choice need to understand that they are balancing rationalities among the technical core, task environment, and the institutional environment. There are trade-offs for each in terms of effectiveness.

The technical core of a school like SAHS maintained its rationality through effectively replicating the community by producing graduates ready to work in factory-type settings. However, schools-of-choice and external forces redefined this rationality at the technical core to being effective at increasing test scores. Meeting two definitions of excellence at the technical core created conflict within the core itself. In the end, it caused the technical core to be ineffective at meeting either definition.

Meanwhile, the task environment relied on school-choice students as a means of survival. The technical core needed resources in order to continue attempting to meet either definition of effectiveness, and the only means to provide these resources for the task environment was to enroll additional students from outside the district in an attempt to receive additional revenue. However, the institutional environment was defining the same two forms of effectiveness. The local community desired the technical core to continue

replicating it while the State of Michigan was requiring higher test scores as a measure of effectiveness. Understanding this continual conflict between rationalities is important for educational leaders to help the core to be effective. Educational leaders need to be clear on the definition of effectiveness for the technical core and work with the institutional environment to meet this definition. All the while, educational leaders must keep in mind the effects of this conflict between rationalities on the students being served.

The experiences of school-choice students at SAHS were predictable: Racial and socio-cultural congruence dictated them. Caucasian school-choice students moved into custodial orientation while African American and Hispanic school-choice students struggled within the new organization or exited the organization. Schools-of-choice was a competition between communities that resulted in an increased need to work with all students within a school in terms of socialization and acceptance. For educational leaders looking to attract students to their district via schools-of-choice, the socialization needs of these students must be addressed once enrolled into the new setting. Similarly, educational leaders working in settings that are losing students via schools-of-choice may also want to attend to the social needs of all students. The findings of this study clearly identified that social acceptance in the educational setting was a defining factor in describing the experiences of school-choice students. In this particular case, racial and socio-cultural congruence defined the level of social acceptance in the new environment. Educational leaders looking to help all students must tend to these social needs.

Schools-of-choice had limited impact on the overall operations and success of SCSD. It did create controversy within the district and conflicts between rationalities. Racially and socio-culturally congruent Caucasian school-choice students were able to successfully reach custodianship while African American and Hispanic school-choice students continued to struggle. In the end, schools-of-choice appeared to be beneficial for Caucasian students at SAHS and had limited positive impact for African American and Hispanic students. For policy makers and educational practitioners, the framework describing the experiences of school-choice students at Southgate Anderson High School can be used to address and predict issues related to individual student success based upon racial and socio-cultural congruence and setting of the educational environment. Using this information, educators and policy makers can help to address deep-seated societal issues in order to help the students whom schools-of-choice policy was attempting to rescue. In the end, policy makers can create a policy, but there is no silver bullet to fix the ills of society.

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