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UNITARY SCHOOL SYSTEMS: ONE RACE OR TWO?*

by

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INTRODUCTION

The Problem Focus

Reacting to the Supreme Court's famous 1954 "Brown" decision and the 1964 Civil Rights Act, prophets of doom foretold the demise of public schools in the South. Six states immediately adopted plans for state-wide private school systems¹, others provided grants and loans to children in private schools. With this legitimization private schools, characteristic of the Northeast, began to blossom over the South like daisies. In 1964, alone, the State of Mississippi granted 23 charters to private educational foundations.

As desegregation progressed white flight began. In the words of news columnist Kilpatrick (1970:611) it was "back to segregation by order of the courts." The term "re-segregation" was coined to describe the phenomena. A unitary system would indeed be unitary - all black - or so it seemed. This paper focuses upon re-segregation and the development of private schools in one Southern state, Mississippi. It is a secondary analysis of some data from the author's dissertation research.²

Basically descriptive in design, this study relates variables by simple cross tabulation. The only statistic employed is chi square.³ No control variables are utilized. The degree of desegregation of public schools in Mississippi as of September 1970 is set forth along with types and degrees of re-segregation. The flight of the whites is documented and the emergence of private schools analyzed. Demographic, socioeconomic and school-community variables are related to the private school movement. The future of the movement is assessed.

*A paper presented to the annual meeting of the Association of Southern Agricultural Workers, Jacksonville, Florida, February 2, 1971.

¹Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Louisiana, North Carolina, and Virginia.

²Mississippi School Districts: Factors in the Disestablishment of Dual Systems to be completed May 1971.

³When the expected frequency of any cell fell below 10 then a correction for continuity was used.

Data Sources

Three major sources of data are tapped. Questionnaires were mailed to 147 District School Superintendents with a 95 percent response rate. School enrollments by race for 1970 were furnished for 90 percent of the districts by HEW along with compliance status reports. The 1960 U.S. Census and other statistical publications were used.

A UNITARY SYSTEM

Unfortunately, the courts did not define a unitary system and confusion reigned. When was a system unitary? Was racial balance necessary among the schools? Henderson (1969:8), Chief of HEW's office for Civil Rights, stated, "Generally speaking, when one enters any school in the district for observation purposes, he would be unable to determine if the school had previously been all Negro or all white." Racial balance was obviously to be the yard stick.

How Unitary are the Systems?

Only two of Mississippi's 150 school districts are not desegregated. These are all-black districts: one serves an all-black community; the other resulted from resegregation. There are 25 districts, however, that have one or more all-Negro schools and thirteen districts that have one or more all-white. Sixty-four districts have one or more schools with a ratio of Negro to white pupils that is 10 percent or more greater than their district ratio. Table 1 provides a breakdown of these schools. Only three districts have both all-white and all-Negro schools. All-white schools tend to be located in districts with a relatively low percent Negro (4-66%), while all-Negro schools tend to be located in districts with a higher percent (33-100%). Those with both types are located in a middle range (47-66%).

Table 1. Degree of Remaining School Segregation in Mississippi Schools

Type of segregation	Number of schools	Enrollment	% of total enrollment for race
All-Negro	58	28,044	11%
All-White	22	6,310	2%
Higher % Negro than District	194	78,985	31%*

*Percent of total school enrollment for both races.

Actually, ninety-three percent of all public school pupils are attending desegregated schools.⁴ Eighty-nine percent of Negro pupils and ninety-eight percent of white pupils are in racially integrated situations. It appears that the unitary system in Mississippi can be a bi-racial system.

While faculty integration is nearly complete, a study by Clark and Ward (1970) has shown that hiring practices in Mississippi favor the white teachers and black administrators are being phased out. In almost every instance the ratio of white teachers to black is higher than the ratio of the student body. My own study has found ratio differences up to 40 percent.

Resegregation: Fact or Fiction?

A number of studies have indicated the circumstances under which resegregation would occur (Stinchcombe, et al., 1969; Hall and Gentry, 1969; Bolner, 1968). Four basic types of resegregation may be identified: intra-school, inter-school, inter-system, and extra-system.

Intra-school resegregation may result from policies on the part of the administration, or, more subtly, by actions of the staff and student body. Segregated classrooms within a desegregated school, whether arbitrarily done or achieved through some tracking system, carry the same stigma. Tracking systems are being used in most districts. Segregation of activities due to the ostracism of blacks by white students and staff is giving way. Pupils, more than the administrators, are achieving integration of the student body. Changes in playground interaction can be noted. Homecoming courts, cheer leaders, bands, football squads and other activities are being desegregated.

Inter-school resegregation occurs when a desegregated school begins to return to a segregated status through a shift in racial balance between schools. One study (Stinchcombe, et al., 1969) noted a racial tipping point beyond which the process is accelerated. Changing residential patterns can cause resegregation over a period of time. Resegregation has also occurred where zoning was the desegregation plan as whites either moved or fictitiously took up residence in another section of town to prevent their children from attending a formerly all-Negro school or to permit them to attend a school with a more favorable racial balance.

Inter-system resegregation, like inter-school, occurs when white families either move or attempt to establish a fictitious residence. Many parents living in a county with a higher percent Negro than the local municipality attempt to send their children to the municipal schools. But the courts have blocked such inter-system transfers. Falsification of residence or movement into town has resulted. Many families in counties with a high percent black moved into nearby counties with a lower percentage or sent their children to board with relatives or friends to escape predominately Negro systems.

⁴Based on 90 percent of the districts reporting or a total of 137 districts.

Extra-system resegregation occurs when parents take their children out of the public schools. Since Mississippi does not have a compulsory school attendance law,⁵ some parents, both black and white are keeping their children out of school. White parents, however, have in the most part enrolled them in private schools. The decline in public school enrollment from 1969 to 1970 was 41,163. A drop of 6,450 was recorded for the previous year.

The effects of inter-school, inter-system and extra-system resegregation are the same - a diminished degree of desegregation. Table 2 shows that an increase in percent Negro has occurred in most of the school districts. The greatest increase occurred mostly where there was already fifty percent Negro or greater.

Table 2. Change in Percent Negro from 1968 to 1970 in Mississippi School Districts

Percent Negro of 1968 district enrollment	Number of Districts with degrees of change in % Negro				Total
	Decrease in % Negro	0-.9% Increase	1-9% Increase	10-30% Increase	
1 to 49%	21	15	30	6	72
50 to 100%	6	2	24	33	65
Total	27	17	54	39	137

$\chi^2 = 38.30; df = 2; p < .001.$

DUAL SYSTEMS EMERGE

Miller (1957:4) wrote, "Private, i.e., nonpublic, education has long held an important place in the scheme of American education." However, in the South, and Mississippi in particular, private schools have not been a major factor in education. In 1960, Mississippi had less than five percent of its school children in private schools (U.S. Census Bureau, 1961:547). Lovejoy, in 1963, listed in his Prep School Guide (1963:74) only 12 private and parochial schools in the state. In 1964 there were only three non-sectarian private schools in operation. Today there are 236 private schools in the state (see Table 3).

Types of Private Schools

Fichter (1963:428-429) classified private schools into parochial, characterized by religion, and private schools, characterized by social

⁵The law was repealed in 1964.

Table 3. Private Schools and Segregation Academies in Mississippi

Type of School	Total Number of Private Schools		Segregation Academies	
	Number	Enrollment	Number	Enrollment
Non-Church Related	135	46,881	132 ^a	46,268
Catholic	53	13,436	b	
Episcopal	6	1,674	b	
Presbyterian	5	1,117	3 ^b	823
Baptist	13	3,879	13	3,879
Other Faiths	8	840	8	867
Non-classifiable	7	1,972	7	1,972
State and Federal supported Non-Public	9	2,220	c	
Totals	236	72,019	162	53,809

^aTwo all-Negro schools and one predominantly Negro are omitted.

^bCatholic, Episcopalian, and two Presbyterian schools have been omitted because they have strong anti-discrimination policies.

^cState and Federally supported non-public schools such as schools for blind, deaf, Indians, special education, etc., have also been omitted.

class. The recent Southern phenomena does not fit Fichter's simple dichotomy. The so-called "Segregation Academies" are not the expensive preparatory schools that Fichter described nor are they free from religious influences. The right to "pray in school" is as much a shiboleth of the movement as the right to "choose one's own company" even though the basic rationale is segregation.

In discussing the Southern private school movement it is necessary to separate the truly parochial type from the newer private and religious enterprises. Fifty-three Catholic schools, six Episcopal and two Presbyterian schools in the state meet Fichter's criteria and differ from the segregation academies in that they have strong policies against discrimination. They also differ in showing a decline in enrollment. For example, in 1964 there were 56 Catholic schools with an enrollment of 16,622. By 1970 the enrollment had declined to 13,264 and three schools had closed - all of this at a time when segregation academies were booming.

Growth of Segregation Academies

From 1964 to 1970, Mississippi granted 158 charters to private educational foundations, not to mention the many "church schools." While not every foundation became functional, 163 segregation academies are operating in sixty-six counties with an enrollment of 54,037 (see Table 3). In 1966⁶ there were 23,586 enrolled in the private schools of Mississippi. The greatest gains were during the Fall of 1969 and the Spring and Fall of 1970 (see Table 4). Even though the growth has been phenomenal, all of the private schools in the state account for only 11.8 percent of the total number of school children in Mississippi, with segregation academies enrolling only 8.8 percent.

Table 4. Enrollment Gains in Private Schools in Mississippi, 1966-1970*

Year	Number of Schools	Enrollment	Gain	
			Number	%
1966-67	121	23,586	X	X
1967-68	129	24,227	641	2.7
1968-69	133	22,093	-2,134	-8.8
1969-70	188	46,981	24,888	112.6
1970 (estimate)	236	72,019	25,038	53.2

*1966-1969 figures taken from Nonpublic Schools, State Department of Education, Division of Administration and Finance, Jackson, Mississippi for respective years. 1970 estimate based on 86 percent of the schools reporting and a projection of the category means for the others.

FACTORS RELATED TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF PRIVATE SCHOOLS

The Southern private school movement is an act of resistance to desegregation stemming from the same sense of frustration as Wallace's school-door stance. It is the "Southern Belle" of the resistance movement sired by the same cultural values that nourished the ideology of white supremacy. Therefore, variables related to desegregation should prove helpful in understanding the emergence of segregation academies.

Demographic and Ecological Variables

Four demographic and ecological variables were considered to be relevant; size, percent nonwhite, percent rural and degree of industrialization. Size seems to be the most important variable in determining how many private schools were established in an area. Larger populations are

⁶The first year for which reliable figures are available.

needed to furnish the clientel. Size was also significantly related to whether a private school came into existence. Sixty-nine percent of the districts that had one or more related private schools were in areas of more than 9,000 population. On the other hand, 57 percent of the districts that did not have related private schools had populations under 9,000.

Perhaps the strongest factor in both the desegregation process and in the emergence of private schools is that of the percent Negro of the population. Two measures, percent nonwhite of counties and percent of the school district's population of school-age that are nonwhite, demonstrate the significance of this variable (see Table 5). A positive correlation appears in both.

Table 5. Measures of Percent Nonwhite related to Private Schools

Percent Nonwhite of School Districts for two Populations	Districts with Related Private Schools		Total
	None	One or More	
Percent Nonwhite of total Population of area			
Upto 30 percent	12	12	24
30 percent and above	2	55	57
Total	14	67	81

$\chi^2 = 22.70; df = 1; p < .001$

Percent Nonwhite of School age Population in the area			
Upto 40 percent	21	38	59
40 percent and above	2	86	88
Total	23	124	147

$\chi^2 = 27.05; df = 1; p < .001$

While the percent rural was considered to be an important factor, the measure of this relationship failed to prove statistically significant. This relationship can better be seen in the two measures of industrialization (see Table 6). An index of change from agriculture to manufacturing from 1940 to 1960 reveals that the counties with a lower index score were more likely to have private schools. The same holds true for a ratio of employees in manufacturing per 1000 population. The lower ratio counties were more likely to have a private school than those with higher ratios.

Table 6. Measures of Industrialization Related to Private Schools

Measure of Industrialization	Counties with Private Schools		Total
	None	One or more	
Index score of change from agriculture to manufacturing; 1940-1960			
Upto 80	10	58	68
80 and above	4	9	13
Total	14	67	81
$\chi^2 = 9.42; df = 1; p < .01.$			
Ratio of employees in manufacturing to 1000 population			
Upto 6.5	8	44	52
6.5 and above	6	23	29
Total	14	67	81
$\chi^2 = 7.14; df = 1; p < .01.$			

Socioeconomic Variables

Two measures were used to tap the socioeconomic dimension (see Table 7). The first was a measure of equality of opportunity. This index was derived by comparing SES scores developed by Bryant (1966:8) for both races. Those counties where the discrepancy between the scores was high tended to have private schools more than counties where the discrepancy was low. A measure of the education differential between the races demonstrated a similar positive relationship. Median education for non-whites was subtracted from whites (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1961:173-179, 201-207). Where the differential was great the counties tended to have private schools in contrast to counties with lower differentials.

School and Community Variables

The original study from which these observations are drawn looks at desegregation within the community context and focuses upon the dynamic of school-community interactions. A number of variables are therefore available related to this nexus.

Prior to the desegregation of public schools in an area the constituents had a number of potential sources for exposure to desegregation

Table 7. Socioeconomic Variables Related to Private Schools

Indices	Counties with Private Schools		Total
	None	One or more	
Equality of Opportunity Index			
17.0 and above	3	62	65
Upto 17.0	11	5	16
Total	14	67	81
$\chi^2 = 39.26; df = 1; p < .001$			
Educational Differential Index			
3.5 and above	4	56	60
Upto 3.5	10	11	21
Total	14	67	81
$\chi^2 = 24.75; df = 1; p < .001.$			

experiences, both their own and that of others. Among these were the desegregation of other institutions in the area and the desegregation of adjacent school districts (see Table 8). Where opposition to desegregation of other institutions was strong there was also a greater tendency to establish private schools. Likewise, when opposition to desegregation of adjacent school districts was strong, private schools were more likely to emerge.

Civil rights organizations actively promoted the desegregation of the schools in some areas. Where there were two or more action agencies in a district promoting desegregation there was a greater tendency to establish private schools (see Table 9).

It was assumed that the earlier a district desegregated the less information the constituents would have about the consequences of desegregation and the greater their opposition to desegregation would be. This should tend to encourage the establishment of private schools. Those districts which desegregated prior to 1968 did have the largest percentage of private schools although the χ^2 value falls a little short of the .05 level. Opposition to Negroes entering formerly all-white

Table 8. Exposure to Desegregation Related to Private Schools

Types of exposure to Desegregation Experiences	Districts with related Private Schools		Total
	None	One or more	
Opposition to desegregation of other Institutions in area			
Little	12	30	42
Much	6	62	68
Total	18	92	110

$\chi^2 = 6.12; df = 1; p < .02.$

Opposition to desegregation
of adjacent school districts

Little	5	6	11
Much	10	81	91
Total	15	87	102

$\chi^2 = 5.71; df = 1; p < .02.$

Table 9. Organizations Promoting Desegregation Related to Private Schools

Number of Organizations Pro- moting Desegregation	Districts with Related Private Schools		Total
	None	One or more	
0 - 1	10	27	37
2 or more	9	78	87
Total	19	105	124

$\chi^2 = 4.36; df = 1; p < .05.$

schools proves a more significant variable. When it is analyzed it shows a significant positive relationship (see Table 10).

Strong resentments were engendered in the South against Federal courts and Federal intervention, particularly where districts came under court order to desegregate. The manner in which the school boards reached

compliance, therefore, should be related to private schools. Ninety-two percent of those that went under court order have a related private school.

Table 10. Opposition to Desegregation of Schools Related to Private Schools

Degrees of Opposition	Districts with Related Private Schools		Total
	None	One or more	
None	9	31	40
Verbal	12	70	82
Overt action	2	17	19
Total	23	118	141

$\chi^2 = 12.36; df = 2; p < .01.$

The segregation academies must have administrators, faculty and pupils. Pupils must come from the public schools which are also a likely source for faculty and staff. Table 11 shows a positive relationship between decline in school enrollment and the existence of private schools. The number of white teachers who resigned rather than teach in bi-racial classes was also found to be significantly related to the existence of such schools. Ninety-seven percent of the districts which had teachers to resign also had related private schools. No clear relationship could be established for the resignation of school administrators. Many private

Table 11. Decline in Enrollment of Public Schools Related to Private Schools

Change in Public School Enrollment	Districts with Related Private Schools		Total
	None	One or more	
Increase	10	22	32
0-10% decrease	9	42	51
Over 10% decrease	4	60	64
Total	23	124	147

$\chi^2 = 10.46; df = 1; p < .01.$

school administrators came from the ranks of teachers. Reports indicate that many are presently doing double duty.

THE FUTURE ROLE OF THE PRIVATE SCHOOL IN MISSISSIPPI

The Problem of Quality

The major pitch of the segregation academy is "quality education." A brochure of the Council School Foundation (1970:25) gives as number one, "a student body of high quality." Since entrance exams are not required this can only be interpreted as "white equals quality." Other claims to quality may be as tenuous. Green and Gauerke (1959:14) have shown that private schools prior to 1959 were not "doing a better job on the average than public schools." They ask, "If some private schools already in existence fail to meet the standards of public schools, what can be expected of schools hurriedly created to replace the public schools?"

While the State has made provision to extend accreditation to these schools it means little in the light of the general poor quality of public schools in Mississippi. Regional accreditation will be more difficult, proving a serious problem to students who wish to matriculate in colleges and universities outside of the South.

Private schools are independent, and the fear of intervention will tend to keep them so. Only 17 percent have affiliated with the newly formed Mississippi Private School Association. Thus, they lack those cooperative facilities and services that are available to public schools through the State Department of Education, and the teachers' and administrators' associations.

Range of Services

Private schools can not offer the range of services which the public schools provide (Green and Gauerke, 1959:8). Their small size and lack of facilities as well as faculty dictate this. They tend to offer college preparatory courses in a very narrow spectrum.

Continued Existence

Cost is another major factor. Council School Foundation (1970:23) charges tuitions of \$450 per year for elementary grades and \$600 per year for high. An increasing discount pattern is offered to families with more than one child. Even with only one child in elementary school the cost is \$45 down and \$45 per month, a rather heavy financial burden for the average family. As prices rise and the problems of desegregation are resolved many families may no longer be able to justify the burden of an expensive private segregated education.

Enrollments may well have peaked this year. If they follow the pattern of parochial schools and begin to decline, many newly-formed segregation academies will have to close. The better equipped and staffed schools located near centers of populations that have a high percent Negro may grow, emerging as boarding schools serving large areas.

The private school movement has a Southern accent now and while it may undergo change it seems to be firmly rooted in the Southern soil. It is now readily apparent that it will not supplant the public schools nor transform them into an all-black system.

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