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## **Affecting Positive Change: Race, Education, and Young People**

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# UNIVERSITY HONORS PROGRAM

## SENIOR PROJECT - APPROVAL

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I have reviewed this completed senior honors thesis with this student and certify that it is a project commensurate with honors level undergraduate research in this field.

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AFFECTING POSITIVE CHANGE: RACE, EDUCATION, AND YOUNG PEOPLE

by

Sara Jane Butler

A senior honors thesis  
submitted to the University Honors Program at  
The University of Tennessee  
and to Faculty Mentor, George White, Junior  
in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the Honors degree of  
Bachelor of Science in Business Administration

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## Abstract

Race relations in the United States are not improving as quickly as Civil Rights Activists of the 1960s and after had hoped. Within the schools is where the most impacting improvements can be made—and it starts with racial identity formation and development. How a child views herself in the society she lives in vastly affects how she treats both those similar to and different from her. This development of the racial identity is a crucial part of a child's learning processes, her social interaction, and adaptability to a sometimes harsh society. If positive steps can be made during the adolescent stages of growth to ensure improvement in race relations, our society will benefit from those gains.

Through study of psychological and sociological theories concerning identity formation, this thesis strives to explain the delicateness and therefore importance of full, healthy realization of who people are in their society. Also discussed are general solutions to current problems—the answer to "How do we create a learning environment for children conducive to positive identity formation?" Next, a case analysis is performed on the school system of Knox County, Tennessee, to show where the community stands as far as racial equality and opportunities

since desegregation. Finally, possible solutions are offered that could ease Knoxville's painful racial situation.

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## Importance of Study

Since the Civil Rights Era, sons, daughters, and now grandchildren of Revolutionaries have sought to maintain the momentum of social change that so shaped that generation. It seems that we have failed in this great task. An entire decade has passed since the Los Angeles riots of 1992 and the racially-charged murder trial and acquittal of O.J. Simpson in 1994. Recently, nothing has been brought to the attention of the American people via the media about Black/White race relations in the United States. Does this mean that the tumultuous times are behind us? That only better things can come if we continue on the path that we now follow?

It may be easy to agree with a positive answer, but the truth remains: America has not healed its wounds of racism, nor is she anywhere near health. Social groups, often drawn along racial lines, are becoming more isolated as people seek company of likeness in difficult times. Affirmative action laws that our parents worked so hard to put in place are being unraveled at institutions of higher learning—as if no racism exists that prevents qualified applicants of being accepted because of their race. Neighborhoods are still divided on the whole; along with school districts left alone from the rezoning lines. Can we be expected to be a country working together for the same goals if



our people are not only enriched by their community and roots, but also allowed to be well-adjusted to the racially-diverse world? Knowing who you are and where you fit in a society at a young age can only aid you in becoming both a successful individual and a successful community member.

Racial identity formation is a very important process that cannot be overlooked or undersimplified. The purpose of this thesis is to emphasize the need for exploration and development of the self-identity, especially in racial terms, because of its delicateness of stature and its importance to the individual and to the community. The study also attempts to provide guidance for educators and parents so as to foster a healthy environment conducive to positive identity formation. Finally, a case school system is analyzed, and more specific solutions are offered to solve its faults, if some are found. At the close of this project, perhaps a broader goal can be sought so that we can improve our society as much as the generation before us did.

### Justification

#### Few Studies on Minorities

Until recently, there has been little research done on racial identity formation in minority groups. A contributor to this phenomenon could be that people are generally unaware of identity formation issues. People are unaware of these issues

for a couple of reasons: in psychological research, studies have mostly involved White middle class children—thereby completely un-involving the people who could benefit most from the study; and if it is discussed in scientific circles, it is very little—most discussion is based on White identity development, and it is such a miniscule topic that it is viewed as not as prominent or applicable to White adolescents (Tatum, 1997, xv). This makes sense because people in dominant or advantaged social groups do not think about the characteristic that makes them dominant because society takes it for granted. Members of the minority group always identify that characteristic that makes them different, simply because society does (Tatum, 1997, p. 21). For this reason alone, there is justification for research.

#### Delicacy of Young Identity

Secondly, recent research has supported the delicacy of young identity. Data reveal that children begin to notice differences and construct classificatory and evaluative categories very early. Furthermore, there are overlapping yet distinguishable developmental tasks and steps in the construction of identity and attitudes; and societal stereotyping and bias influence children's self-concept and attitudes toward others (Tatum, 1997, p. 67).

This delicacy has great implications for society. How a student views herself affects academic performance, social adjustedness, self-expectation levels and ultimately self-esteem, and overall life success. Individuals add up to groups; groups add up to societies that must work together, despite personal turmoil.

#### Oppositional Identity Formation and Academics

Commonly, when adolescents feel tension or stress from everyday life, they seek out people like them to share their pain with—someone to understand their trials. Minority groups are no exception. Common in junior high and high schools today is racial grouping—a response to racism that adolescents use. These teens are finding support in stressful situations from their peers (Tatum, p. 62). What commonly happens in these groups, subconsciously, is very damaging to the African-American community. In homogenous groups, oppositional racial (or social, for that matter) identity often forms in response to societal pressures and stereotypes in order to protect the identity of the individual. The new identity takes on the worst stereotypes of the group.

For example, society has pinned "acting Black" as encompassing negative stereotypes of Black youth: loud kids with baggy pants that are confrontational and do not care about their

school work. So, in order to keep the dominant group at a distance and to protect the identity of the *group*, Black students might adopt and live this negative stereotype.

On the other hand, these adolescents have also applied this thought process to "acting White." According to researcher Beverly Tatum, Black students may play down academic success for peer acceptance—and dominance rejection—among their Black peer group (p. 64). This negative social label on academic success among Black youth can only be damaging in the long run. This phenomenon can lead to a fraying of continued education in the Black community.

#### Low Diversity Preparation

A final justification for this study involves a need to bring attention to the low-diversity preparation is given to teachers in this day and age. As stated by researcher Ladson-Billings, reliable diversity preparation literature for teachers is difficult to find. Even harder to find is literature that deals specifically with teaching African-American students (Ladson-Billings, 1994, p. 7). A reason for this difficulty could be that Americans refuse to view African-Americans as a distinct culture group in terms of education of the group (Ibid., p. 9). The sciences should be paying attention to culture differences that require specific attention or to the

devastating impacts of systemic racism. To bring attention to this subject is reason enough for research.

### Connection to Research

As every optimistic American, I want to change the world. I would like to better society for my future generations' enjoyment and quality of life. This is the basest connection to this research I have. In addition, the children I will have someday will be viewed by society as a minority. Being a member of the dominant culture, I feel it is my duty to train myself as to the best way to introduce my child to the world. Studying his or her racial identity formation is a step in the right direction for my preparation for parenthood.

Finally, my connection to this research is a bit historical. The high school that I graduated from, McMinn Central High School, in Englewood, Tennessee, has a severe racial situation that no one seems to be working to solve. Hopefully, I will have learned something that I can apply to that school's situation and solve their problems.

### Popular Theories on Racial Identity

Surprisingly, not as many studies exist as one might think on racial identity theory and formation. Most research that is done today in this field comes from the studies of three main pioneers: Marcia, Phinney, and Cross.

Studies of James Marcia

The first large studies of the formation and development of racial identity were performed by James Marcia in 1965 and 1966. These studies were not group-specific. The only group identification noted is dominant versus subordinate (in American society, this is inferred to be White and Black culture, respectively). He interviewed 86 college males, and in doing so identified four distinct identity development stages that are based on the subjects' level of exploration, commitment, and decision-making. Those that were in the latter stages of development scored higher on concept-attainment tasks; those that are less developed adhere more to their parents' wishes and high goals and subscribed more to authoritarian values (Marcia, 1966, p. 551).

Marcia Stage One: Identity Diffusion

Marcia's first stage of racial identity development is Identity Diffusion. In this stage, there is no exploration of identity and no conscientious commitment made to any particular group. She makes no thought to position in society or how groups are treated differently.

Marcia Stage Two: Foreclosure

The subject in the second stage, or Foreclosure stage, has also made no exploration attempt, but has made some sort of commitment, most likely in response to parents' views. S/he has not experienced a "crisis" (i.e., racial confrontation) that would spark an interest in exploration or anger. In this stage, there is much reliance on parental decisions; therefore, the subject does not form opinions on one's own very often.

#### Marcia Stage Three: Moratorium

Another intermediary stage, Moratorium, is characterized by a "crisis" period. Here, much of the struggle involves the subjects' active exploration of culture and society in order to someday form commitments. S/he is attempting to balance her wishes with her parents' wishes and society's norms. Note that no commitments are actually made here (Marcia, p. 552).

#### Marcia Stage Four: Racial Identity Achievement

Finally, in the final Identity Achievement stage, the subject has lived through the crisis period, has explored herself and position thoroughly enough, and has formed commitments based on the findings of exploration. Here, ideologies for living are formed (Marcia, p. 551).

Studies of Jean Phinney

Another well-known researcher of racial identity is Jean Phinney, who first published findings of research in 1990. As the basis of his study, Phinney defines ethnic identity as the "psychological relationship of ethnic and racial minority group members with their own group" (p. 499). In his definition, there are four main components: self-identification (the ethnic label one labels herself); a sense of belonging; the identification of both positive and negative attitudes and opinions toward the group; and ethnic involvement: social participation and adoption of cultural practices (Phinney, 1990, pp. 503-504). Much like the research that came prior to this study, Phinney finds formation occurring at a three-stage progression; much like a combination of other models discussed previously.

Phinney Stage One: Unexamined Ethnic Identity

In his first stage, labeled Unexamined Ethnic Identity, the adolescent may show a preference for the dominant culture. Non-interest is also a characteristic of this stage, as well as foreclosure. Many people do not progress beyond this stage because they simply are taught to adopt the views of their parents or social group. Also included in this stage are minority children that racially misidentify themselves and show preference for white stimulus figures (Phinney, p. 499).



### Phinney Stage Two: Ethnic Identity Search

As the subject progresses to the Ethnic Identity Search stage, she oftentimes immerses herself in her culture and/or rejects the dominant culture. Many times this stage is triggered by an encounter (much like in Cross's study) or awakening. This stage can be compared largely to Marcia's Moratorium stage.

### Phinney Stage Three: Achieved Ethnic Identity

Phinney's final stage is named Achieved Ethnic Identity. After thorough study and observation, the subject comes to resolve two dilemmas: there exists a disparaging difference between the dominant and minority group; and there is an apparent lowered status of their own group (1990, pp. 502-503).

### Studies of William Cross

It is important to note here that Cross's studies dealt specifically with African-American college students—no other minority group was involved. Therefore, this study may be most applicable to the scope of this project and the case of the Knox County School System discussed later. For this reason, more emphasis is placed on this study than any other.

### Cross Stage One: Pre-encounter

Cross's five-stage model describes the stages of identity development as an ongoing life cycle, rather than a series of

linear events that take place in adolescence as described by most other models (Tatum, 1997, p. 83). A person is usually born into this first stage of development, Pre-encounter, but its socialization involves everyone the subject is in contact with from childhood to sometimes early adulthood (Cross, 1991, p. 198). In the first stage, African-Americans often exhibit low-salience attitudes—those that give little positive emphasis to Blackness. Their race plays a minor role in everyday life, as they have not given much thought to race-related issues. Another common regard to race in this stage is that its only meaning be that of a label that calls for social discrimination. An extreme racial attitude of this stage is anti-Black sentiment. Members of this stage regard Blackness as a liability or as a “negative reference group” (Cross, 1991, p. 191).

It can be inferred that subjects in this first stage of development are more responsive to Eurocentric ideals portrayed in the media and/or miseducation about the significance of the Black experience. This example is one of many that shows the severity of the impact that society’s point-of-view has on the racial identity formation of youngsters.

### Cross Stage Two: Encounter

Cross argues that a person's identity will fight hard to resist change; therefore, something drastic must take place that forces the change. Cross (1991) calls this the *encounter*:

The encounter must work around slip through, or even shatter the relevance of the person's current identity and world view, and at the same time provide some hint of the direction in which to point the person to be resocialized or transformed. (p. 199)

One can only imagine the feelings that are a reaction to the encounter: that of shock, confusion, or depression. These feelings aid in the journey of inner reflection, which can lead to other feelings: betrayal, guilt, anger, and anxiety. These are the tools that the enlightened subject takes to the next phase: Immersion-Emersion (Cross, p. 201).

### Cross Stage Three: Immersion/Emersion

Stage three is the transitional period in Cross's model of development. During this tumultuous time, people work to shed the image of their old self and construct an image of their new reference frame. Note that identity change has not yet taken place; the subject has only committed to change (Cross, p. 202). Cross has further divided this stage into two phases: Immersion and Emersion.

Immersion.

This phase of transition is marked by complete *immersion* of the Black youth—she is determined to surround herself with reminders of her racial identity and people who share that identity with her. She soaks up all the new information that is given to her about herself like a sponge. At this point, she may see white people as "irrelevant," with the focus not on anger, but self-discovery (Tatum, 1997, p. 76).

Furthermore, although her new identity has not yet been revealed at this stage, the youth may feel drawn to demonstrating her new commitment. Most of this demonstration takes place in Black organizations, but can be taken to the extreme with direct confrontation with authority (i.e., White police officers)—with life or death implications (Cross, p. 206).

Emersion.

After whirlwind of emotion during the Immersion phase, there is often a period of equalization in the Emersion stage. This stage is brought on by a realization that Immersion is not the end stage—there is further evolution to take place. The successful end-product of this evolution is finally realized to be someone sophisticated and more serious about their commitments to Blackness (Cross, p. 207). Finally, they are

ready to take on this new challenge in the Internalization stage of racial identity development.

As an aside, it is important to note that not all African-Americans attain or reach beyond this transitional third stage. There are some negative outcomes that can take place in this stage, caused by frustration, chronic racism, and failure to reach high expectations. These possible effects are regression to the Pre-encounter stage, possibly caused by a negative experience or strong discouragement; continuation of stage three—whereby the subjects are overwhelmed with hatred for the dominant culture because of chronic, repeated exposure to racism; and dropping out altogether of involvement in Black issues. Dropouts usually follow one of two paths: one of frustration from a seemingly unsolvable problem or one of a feeling of accomplishment of their Blackness, and therefore move onto "more important" life issues (Cross, p. 209). All three of these conditions exist without progression to the next step.

#### Cross Stage Four: Internalization

For the first time, the subject perceives herself as being totally changed in the Internalization stage. The person's new identity serves new purposes:

The internalized identity seems to perform three dynamic functions in a person's everyday life: (1) to defend and

protect the person from psychological insults that stem from having to live in a racist society; (2) to provide a sense of belonging and social anchorage and; (3) to provide a foundation or point of departure for carrying out transactions with people, cultures, and situations beyond the world of Blackness. (Cross, 1991, p. 210)

In addition, the subject is more at ease with who she is, and can begin to fully understand and appreciate the complexities and challenges of Blackness in American society. From this point, she can more seriously analyze her position in life and the importance of that understanding.

#### Cross Stage Five: Internalization/Commitment

After having developed a Black identity from going through these four stages, some people are content with the outcome. The extent that Black people move into the Commitment stage is dependent on long-term interest in Black issues. The researcher notes that not much scientific distinction has been meted out between stages four and five and more research needs to be performed.

Cross's model of five progressive stages of racial identity can be extended to cross the life span or recycled many times over. Encounters can restart the cycle, but it is impossible to return to the Pre-encounter stage of development. Both the

nature and intensity of the new encounter determine the complexity of the recycle—from a refocus of ideas to a complete rerun of the stages (Cross, p. 220).

### Possible General Solutions

Throughout my research, several methods have been offered to "save the school systems." Below, I have identified some areas of improvement that are specifically directed toward fostering identity growth in minority groups.

#### Curriculum-Based

##### Anti-Bias Curriculum

Common sense tells us that children are born without prejudice and hatred. We have already established that children develop sensory and evaluative techniques early on—but what is more important is the slew of prejudices and hatred that adults live every day that children pick up on and curiously respond to. In response, anti-bias curriculum is needed. Laura Derman-Sparks (1989) defines anti-bias as:

An active/activist approach to challenging prejudice, stereotyping, bias, and the "isms." It is necessary for each individual to actively intervene, to challenge and counter the personal and institutional behaviors that perpetuate oppression. (p. 3)

The researcher outlines a few ways to empower children to confront isms and strive for a better society. In the US, there is a little-known history of freedom and community schools organized for empowering children of color. These schools are controlled and ran by minorities—preferably community members. Curriculum in these freedom schools is focused on “reclaiming history, culture, and identity stolen by racism, and pushed aside by academic skills” (Derman-Sparks, p. 5).

Another option to empowering students is through biculturalism. This study recognizes cultural differences without assigning value to them. In a bicultural classroom, the language, values, teaching styles, and beliefs of both the dominant and subordinate cultures is taught. With these methods of anti-bias curriculum, Black students would get the opportunity to see his/her culture in a positive light, which can only contribute to positive identity formation.

#### Culture-Driven History Concentration

Everyone knows that Black History does not only need to be celebrated during the month of February. Students should be able to take history in school that is applicable to their culture. This request comes because when children see historical examples of people like them doing great things, they see the feasibility of themselves becoming great. In addition, as in the United



States history, everyone has the right to know the atrocities suffered by their people so that knowledge can be gained through past experiences. We must learn from our history so that we do not repeat it.

### Social-Based

#### Minority Leaders at High Administration Levels

Just as important in developing a view of oneself from the past is the vision of one in the present. If Black students can see successful people from their racial group on a regular basis, a message gets sent to the student that may not have been sent from a White teacher: "You, too, belong here, and can make it all the way." Students with underdeveloped racial identity can use this quiet reassurance every day—even though they might not even think about it.

#### Same-Race Peer Group Outside of School

Although school is an important part of the adolescent life, a group of non-school peers is a great supplement to social development. This time period allows children to get together and discuss issues that are not always reached at school—especially issues on race. Sometimes the school life is too full of taboos and nervousness about certain topics; a new

group to exchange ideas with can only reinforce the positive messages that the child already receives.

Now that we have a general idea about how to and the effects of encouraging positive personal racial identity growth, we should examine a case and extrapolate ideas to the new situation.

#### Case in Point: Knox County Schools

In order to fully benefit from new knowledge, one must apply this knowledge to a controlled setting and observe the results. Due to geographical convenience, the case (or controlled setting) studied here is that of the Knox County, Tennessee School System. To fully understand the current situation, along with points-of-view and ideologies behind attitudes, one must study Knoxville's desegregation history since *Brown vs. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*. In this history lie many answers to the questions we may ask about the present.

#### History

Education, along with many other facets of daily life, changed forever in this country when the Supreme Court reached its decision in *Brown v. Board* in 1954. Over the course of time since then, cities all over the United States have followed

generally the same pattern in their moves toward "integration." Knoxville is no exception. Let us review the course of history.

Directly after the Brown decision, some courts scrambled to relieve tension in both the North and the South; while others simply did nothing. In the North, the reaction was in the form of a "freedom-of-choice" plan—called majority-to-minority. This rule allowed students to migrate to schools of their choice (and at their expense)—on the condition that they were in the majority group at the initial school and in the minority at the new school (Rossell, 1990, p. 4).

Also adding to injury of separate schools was the Private School Movement all throughout this time. In mass waves, parents moved their children from public schools to private schools for fear of the "adverse" affects of integration. By the early 1960s, private schools enrolled almost 14 percent of all K-12 students—their largest share of the century (Newman, 1998).

In the South, court approved desegregation plans were "choice" plans similar to those to the North. They came in many forms, including pupil-placement laws that assigned students to schools based on their race; freedom-of-choice plans, where the students chose their school at the beginning of the year—completely dropping the race factor (Black students in fact did not attend predominantly White schools at this time for obvious concern); and incremental desegregation, which promised eventual

desegregation, usually by grade level. Statistics show that these plans were not making an impact on the racial balance of the public school systems: by 1965, eleven years after desegregation was ordered, almost 94 percent of Southern Black students still attended all-Black schools (Rossell, p. 5).

A huge break came for the desegregation movement in the *Green v. County School Board of New Kent* (1968) decision. This case called for a unitary (as opposed to dual) school system for all students and required that students transfer from the single-race schools. Furthermore, in *Alexander v. Holmes* (1969), incremental desegregation was denounced. This decision greatly sped up the progress, so between 1970 and 1971, "the public schools of the Deep South were substantially integrated" (Rossell, p. 7).

School systems were still moving slowly to integration because the Courts had not yet told what it required; it only stated what was unconstitutional. This problem was solved in 1971 in the *Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg* case. *Swann* suggested some permissible remedies to the situation: racial balance; nondiscriminatory one-race schools, varying of school attendance zones; and transportation of students anywhere within districts to achieve balance (Rossell, p. 8). It is notable that, in regard to the racial balance remedy, it is nowhere stated that population ratios are required to match that of the makeup of

the community, as some have misconstrued. For a time after this decision, busing—and resistance to busing—was a huge national issue.

But, since 1974, no positive court decisions have been made to support the cause of desegregationists. For example, in 1991 in *Board of Education of Oklahoma City v. Dowell*, the court allowed the reversal of desegregation rules if the district had complied with the court orders for several years. Years of positive racial integration legislation was unraveled in subsequent court cases, such as *Freeman v. Pads* (1992) which did not even call for prolonged adherence to desegregation laws (Orphield, et al.).

In light of discouraging legal battles, there are some methods of desegregation that districts are using that point toward the voluntary desegregation plans of the 1960s. One of these such plans is the magnet program, which Knoxville has prescribed to in recent years. Currently, there is one high school, one middle school, and three elementary schools that participate in the magnet program.

The plan is simple: entice Suburban White students to inner-city schools that need to be desegregated by offering special, focused curriculum and higher per-student spending. In doing this, the districts seek to highly publicize the positive actions of the magnet schools, thereby attracting more White

students, hoping for eventual desegregation. Many school districts across the country employ only this plan, even though court cases have identified magnet programs as only a supplement to an already established desegregation plan (Rossell, 1990, p. 22). This brief historic review brings us to analyze more closely Knoxville's desegregation battles.

#### Desegregation 1959-1974

Much of what took place in this first stage of desegregation was based on a single court case, *Goss v. Board of Education of City of Knoxville, Tennessee* (1959). The reason for its longevity lies in the new decisions of the Supreme Court cases during this time (e.g., *Alexander, Swann, and Green* discussed above). After the school board's inaction after *Brown*, Black community leaders filed the suit against the city, calling for a plan of action to desegregate. In response, the school board presented a desegregation plan in April 1960. Its plan involved actions that were being taken across the nation: a grade-a-year plan and a minority-to-majority transfer policy (Mauney, 1979).

After having been shot down by the Court of Appeals for the first plan, the Board of Education submitted an amended plan in 1963 that was finally accepted in 1967 (*Goss*, 1967, p. 918). But the honeymoon period did not last long, for in 1969, after the

*Green* and *Alexander* decisions came through, some of the provisions were then unconstitutional, namely in the majority-to-minority clauses; and then, in 1971, after *Swann*, in part because the court case put the burden of proof with the plaintiff to prove the dual system—so they took the opportunity to test the new law. Judge Taylor favored the defendant, citing that the school board amended their plans to conform to *Swann* (including assigning faculty to schools based on racial percentages of the system as a whole and revision of the transfer policies) (*Goss*, 1972, p. 712-720).

The *Goss* court case and this phase of Knoxville's school desegregation ended in 1974 when the Supreme Court refused the plaintiffs another hearing. By this time, the school system was hardly unitary, and it is obvious that the school board did all it could to avoid compliance. Desegregation at this point was unsuccessful.

#### Desegregation 1989-1996

After the heated debating of the *Goss* case and less media coverage of popular desegregation situations, public sentiment seemed to have faded, for there were no more complaints of the Knox County/City Schools until 1989. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) filed a complaint against the system with the Office for Civil Rights in the

Department of Education (Complaint # 04-89-1269). In this complaint were grievances against hiring practices, recruitment, discrimination in promotion, and in administration of the minority-to-majority transfer policies (Hassan, 1999, p. 80). OCR found the school system in violation of the 1964 Civil Rights Act for:

- (1) assignment of staff to schools: there were no Black teachers or administrators in 37 of the 92 schools and a disproportionate number of Black teachers in predominantly Black schools;
- (2) unequal treatment of Black students in the majority-to-minority transfer policy; Black students were not being allowed to transfer out of inner-city schools at the same rate; and
- (3) misuse of administrative transfers that worked against the desegregation goals (Hassan, p. 81).

Although the school board formed a Task Force Committee and offered several ways in which they would change, OCR demanded mandates of the County system. The Committee suggested the following changes, within three academic years: the placement of minority faculty in every school; the placement of Black administration in White schools; guaranteeing majority-to-minority transfers for one year; and elimination of administration transfers. OCR's mandate demanded that:



The percentage of Black teachers at any of the disproportional Black school not to exceed the system-wide percentage of Black teachers by more than 15 percent.

(Hassan, p. 82)

At this point, the current percentage of Black students in the school system was 8 percent. This mandate meant that in predominantly Black schools, there could be no more than a 23 percent Black teacher population. The school board elected to solve this problem with magnet school programs.

In response, the Knox County School Board requested from OCR another year to find another way to comply with Title VII. Although the agency refused, it reported that it would review another plan when it was presented with one. Finally, in 1994, after years of bickering over plans (topics of discussion: rezoning, closing of schools, avoiding busing), one was approved and adopted. Under this system is where the current Board resides. Its solution to segregation in the school system is the magnet program.

#### Current Situation

As of the 1998 school year, Knox County Schools served 51,835 students in 50 elementary schools, 13 middle schools, 12 high schools, three vocational schools, three special education-focused schools, and two alternate schools (Hassan, 1999, p.

59). No significant changes in population or school districting changes have occurred since then. According to 2000 Census data, 8.63 percent of Knox County's population is African-American.

### The Magnet Program

The Knox County School Board's solution to segregation was the Magnet Program, first implemented in 1993 with Beaumont Elementary/Honors Academy. Magnet schools offer focused curricula to attract White students from other zones to attend the inner-city, often predominantly Black schools. In Knox County, the program acts as a "school within a school," whereas the "magnet" children are in a particular curriculum path separate from the "residential" children that are zoned to attend the school. Students share equipment, and residential children can attend most magnet classes. Table 1 shows a breakdown of Knox County's magnet programs:

School	Magnet Only		Total School Pop.	
	White	Black	White	Black
Beaumont Elementary/Honors Academy	87%	13%	49%	49%
Green Magnet Math and Science Academy	51%	49%	14%	86%
Sarah Moore Greene Technical Academy	51%	49%	16%	83%
Vine Middle Performing Arts School	58%	42%	30%	69%
Austin-East Performing Arts and Sciences H.S.	51%	49%	16%	84%
Knox County Schools, overall			84%	14%

From the numbers above, it is evident that desegregation is not being realized. The only school that seems to be racially balanced is Beaumont—it is also the only school whose magnet program achieved a racial balance that mimics that of the Knoxville community.

There are other faults that community members have pointed out. In fact, in March 2001, in response to parent and teacher complaints, the NAACP toured the schools and submitted a report to the Office for Civil Rights about their findings (Lawson, 2-10-2002, p. A13). Specifically, teachers at Sarah Moore Greene were reporting unequal treatment of magnet and residential children at their school (Lawson, 3-23-01, A9). Local NAACP member Attica Scott says that magnet schooling has caused another form of segregation in Knox County. She heads the committee that is evaluating Knox County Schools, which also hosts other NAACP members and former educators (Ibid, p. A1).

Along with the tours that the committee conducted, they were able to use a racial-justice index-survey software that assigned the county system a grade based on findings and observations (Lawson, 4-1-01, B5). Among the list of grievances, the committee will report to the OCR (1) few or no Black teachers in the magnet programs; and (2) better equipment and resources in the magnet classrooms (Lawson, 3-23-01, A9). From the research that was conducted, it seems that the media is

trying desperately to blame the failure of the magnet program and other inner-city schools on lack of parental involvement. From general knowledge, it takes more than (expected) inactive parents for a plan for an entire school system to fail.

It is evident that Knox County's education system is not one that is most conducive to full, rich development of racial identity because of the racial balances and struggles in community v. government. Even more evidence exists in academic performance evidence.

#### Other Issues: Academic Performance

After speaking with one angry Knoxvilleian, who also happens to be running for the Knox County School Board in the upcoming election, a more clear view of the picture was painted—especially on the topic of academic performance. Gary Gordon, former Knoxville City School Board member, holds this stance: "Since the County took over [in 1987], they [the Board] have never developed any proscriptive means of effectively educating these inner-city low-income Black kids" (personal communication, April 10, 2002).

Statistics support his case: for example, at Austin-East High School—a magnet school—for the 2000 and 2001 academic years, only 21 seniors of classes totaling 132 achieved a score of 20 or higher on the ACT. The average score for Austin-East

for these years is 16.3. A twenty is standard college recruitable score. That number means that only 15 percent of these students are even looked at by colleges. Furthermore, these students attend a magnet school—one in which the "high-achievers" in the magnet program are supposed to lift up the mean score for the school.

Gordon also believes that the County is attempting to hide the fact that Black students are not being sufficiently educated, and therefore not even ready for college when they graduate. He holds that less than one-third of Black students in Knox County attend racially-identifiable schools; most are zoned to predominantly White schools. With zoning lines drawn as such, statisticians cannot determine the academic performance of Black students because their low scores are "hidden" in the higher average of the school.

When asked his opinion on the magnet program, Gordon called it "a failure." Magnet schools are still failing (in the area of achievement in various subjects) on the state's School Report Card system compared with suburban, all-White schools. Clearly, these signs of academic non-performance are simply byproducts of unhealthy cultural upbringing as discussed previously.

Possible Solutions for Knox County

Now that an in-depth discussion has taken place about the racial, social, and educational situation of Knox County students, we can apply what we have learned about racial identity formation to this unique case. First, an obvious step should be made to desegregate the predominantly White Knox County schools.

Additional, but Different Magnets

It makes sense to lure White students into inner-city schools with specialized programs, but would it not be twice as effective if inner-city students had incentive to travel to the suburbs to attend class? If we can fight segregation at both ends, our goals may be easier to accomplish. With so much more chance for positive social interaction among races, this move would be a viable solution for Knox County—both to help solve the desegregation problem and to foster a better environment for positive identity growth.

A success story from this procedure can be found in Boston, although favorable media reports may be skewed. This program was called METCO: Metropolitan Council for Educational Opportunity. This voluntary desegregation program brought packs of students from inner-city schools to the predominantly White schools of the outlying areas. Reports suggest that the students have

adapted well and are improving academically (Tatum, 1997, p. 41).

### Student Efficacy Training

Another possible solution to Knox County's problems involves an in-school program. This program can be used in conjunction with voluntary desegregation plans or simply by itself is Student Efficacy Training. Here, transplanted students (from busing, magnet schooling, etc.) spend one class period per day discussing issues that concern them—such as racism—with staff and other transplanted students. This way, students can get the positive feedback and exposure from people just like them who are experiencing the same hardships during the transition—much like a support group.

School districts that have tried this program report dramatic improvements in grade average—an indication of comfort and success among the students involved (Tatum, p. 41). This could be a feasible option if Knox County follows its voluntary desegregation plans.

### Increased Involvement of Community Leaders

With all of the help of the NAACP in the court rulings in the 1990s and the new complaints in the magnet schools, one would think that Knoxville had an abundance of community leaders willing to dig in the trenches for the school system. According

to concerned citizen Gary Gordon, the case is to the contrary. He blames the ruin of the school system on the apathy of community leaders (personal communication, April 10, 2002).

Perhaps some of the problem lies in communication difficulties. There are so many organizations with full coffers and volunteer hours; maybe the school simply needs some outreach direction. One great community organization that could possibly lend a hand is Project Change of Knoxville. Project Change was created by the corporate giant Levi-Strauss in 1991 to address racism and prejudice in the communities of its workforce. Its four stations are located across the nation, with an important center in Knoxville.

The Knoxville branch started in 1993, intent on following PC's national objectives of using community strategies to foster community anti-racism training and hate crimes prevention. Today's Knoxville branch has changed focus; its more focused goal is: "to strengthen anti-racism infrastructure and networks for civic engagement and democratic renewal utilizing three primary strategies: technical assistance and training; a national network of organizations; and publications and online resources" (Project Change, 3-3-02).

With the networks that Project Change is setting up, a county like Knox can reap huge benefits from a relationship with the group. When like-minded groups work together for a common



goal, the goal is usually realized. Social change brought about by these symbiotic relationships can broaden horizons and eventually lead to environments in which racial identities can blossom without hindrance.

In conclusion, all our fathers and grandfathers fought for in the Civil Rights Era and before is not in vain. Although backward steps have been taken legally, if not socially, over the last two decades, new studies are being conducted that sheds new light on topics not touched before, including the subject of identity formation. With studies like this that break new ground, minds are opened to new, hopeful solutions to old problems.

If small steps can be made now, larger ones will be made in the future. In the case of the Knox County School system, those small steps must be made soon. Thousands of children are being negatively impacted so that their racial and social identity formations may be altered. This can only mean negative results for our society as a whole.

Now that we are taking that step into new studies, we must take that next step—that of action—to save our schools, children, and society.



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